

**Science and Mathematics Education Centre**

**Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding the Relationship  
between Virtuous Teaching and Assessment**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
of  
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## Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Uale'.

Date:

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, the late  
Beatrice Richardson.

## An Abstract

This interpretive inquiry details a teacher's lived experience of assessment within an *ethos* of professional practice in some Tasmanian schools, with overseas comparisons. As a sociologist-educator, I adopt a sociological perspective to engage with recent history of teaching in Tasmania, with an aim to reveal the foundations of present day educational organisations. Using conceptual frameworks in metaphorical forms, my study gathers momentum as contemporary teachers and students contribute to my depiction of assessment. I interpret perceptions of assessment and bring my understandings of Julia Annas' analogy between virtue and skill, Max van Manen's researching lived experience, Gert Biesta's idea of beautiful education and Hans-Georg Gadamer's "effective historical consciousness".

The springboard for this thesis is the code of professional ethics which was developed by the Teachers Registration Board Tasmania to provide guidance to teachers. This code articulates moral commitments and practices to promote the integrity of Tasmanian teachers. I learn the significance and implications of ethical principles put forward in the code by illustrating them in my primary and secondary research in my endeavour to understand the relationship between virtuous teaching and assessment.

I use my own experience of specific incidents to explore the tension between policy and practice. I compare two leadership types and question the kinds of pedagogical domains we teachers help create and sustain if we have the opportunity to participate in educational decision-making. Teachers make ethical responses to various stakeholders, not only to students, but to parents and prospective employers.

My inquiry explores the socio-political contexts in which classrooms are situated, mainly in Tasmania, and in some places abroad. From my sociological imagination, I portray real and ideal teachers. I investigate ways of enriching students' learning through understandings of assessment in Behavioural Science subjects, and identify approaches that are fair and ethical for all concerned in the teaching, learning and assessment practices.

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# Chapter 1

## Twisting and Turning Ethics of Assessment

My purpose is to clarify, philosophically, what a virtuous teacher is and how a virtuous teacher might ethically assess her students' work and progress. I start, not by generalising or offering broad descriptions but by targeting a particular human activity, something very definite, and use it as a means to open up dimensions of virtuous behaviour and ethical events. The activity I target is teaching and within that teaching, assessment. Rather than delving into Socratic ideals of virtue, I depend on the contemporary ideas of Julia Annas as she offers an insight into the link between virtue as an ethical ideal and virtue in daily life. In order to delineate my research I adopt conceptual frameworks in the form of metaphors. Conceptual frameworks help organise and represent a research project's intention. They serve to unite concepts into a coherent depiction, to interpret events and integrate information. They represent a way of looking at the world, in my case, from a sociological perspective. As Laurel Richardson suggests in *Writing Strategies*,

Metaphor is the backbone of social science writing, and like a true spine, it bears weight, permits movement, links parts together into a functional, coherent whole – and is not immediately visible. Without metaphor, writing is spineless. But, due to the strength of the logico-empiricist beliefs about writing, we often do not recognise metaphor's role in social science analysis. (1990, p. 18)

As a qualitative researcher of ethical events, I draw on studies of literature, leadership, and overseas teachers to help me and other teachers understand the relationship between virtuous teaching and assessment. As a sociologist and educator I use my sociological imagination to interpret my surrounding environment. Sociological imagination, a term coined by Charles Wright Mills (1959), is an approach to analysing issues, to view the world sociologically and link personal individual concerns with public ones. Mills considered that the major task for sociologists was to discover the links between particular social environments of individuals and wider society, that is, their personal and public locations within that

society. Mills reasons that “The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society,” and further, that “No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey” (1959, p. 6). My understanding of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s concept of historicity, that is interpreting information and events in light of their terms and relativity, affirms Mills’ perspectives. In his third chapter, Mills criticises quantitative research because of lack of reference to the social context of data. He feels that qualitative research can expose and respond to social injustice. My own concern to create a ‘level playing field’ within teaching and assessment caused me to begin this inquiry. My qualitative research aims to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour. I draw inferences from the truth of things as they occur in various ways: perception, thinking, remembering, picturing, and quotation as well as my own practical deliberation. I aim to maintain modesty while I shed light on ethical assessment and bring out its many aspects. I hope to provide impressions that illuminate, not devices that explain. My conceptual domains are the domain of the student, the domain of teachers, the domain of teaching practice, and the school environment domain.

There has been much written over the years about assessment of student progress. There are arguments regarding ways to assess. Some say it serves little purpose to test students in order to assess their progress and that there are other, better means of achieving evidence of improvement. Others argue that assessment depends on the method of testing. From a pragmatist’s point of view, it is necessary to provide some State or nationally recognised results from testing. I concentrate on the ethics of student assessment within teaching in general, and specifically in Behavioural Science subjects. I explore a wide-ranging area starting from a narrow framework, then broadening into diverse aspects. There have been frequent twists and turns, as Kenneth Grahame of *The Wind in the Willows* fame proposes,

...a thesis, is in most cases little more than a sort of clothes line on which one pegs a string of ideas, quotations, allusions and so on, one’s mental undergarments of all shapes and sizes, some possibly fairly new but most rather old and patched. (Cited in Bennett, A. 1997, p. 351)

Alan Bennett senses that *The Wind in the Willows* persona of Toad is an echo of Grahame’s own life-course because Toad becomes a changed character at the very end of the story. Bennett cites the invisible clothesline and suggests that writers have things going on in their heads they are not conscious of. My rather old ‘undergarments’ have been re-examined to see if they still fit. Sometimes they are too tight when I learn of the unreasonableness of some educators, while at other times my undergarments are very comfortable because of an intrinsic satisfaction of ‘getting it right.’ ‘It’ can be delivering a lesson, a professional learning session, an interview with a parent—that feeling of achievement. One could say my undergarments are patched, but I like to think of them as reviewed. My thesis has developed over time and there are certainly ideas new to me, which I have considered. Grahame goes on to observe that “...owing to the invisible clothes line they seem to have some connection and continuity” (p. 351). My connection is maintained throughout by links to the ethics of assessment.



**Illustration 1** *My imaginary clothesline*

### *The Domain of Dilemma*

Assessment is part of a teacher’s role and the way a teacher carries out ethical assessment depends on that teacher’s moral values. How are the ethics of a virtuous teacher manifested? Manifestation of teachers’ conduct occurs in many arenas. I try to deal with certain dilemmas or disconcertion that block my understanding of teachers’ behaviour. Dealing with such disconcertion is not a waste of time since it unravels tangles in my ideas and refreshes what I am trying to discover.

I draw inferences from my own lived experience and from literature, and draw conclusions from what I see, hear and read. I am not making judgements, but simply reporting events, some from the past, so that you, the reader, have information about teachers and the way they teach and assess, and about me and how I carry out my day to day teaching and assessment. I draw your attention to events in my college, the wider Tasmanian education community and some overseas schools. My interest prompts me to ask what lessons can be learned from a country that is hailed as a world leader in student achievement, as having an intriguing and successful school reform model. Finland is said to have the best education system in the world. Could their strategies be applied to Tasmanian schools?

While I have had experience with young children, for the purpose of developing my thesis, I concentrate on senior secondary level schooling, and the principles needed at this level to be ethical when making assessments. It is not an easy task to unravel all the threads that emerge from assessment. Every day when I am teaching and frequently when I am not teaching, I think about assessment. It bedevils me. It is the recurrent idea of wanting to provide the best possible pedagogy for all learners. I want to be fair. I want students to pass exams. I want students to gain entry to university. How can I assess in the best possible way? Although means of assessment can differ greatly, and indeed delivery of pedagogy can be subject to fads, ethical assessment can be explored and principles can underpin these ethics.

I present a variety of situations and experiences and because of the variety of our senses, almost any event we experience, no matter how basic, is accompanied by some self-awareness. Experiences and perceptions are played off against a background of my self, so I must realise that my interpretation of lived experience, even with a desire to present rationally, may be influenced by my previous experiences. I am not being consciously untruthful.

My desire for truth leads me to Robert Sokolowski's special term, veracity. "Veracity is the desire for truth." It is the impulse towards the truth, and it implies "there is something morally good in the fulfilment of this desire" (2008, p. 20). We can be virtuous teachers by nurturing our veracity into truthfulness. Our rationality is not just finding things out but the desire to process the truth. We must be aware of all possibilities in any given event. Given the society in which we are situated, by

discussing lived experiences, through thinking, reasoning and perception, we are helped to appropriate our human condition as agents of truth. We exercise this agency in many contexts: talking, visualising, recollecting, everyday behaviour, artfulness and strategies. I am interested in the truthfulness of human discourse, in the human endeavour to reveal the way things are.

I provide revelations of the way things are, and the way things were, in my writing. Richardson writes that “although life is not a narrative, people make sense of their lives and the lives of others through narrative construction” (1990, p.10). My narratives involve past and present students, past and present teachers and past and present principals. Some portrayals are real and some are fictitious. I am writing for teachers, those interested in teaching and assessment, and for myself, in order to reflect.

My writing warrants consideration because I bring unseen and un-recounted stories to light. I hope to involve readers, prompt contemplation, encourage discussion and relate in practical terms what is often abstract and theoretical. Richardson reminds me that I “work within, not above, broader historical, social and intellectual contexts” (p. 11) and that these contexts function as frameworks for my inquiries and the responses I come by.

I use the metaphorical clothesline and drape my thoughts over it to try and make intelligible the things going on in my head. As Sokolowski writes,

The intelligibility of the thing becomes present when the name is found, when the right word, whether literal or metaphoric, comes to mind, fully alive and distinctly used within its syntactic frame. The intelligibility crystallizes around the word, which is its carrier. (2008, p. 156)

I peg my conceptual arguments on my invisible clothesline. A useful starting point in my inquiry is to consider the background of teaching in Tasmania. I peg that account to the end of my clothesline and go on from there to describe a case study I undertook of the relatively new Teachers Registration Board Tasmania (TRBT). The ‘Tasmanian Case’ is exemplary of questioning, raising problems in administering, giving and evaluating a particular researched and substantiated approach to building a code of ethics that is to apply through, for, and with educational practices and procedures.

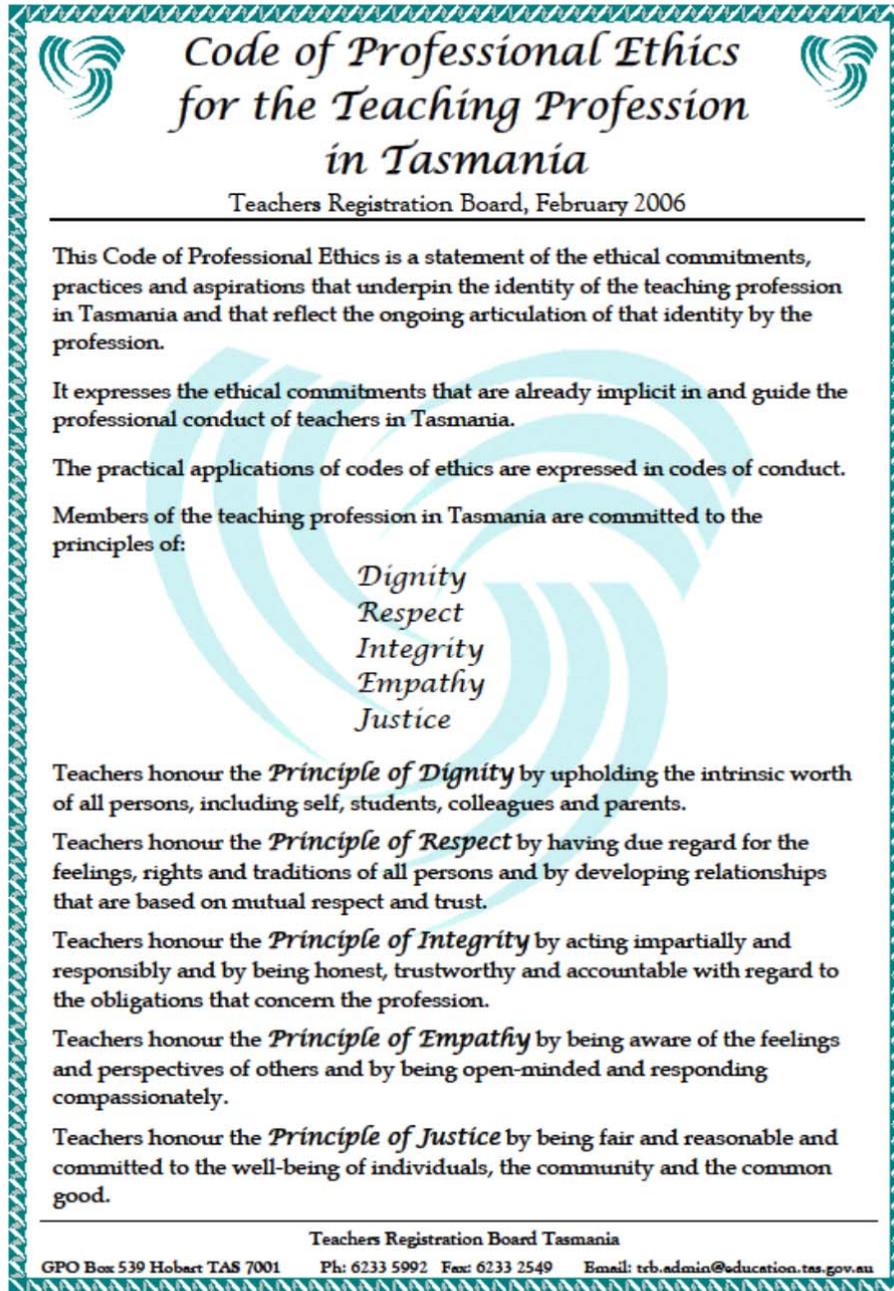
Such a case study may be of use to any other interested, pragmatic, curious or ethically compassionate educator elsewhere. I write for a lay reader as well as for a professional audience. The TRBT was established under the *Teachers Registration Act 2000*. Similar to other States, teachers working in government and non-government schools must be registered in order to practise. The TRBT is an example of an institution creating a code of ethics. It articulates principles which underpin ethics and form the basis for fair assessment.

### *A Code of Legislated Professional Ethics*

One of the TRBT's first tasks, required by the Government, was to establish a code of professional ethics for educational practitioners. Government approval and publication of the TRBT's *Code of Professional Ethics for the Teaching Profession in Tasmania* came after an extensive collaborative enterprise between government and non-government teachers and the TRBT to identify a number of principles of educational practice that would enunciate, and guide a code of practice that TRBT members would elect to agree upon.

The Board was established as an independent statutory body with powers defined under the Act. Focus groups representing educational structural layers from teacher aides to top administrators examined responses widely and numerous sourced from those layers until a working document evolved. A committee elected by the TRBT then generated the code in draft form, and called for responses amongst government and non-government personnel. Eventually a final statement emerged. Posters (see Figure 1) were circulated in multiple copies to all Tasmanian schools. That they took pride of place on staffroom and classroom notice boards was often reported to me anecdotally.

This thesis concerns practices and ethics of assessment that guided and still guide practices of assessment of students' work in the Tasmanian case study, and highlights implications of likely generic concern in applying everyday ethical judgements in human work and human interaction today. Each principle nominated might manifest itself in different and many ways when attention and curiosity is turned to acts of assessment of students' work and judgement of their levels of achievement. My aim is to reveal and illustrate teaching and assessment conduct.



**Figure 1 Teachers Registration Board Poster**

My thesis explores a number of manifestations through reviewing and interpreting the archives of my experience over a number of years, archives that I kept for the purpose of evolving this thesis. My archives include a journal, documenting insights gained from the classroom, from postgraduate meetings, and from texts, and novels, as sources of lived experience. I have noted any interesting

or significant aspects that I come across. My journal is useful as a tool for reflection, and I have kept transcripts of interviews. As Max van Manen writes, the interview,

...may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon. (1990, p. 66)

The human phenomenon I study is the act of assessment that teachers engage in because they must as servants of State and community. As active moral agents required to perform such an act, teachers consider their moral and ethical responsibilities. The ways in which we do this as teachers, principals, and educational administrators, make up the central narratives, curiosity and questioning of this thesis. It is a philosophical inquiry, not psychological, nor a theory of ethics that could be applied to assessment in education.

While traditional philosophers have presented views on systems of ethics in the past, I am focussing on contemporary ethical theories, and contemporary issues and concerns from the ground up. I draw on Annas' *Intelligent Virtue* (2011a) to understand the application of the set of professional ethics through practice. Annas proffers virtue as a central ethical idea. She posits that exercising a virtue employs practical reasoning of a kind which can be compared with the kind of reasoning we find in someone exercising a practical skill. She likens acquisition and exercise of virtue to acquisition and exercise of everyday activities such as farming or teaching, rather than relating virtues to rules, principles, or an outcome. Accordingly, virtue then, is part of what Annas calls a person's, or in this case a teacher's flourishing or *eudaimonism*, or put simply, ethics which tend to produce enjoyment of teaching. She offers an understanding of the relationship between virtue as an ethical ideal and virtue in everyday life: and of being virtuous or ethical and doing the right thing.

I equate her conception of virtue, that is, a skill to be acquired, to ethical skills for teaching and assessment of year 11 and 12 students. I look at acquisition and exercise of virtue and hope to make it clear by the end of this thesis that virtuous practical moral reasoning is a skill to learn and apply. Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of *phronesis*, the acquisition of self-knowledge or wisdom also comes to mind. Annas refers to practical reasoning of the ethical teacher as the "skill analogy". "Practical reasoning of the virtuous person is analogous in important ways

to the practical reasoning of someone who is exercising a practical skill” (2011a, pp. 2-3). This thesis is not an all-inclusive discussion of all the issues involved in a theory of virtue, but it will bring to notice the issues and concerns shared between me and other stakeholders in the school community.

As well as qualitative research using interviews, I draw on my own personal lived experience. Descriptions are from my own time at school as a student, then as a mother of a student, and as a teacher. Anecdotes, which are sometimes dismissed as not a proper basis for serious research, are a means of explaining intangible ideas. Personal accounts provide tangible substantiation, and tend to involve the reader. van Manen (1990) tells us,

Anecdotes form a concrete counterweight to abstract theoretical thought...[They] possess a certain pragmatic thrust...[and] may provide an account of certain teachings or doctrines which were never written down. (p. 119)

The personal stories I retell have not been written down previously. Many are commonplace and while not extraordinary, they have the capacity to demonstrate in practical terms what is often intangible. The anecdote *A moral tale* (Figure 2) from many years ago serves such a pragmatic thrust.

**A moral tale**

The little girl eagerly ran around the playground gathering up pieces of litter, as the teacher had instructed. She wanted to be the first to get her three pieces. She darted around, picked them up, put them in the rubbish bin, and returned to where the teacher was standing.

‘Where are your three pieces of litter?’ asked the teacher.

‘I put them in the bin,’ the little girl explained.

‘I didn’t tell you to do that. I want to see what you picked up. Go and get three pieces now.’

By this time, the other children had finished and there was no litter left to pick up. The little girl tried to explain.

‘Hold out your hand’ roared the teacher.

‘Whack, whack’ went the waddy.

**Figure 2 A moral tale**

While this story is unique, the moral can at the same time be extended to many other instances. The incident in the narrative serves to demonstrate the importance of fairness when teaching and assessing. Would Annas interpret such actions by the teacher as lacking practical wisdom, and lacking intelligent virtue?

I understand my research as a site of moral understanding. A student's self-worth is too important to dismiss as indicated in the narrative. In my narratives I look for particular connections between events. The connection between the events is through the meaning that I draw from them and which I view through an ethical lens.

### *A human science research approach*

My research therefore involves a qualitative interpretive study, with reference to van Manen's human science research approach. It is the relationship between my lived experience and others' lived experience. My field is limited to young adults in their final two years of education before going to university or entering the paid workforce. van Manen maintains that "the interpretive examination of lived experience...relates the particular to the universal, part to whole, episode to totality" (1990, p. 36). This has relevance for me because much of my professional time is taken up with evaluating and assessing. There are episodes which may seem trivial to a teacher during class time, but which, with hindsight, have a negative effect on a student. A throwaway line, a flippant remark, can impact on students' self-esteem. An example related to me is, "You did well on the test, it must have been easy." Some students may laugh such a comment off, others may take it to heart and be distressed. van Manen's idea of the interrelationship, the linking of the particular to the whole, evokes an image of a pebble thrown into a pond and the subsequent ripples that occur.

I am acutely aware that as well as teaching a subject, any assessment I make, especially with pre-tertiary students, can have far-reaching effects. For example, it could mean the difference between getting into a particular university, or a certain faculty, or attaining a scholarship. Keeping these prospects in mind, I have an ongoing internal tussle about teaching for understanding and higher order thinking, or teaching exam passing techniques. To set the assessment scene, some explanation of subjects is required.

Subjects at Secondary Colleges in Tasmania are classed as either A, B or C subjects. It means that they are 50, 100 or 150 hour subjects per year respectively, albeit counter intuitively. Some subjects are Tasmanian Qualifications Authority (TQA) approved syllabuses while others are college based. Assessment is divided into non-pre-tertiary and pre-tertiary sectors. The former are assessed internally, while the latter, which are invariably C subjects, are assessed partially internally and partially externally, usually 50 per cent each. In the past, a student could study hard at the end of the year and sit final examinations. Now, study during the year is imperative in order to qualify for tertiary entrance. The internal assessment component is criterion-based. Most subjects have ten criteria, some are generic and some are subject specific.

Teaching Behavioural Science for the last fifteen years, I have been involved in the external assessment process of pre-tertiary syllabuses conducted by TQA. The process entails attending state-wide moderation meetings and end of year meetings to mark folios and scripts, and for the last eight years, I have been serving as the Sociology Chief Marking Examiner. As well as writing a report, which is posted on the web site as a reference for teachers and students to consult, I am required to organise markers and chair discussions about the assessment process. Hence my avid interest in the topic of ethical assessment. If there is no final authority or final solution to issues of ethics I can only search for partial, temporary resolutions. Such searching brings me to moral and ethical questions about which there are more or less ethically principled determinations.

### *Responsibility of assessment*

One such question arises. What are we assessing? Continual criterion-based assessment throughout the year is reasonably straightforward. Yet at moderation meetings, teachers have differing interpretations of these criteria which inevitably leads to differences in assessment. A student gaining a high achievement at one government college in Tasmania may gain a satisfactory achievement at another, or indeed, at the same college with a different teacher.

Internal assessment, that is, purely at individual school or college level by one teacher, can be subjective. A teacher may believe that the students are “all above average”, like students of Lake Wobegon as in Garrison Keillor’s (2007) *A Prairie*

*Home Companion.* A teacher's perception of a student's ability can depend on other students. If there is a class of 'high flyers' then an average learner may appear slow, and conversely an average student with slower learners may appear very bright.

Even if teachers are diligent and take into account all types of learning, there are many pitfalls for a beginning teacher. Howard Gardner (1983, p. xii) in *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, proposes that each student has capacities in all intelligences (verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical-rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic), but with different levels of functioning. Gardner contends that a notion of intelligence based on IQ tests is far too limited. He has since suggested inclusion of existential and moral intelligence.

Annas too recognises that different individuals have different natural temperaments and abilities. A student must recognise and jettison dispositions which may harm others or be personally harmful. The teacher and the learner require practical intelligence for this, according to Annas. The teacher must offer reasons for learning a skill and here is where intelligence, in the form of recognising suitable responses, contentions and observations, is taught with the aim that the learner will use that skill. Her skill analogy helps me see that practical intelligence can rise above cultural interpretations of abilities. She does concede that "if some of us have a better natural endowment [to acquire skills], then others will find it harder, but they are not excluded" (2011a, p. 30).

Lorna Earl (2003, pp. 22-24) describes various methods of measuring students' skills and progress. Assessment can be formal or informal. It can be purely summative, that is, assessment *of* learning. The student learns by rote and retells the teacher. The purpose of this type of assessment is to report to parents or prospective employers, and for accountability.

Assessment *for* learning is formative and much more powerful. It is the process of understanding evidence used by teachers and students to decide how best to proceed with their learning. It is on-going and drives the teaching program. The learner has to trust the teacher to be doing the right thing to follow. Once the learners have control of their learning, the motivation becomes intrinsic. It is what

Annas calls “the drive to aspire” and is needed for the learners to understand what they are doing in order to learn properly. Learners need to not only learn from the teacher or role model about how to understand what they have to do and the way to do it, but to become able to acquire *for themselves* that skill, rather than to stop at a plateau of routine where thinking about further improvement can be turned off. “Aspiration leads the learner to strive to improve” (2011a, p. 18). Assessment *as* learning is a subset of assessment *for* learning, where students actively participate in the assessment process. It could be peer or self-assessment. Summative and formative assessment can overlap.

At the moment it concerns me that the playing field is not level. This uneven playing field can be due to a number of factors, which include parental attitudes, the home situation, language, teachers’ attitudes, and TQA requirements. Social problems can become pedagogical problems. Economic situations locate individuals in different ways with regard to access to learning, and consequently access to knowledge. The ethics teachers adopt play a pivotal role. Using the code of principles, I target a deeper understanding of the ethics of practice in assessment.

In Tasmania, parental choice over which school a child attends depends largely on finances, or on religious beliefs. If money is available, then parents are able to look at options, consult with teachers and other parents, and choose appropriately. The choice may be a non-government exclusive, prestigious private school, Anglican or Quaker, or a Catholic school. There are also cottage schools and Rudolf Steiner schools. Parents may have certain ideals which dictate their selection. Notwithstanding finance, some parents opt for a reputable government school. An excellent drama or music department within a particular school or college often determines choice.

On the other hand, parents may have their child’s best interests at heart, but are not able to afford private schooling which they perceive as having a more structured system. There is a perception that government schools are more lax regarding teaching the ‘three Rs’, that is, reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic, and especially grammar. That rules regarding behaviour, attendance and punctuality are overlooked. Many parents are pragmatic and opt for the closest school. Others prefer a single gender school. I acknowledge that comparing government and non-

government schools is a contentious issue. My observations stem from interviews I conducted, from listening to talk-back radio, and from surveys conducted by my students which confirmed perceptions about which schools are 'best'.

By the time students reach year ten, some parents deem it unnecessary for education to continue. They have perhaps not continued with their own education, and see no point to going on, or they may desperately need another income in the household. The majority of senior students have part-time jobs. In fact, two thirds of my senior secondary students work after school and at weekends, usually at takeaway food outlets or major supermarkets. Many of them stack supermarket shelves at night. Parents may themselves be holding down two jobs and be too tired to take an interest. The students may be 'sick' of school, especially if they are not doing well, or continuing on to tertiary education is not expected.

Ruby K. Payne in *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (1996) points out that poverty is relative and occurs in all countries. Economic class is on a continuum—there is no clear division. Accordingly a student brings his or her attitudes, values and beliefs of the class in which he or she was raised (pp. 10-11). Payne writes of hidden rules which exist among economic classes and have impact on achievement in schools. Her message to teachers is, "We can neither excuse students nor scold them for not knowing; as educators we must teach them and provide support, insistence, and expectations" (p. 11). In other words, we must respect the cultural identity of the student and his or her class in order to teach well.

As well as parental attitudes, the home situation can have an effect. Students in low socio-economic households, apart from having disinterested parents, may find it difficult to find a quiet spot to study. There could be an anti-school subculture amongst their peers. Some adolescents opt to live independently because of conflict within the home, particularly if the family is a blended one, that is, parents have re-partnered. Some students already have partners themselves. It is a time of romantic involvement for many. One of my students was 'dropped' by her boyfriend at the start of exams. She was devastated and performed badly in the exam. Of course an external examiner would not know her circumstances, but a subject teacher could make allowances in such a case.

### *Cultural capital*

In contrast, students from higher socio-economic households are generally better set up with a study, computer, and any other items necessary for learning. Malcolm Waters and Rodney Crook refer to Pierre Bourdieu (1973) who maintains that students with upper class backgrounds have a built-in advantage because they are socialised into the dominant culture. He calls this “cultural capital”.

It [cultural capital] consists of such things as cultural artefacts (books, paintings, fine automobiles, etc.), and practices such as attending concerts...or speaking and dressing in a particular manner, or having been to the right school, or having a university degree. (1993, p. 330)

I draw attention to the importance of cultural capital and its inherent advantages, including language skills. Anthony Giddens (2006) refers to sociologist Basil Bernstein who examined inequality in education through analysing language skills. He found that students from different backgrounds develop different linguistic forms of speech. He termed these “elaborated code” and “restricted code”. Language in a restricted code, used mainly by lower socio-economic status families, is more suited to communication about practical experience as opposed to elaborated language which is used for discussion of abstract ideas. Elaborated language code used in text books and by teachers is the key to academic success. Students who come from a restricted language code background are therefore at a disadvantage before they start school. At times such students have asked me why I use ‘such big words’. I am momentarily surprised by this because I speak in my usual way and am unaware of using any different vocabulary. Such lived experiences lead to meaningful episodes. Each event contributes to the conclusion. I conclude it is my moral responsibility to teach and provide support to all my students.

### *Teachers’ attitudes*

Vocational Education Training (VET) teachers are worried about equality regarding assessment. Most units of work require either a ‘competent’ or ‘not competent’ award. Such an award does not recognise high, or for that matter, low achievement. A greater concern however, is that students can re-sit tests or re-do assignments until they are ‘competent’. There is no differentiation between a certificate awarded where a student has re-done a test five or six times, and one who passed first go.

How many times should be allowed? Which student would employers prefer? Are these legitimate concerns?

TQA requirements need to be addressed when assessing students' work. Students must achieve certain standards in various subjects. These are all set out along with syllabus documents, and are reviewed every five years. University entrance scores often dictate choice of subjects, as well as some universities or faculties requiring English, Mathematics or Science.

The ethics of the whole assessment scene deserves close examination. A functionalist or meritocratic approach, say, would view inequalities as a product of rewarding scarce talent. Those who study hard to achieve, merit rewards. A neo-Marxist approach on the other hand, would see the inequalities as reproducing the class system. "The struggle over public schools cannot be separated from the social problems currently facing society" as far as Henry A. Giroux is concerned, "The problems are not only political in nature but are pedagogical as well" (in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler (Eds.), 1992, p. 199). In other words, power and knowledge influence not only individuals who have access to wealth, but also relationships with others, teachers, for example. The majority of elite people attended private schools claim John Higley, Desley Deacon and Don Smart (1979), and these people are powerful. They are committed to the status quo because change could erode their power.

Ivan Snook (2003) in *The Ethical Teacher* reminds us to ask "Does the assessment do harm?" (p. 88). That is, does it lower students' self-esteem? He urges us to think about relationships between students, and between students and parents. If an assessment does no harm, does it do any good? It may seem a strange question, but we need to ask if there is any benefit to the learner.

To deepen my enquiry, I draw on the work of Annas, van Manen, Paulo Freire, Gadamer, Gert Biesta, Sokolowski, Karl Jaspers, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Bertrand Russell and Alfred Whitehead.

Gadamer (1986b) advises us when we enquire into lived experience to reflect critically on ourselves as historical beings, because every act of understanding is conditioned by its motivation and prejudices. Being prejudiced means being

subjective and Gadamer would argue that being objective is impossible to achieve. I am influenced by my cultural baggage but as long as I am conscious of this and take my biases into account, I can interpret the past and use that interpretation to expand and update my knowledge with the truthfulness to which I aspire.

My historical being as a student, first at primary, then secondary and senior secondary school, provides anecdotes from the past in relation to assessment and ethics. In the not so distant past, my first-hand experience as a university student, then student-teacher, and more recently teacher of Behavioural Science, marking examiner of Sociology, and researcher affords behaviours which can be interpreted. Similarly, as a parent of students who followed educational paths like mine, I have information from a younger generation apart from my own. I draw on observations made of students who have passed through my classes over the years. I still see many of them in the community—at the optometrist, the chemist, the supermarket, the theatre, restaurants, and various other places.

What Gadamer (1975) calls “effective historical consciousness” means that while I interpret the past I am updating my understanding (pp. 267-274). Gadamer asserts that our historicity leads us to create differing understandings of the same events at different times of our life; the “sameness” of the aspect or phase disappears, and identity gives way to difference (p. 473).

I glance briefly at an early period of my life, but the main period is my teaching time. My interpretive approach must take account of this period of the research, the linguistic implications and social norms, attitudes and values during this stage. I concede that the historicity element must be accounted for and I try to ‘put myself in the shoes’ of individuals of times past without being judgmental. I try to justify my rational prejudices and suspend or bracket what appear as irrational ones.

In the following chapters, I use examples from students and colleagues as well as my own life experience. A scholarly input from Gadamer overarches much of my thinking, and contemporary principles espoused by Annas underpin my understanding. Each chapter of my thesis reveals different observations and perceptions involving ethics of assessment.

I look at the social element in my teaching and assessing to understand what it is to be human. Each group of teachers, students and others has established norms which in turn are linked to morals. There is a tendency to see events in a different light according to one's perception. Perceiving and remembering are two quite different propositions. Meanings are presented through language. The words we choose can convey truth. Or we may choose to dissemble, mislead or lie.

Sokolowski (2000, pp. 157-160) identifies two kinds of truth; that of correctness and that of disclosure. Correctness is confirmation of a claim whereas the truth of disclosure is simply the display of a state of affairs. Correctness then, depends on disclosure. The two kinds of truth depend on evidence and here the water becomes somewhat muddy. Evidence in English is something used to prove a claim. It is different in German where it can mean realisation of being convinced of something. Sokolowski writes of the verbal form "evidencing" that is, the bringing about of truth. My evidencing is contemplating the lived experience of my students, colleagues and others, as well as my own; thinking about what they thought. Sokolowski proposes veracity "as the name for the human inclination to attain the truth of things" (2008, p. 20). If we are to be human we must practise truthfulness, and "if we love the truth, then when we attempt to determine the future we will be moved to deliberate truthfully" (p. 27). My aim is to be truthful, or become truthful, by finding out, by presenting different ways of thinking, and by avoiding hasty conclusions.

At the start, my writing was very 'bolshy' about what should or should not be done, and how it should or should not be done. As my research widened, I soon discovered that assessment is much more complicated than I first thought. I needed to stand back and consider that even a small piece of information can put a different complexion on my evidence. I have learned to temper my approach after reading Sokolowski's ideas on hiddenness and truth, that the focus of one aspect usually means other aspects become obscure. They are not necessarily lost, but need their right time to be seen (2000, p. 165).

Alfred North Whitehead in *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (1959/1929) does not refer to truth as such but does write about the morality of the

mind which relates to virtue (p. 19). He contends that the key to the understanding of ultimate reality is a careful examination of the nature and experience of human beings. No special method is required apart from careful self-observation. Whitehead eschews the traditional notions of space, time, and matter, and contends that ultimate physical reality is composed of interrelated 'events', revealed in a sense of wonder and curiosity in an individual's mind. I bring interrelated events to my enquiry as it unfolds.

### *What is hanging on my invisible clothesline?*

In Chapter 2, using information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics *Tasmanian Year Book 1977 and 1978*, I examine the background of the teaching profession to contextualise the situation in Tasmania. These *Year Books* provide comprehensive descriptive accounts of the social, demographic and economic structure of the island State with particular emphasis on progress and development. Using Gadamer's concepts, I follow the path leading from segregated secondary schools to comprehensive education, and look at the status of teachers. I compare the dual system of education in Tasmania, that is, public and private, and examine how different styles of leadership influence each system.

As much of a child's involvement at school is affected by his or her teacher, in Chapter 3 I examine teachers' ethical expectations and the effects of the hidden curriculum by encouraging my classes to write about their experiences. Turning to Gadamer once again and engaging in literature, I provide some positive accounts of moral teachers who are portrayed in texts.

Chapter 4 provides some impressions of other countries, Germany in particular. Discussions with overseas teachers enable me to have an understanding of methods and ethics of assessment in other parts of the world, and to compare the information with my own experiences in Tasmania. I interview teachers in Tasmania who have worked in Asia, to enquire whether eastern-type varies greatly from western-type education, or whether there are universal tenets overarching practice. I have not attempted any further research to verify to any degree, but include what are essentially perceptions of these educators. If a teacher perceives a certain situation or system and acts accordingly in line with this perception, for that teacher it is real, and I contend, valid.

Details of my classroom research involving student satisfaction with their course are described in Chapter 5. I note learning styles, and reforms, different ways of assessment and ethics of the practice of assessment, including inequality. I indicate my own assessment tools. Concerns about the duty of care, the role of the pastoral care teacher, and student wellbeing, are further themes.

Chapter 6 explores the necessity or otherwise of punishment, a contentious topic; the place of humour in the classroom; and the use of attention-grabbing objects to create an ambience for the task which is being assessed. I describe how the actual marking procedure is carried out and how ethical principles might influence marking, including the topics of assessing students with disabilities

In Chapter 7, I analyse ways parents and other stakeholders impinge on the assessment process, how trends and fads can affect values, and how change has political repercussions. Education is frequently a ‘political football’, that is, a topic that politicians argue about and use to try and gain an advantage for their parties. Ethical responses regarding class and gender are noted, along with a list of values to consider.

Chapter 8 deals with the importance of language, grammar, what makes a good teacher, and how the status of teachers might be raised. Why is status so important? Russell’s principles and Jaspers’ advice to philosophers, in the form of pledges are offered as guidance.

In ending with Chapter 9, I bring in garments I have on my imaginary clothesline. I smooth out the creases caused by wear and exposure and I fold them carefully and sort them according to my understandings of where they fit within the conceptual frameworks that enfold and unfold in my writing. Engaged in the act of folding, in my sociological imagination I depict how an ideal school, if such a thing might exist, would emerge. I see the school teeming with virtuous teachers and create my imagery of how they perform.

I acknowledge that there are many different writings dealing with assessment. Much has been written, yet no real agreement can be reached regarding the methods of assessment. Going back to ethical principles goes some way towards finding a way forward. I apply the principles to my everyday thinking and being in

educational relationships with other teachers and my students. I use the phrase ‘teaching and learning’ at times in my writing, and note that Biesta (2012, p. 37) deliberately writes it as one word, “teachingandlearning”. At a recent symposium at Port Arthur, Tasmania, Biesta drew my attention to changes in understanding regarding teaching. He suggests that a certain understanding of it has disappeared and that there has been a shift over the past twenty years or so to refer to teachers as “facilitators of learning”. I use learning in the sense of receiving education. Biesta makes the point that students do not just learn, but learn something, for particular purposes, and from someone (p. 38).

### *Ethical Considerations*

My thesis has information from teachers and learners—from primary research in the form of surveys and from interviews. These follow the Curtin University of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) procedures and approval of research with minimal risk. I received official approval on 10 March 2006 with the approval identification SMEC 2006 0004.

As an unfunded sociologist/researcher, I have followed ethical protocols, according to practice in Sociology. I refer mainly to Earl Babbie’s (1983) *The Practice of Social Research 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*, as well as W. Lawrence Neumann’s (2005) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Neumann writes about the social and historical context of research, while Babbie describes the theoretical principles of research and how these are reflected in techniques for carrying out research. He identifies the main constraints as scientific, such as certain research procedures, for example disclaimers on surveys; administrative, that is, easy to administer, not too long or too expensive; and ethical.

I complied with ethical standards as follows. Respondents gave informed consent and at all times participation was completely voluntary. In the case of my students, there were no implied sanctions. I advised them not to put their names on the surveys and I used a drop box for collection. There was no harm to participants. I sought no information which might embarrass them, endanger their friendships, their part-time jobs or their home life. When I asked them to consider past events which they may not normally consider, for example the hidden curriculum, again it was totally voluntary.

Privacy and confidentiality governed my research. I gave assurance that names would not be made public. Anonymity ensured that a given response could not be identified with a given respondent. There was no deception involved as I did not conceal my identity. Regarding analysis and reporting, I upheld the obligation to make any limitations known to the reader.

In the case of interviews, I have substituted pseudonyms, and disguised settings to respect privacy. On my clothesline I peg up some information from literary reviews, some from case studies, some anecdotal examples, and literary allusions, as I unfurl the realm of assessment, and ethics relating to it. I aim to draw together the ethics and the assessment by offering my insights on this topic as I try to make a case for a more caring approach in the domains of education—an approach which encompasses what Annas would call virtuous practical expertise.

## Chapter 2

### Ethics as events: virtue and eudaimonism in school cultures

In this chapter I return to the beginnings of the journey of my inquiry with the intention of coming to understand and write about what it means to teach and assess ethically in the lived experience of being a teacher in Tasmanian schools. I write this chapter with my journals before me. My journals record my questioning, my reflections, my opinions, my biases and prejudices, for better or worse. As I drift backwards and forwards through my musings and my serious recordings of data, narratives, interviews, readings, conversations and dialogue, my journals surprise me. The word surprise comes from the French *surprendre*, and before, from the Latin *superprehendere*, to seize. I am seized with wonder at what reveals itself to me about me and about my lived experience of teaching and assessment. I am astonished that I could have once seen my world so black and white. I do not now want to believe that I could be fixed in my views or judgemental about what teachers ought to do or not do and think or not think. As I read my early journals I am jolted to see such phrases as, ‘I don’t agree.’ ‘That’s not true.’ ‘It just can’t be the case.’ ‘That is wrong’ ‘Now that is a good idea!’—and see no recording of my reasons for writing them. I become cautious of allowing this foible to spoil my thesis. As my inquiry progresses through my journals I detect a growing questioning of my views and understandings, as I was discovering and contemplating other possible ways of viewing my world. Questioning was replacing concluding. Interpreting and reinterpreting was replacing induction and deduction. In my later journals I discern a kind of irony emerging that makes me smile and feel grateful for the understandings I am receiving.

In later chapters, I will reveal the ways in which my questioning opens up my thesis and the manner in which writers, like van Manen and Gadamer influence me to re-examine, reinvent, invigorate and emancipate my beliefs, biases and prejudices when I reflect upon the recordings of my lived experiences. Jaspers helps me to understand how my historical being in the world creates possible perspectives for understanding differences in being human. Sokolowski leads me to make clear my intentionality in being a teacher-assessor-researcher, to lean towards the truth of

things and to be modest. Roland Barthes shows me how to honour the ways that I can make the portrayal of my growing understandings intelligible through my inquiry with language and literature. From Annas I realise that my practical intelligence can be virtuous, and from Biesta, I clarify ways in which I can approach the enigma of assessment which bewilders me and at the same time possesses me.

As I put aside my journals to write, I become aware of a certain achievement I am fulfilling that I hope I can sustain throughout my thesis. In *Intelligent Virtue*, Annas says,

The more we reflect on our possession and development of practical intelligence and on the many diverse ways in which different virtues contribute to decision and action in particular cases, the less likely we will come to overall judgments of our and others' characters as being simply good or bad. (2011, p. 91)

This chapter portrays the contextual and conceptual tiers of lived experience, knowledge and understandings that initiated my inquiry and from which the rest of my thesis flows. I ask my reader to understand that my approach is not that of historian, or statistician, or data analyst, or educational theoretician. I present historical facts, statistics, analytic tables, theories, and some of my own living experiences of being a teacher. My intention is to demonstrate how I find myself to be situated within a life world of teaching and assessing in schools as one who is occupied with living and being ethical in schools today. As my inquiry unfolds my task is to show the ethical umbrella under which I stand.

Narrating my inquiry is essential to developing my thesis. "All human science has a narrative quality (rather than an abstracting quantitative quality)," says van Manen (p.115). The story form of relating enquiring brings forth the truth of the lived experience. This chapter embraces a number of narratives that I develop and interpret and with which I unravel my preliminary understandings. The first narrative sets the scene in which my experience as teacher-assessor begins and follows my appreciation of public attitudes towards teachers and schools and societal views about their status and worthiness. The second draws me into reflecting, through a sociological lens, upon the relationship between motivating students and assessing as purposes for teaching. Thirdly, I tell a story of what a teacher does when

she assesses students in a college, a year 11 and 12 environment, amidst waxing and waning approaches to assessment that educational systems adopt following government imperatives. During this part of my narration, I emphasise the value of anecdotal recounting of experiences as counterpoints to theoretical thinking (van Manen, p.116). Here I introduce the ethical dilemmas that fly in the faces of teachers—how do we do the right thing?—when we are told to assess students’ achievement according to nationally contrived desired outcomes.

In the second part of this chapter I enter a sphere in which I compare my experiences of teaching in two different school systems in order to identify the influences of school leaders and cultures on teachers’ ways of assessing. I seek places in which I encounter or might have encountered qualities such as virtue and eudaimonism in school cultures, as Annas could find them. Then I find purchase for questioning whether an *ethos* of dignity, respect, integrity, empathy and justice is properly present and intrinsic in the school cultures of which I have reasonably intimate knowledge

In the last part of this chapter I conceptualise the efforts of teachers’ assessing students’ work as events of ethics. In the events of ethics I can begin to portray teachers as virtuous and courageous.

### *My first narrative: Scenes of lived experience*

I start with what came before me and what remains with me now.

As education in Tasmania has evolved, secondary school assessment systems have continually changed according to various evaluation processes that government departments have required. The background to teaching in Tasmania is interesting because some aspects of Tasmanian legislation have been trail-blazing. The *1977 Tasmanian Year Book* (p. 470) states that Tasmania was not only the first Colony in the British Empire to make education compulsory, but in 1946 it was the only Australian State to make school attendance compulsory up to age 16. In some circumstances special exemptions to conduct education in situations such as home schooling or beginning a trade apprenticeship could be obtained. The compulsory age in 2012 was 17 years, and there are discussions now underway in 2013 to raise it to 18 years.

The proportion of pre-World War II students enrolled in secondary education was very low. Entrance to high schools was by way of an ability test taken in year 6. Students who did not pass the test attended a secondary school. An entrance examination or ability test had to be undertaken by students who wanted to attend any of the three exclusively academic schools in Tasmania. These were Devonport High, Hobart High and Launceston High. Two of the secondary schools were Elizabeth Street and Albuera Street.

Certification of levels of achievement was of considerable significance to employers. In order to formulate and administer new systems of awarding school certificates the Schools Board of Tasmania was constituted in 1944. The Board conducted examinations where students could achieve a Schools Board Certificate after a four-year course of general education comprising four compulsory basic subjects and three other subjects of choice, should the timetable permit. Secondary schools could choose to qualify students through an internal accrediting system or an external examination (*Tasmanian Year Book*, 1977, p. 481). It is unclear whether any schools opted for the accrediting system, probably due to it being less formal. In 1969, the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate replaced the Schools Board Certificate. Evaluation for the School Certificate is to this day determined by internal assessment and is awarded at the end of year 10. The Higher School Certificate used to be awarded after either year 11 or 12, that is, it could be completed after one year's study. Now a student must complete two years study to gain it.

From 1969 a moderation process reviewed subject standards of year 10 and internal assessments were reviewed twice a year. Teachers from schools throughout Tasmania met "to ensure reasonable comparability" (TYB 1977, p. 483). The moderation procedures, or statewide meetings to effect reasonable comparability, were discontinued in 2008. Now, subject teachers, in collaboration with the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority carry out "Quality Assurance" in colleges by means of audits. Students, parents, and other interested parties expect teachers to justify their assessments, that is, they must account for the awards they give. Today ethical practices propounded by the TRBT's code of professional ethics underpin accountability. Audits require teachers to provide exemplars of work showing

grades given and reasons for such grades. The TQA certificates have changed as well. Since 2009 a student can receive a Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE), a Qualifications Certificate (QC), or a Tasmanian Certificate of Educational Achievement (TCEA).

The descriptions of TQA certificates, available to students in 2013, are not essential to my thesis but may be of interest to some. See Appendix I for explanations of the TCE, QC, and TCEA. As well as these three certificates, TQA issues two more documents: a Statement of Results and an Australian Tertiary Admission (ATAR) Statement, explained in Appendix I.

Today senior secondary students can study a variety of courses and many options are available to them, and while it may seem laborious for pastoral care teachers to sift and recommend subjects with students whom they counsel, there is a potential pathway of study for every student. Teachers attempt to keep abreast with and adapt their practices to changes in certification processes so that they might offer the best selections for students to make.

The occupational status of teachers, that is, the esteem and authority based on the judgement of others, has changed over the years since World War II. The post-war fast growing school population required more teachers and because many were needed quickly, speculation abounded regarding their suitable qualifications. Were they properly qualified and were they looked up to? In any case, specialist teachers for subjects such as History, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Modern Language were employed in matriculation colleges.

Tasmanian society's opinions appear to have changed over time. I consider the status of teachers very important for the future of our children's education. The principle of dignity advances that the profession has intrinsic worth. A 2011 Roy Morgan Poll ranked professions according to public perceptions of honesty and ethical standards. Morgan Research has conducted public opinion polling in Australia since 1941. It is a highly regarded independent research company with a reputation for providing accurate information to society. *Very High* and *High* responses were converted to a percentage for each occupation. Rankings are listed in Table 1.

<b>Professional Rankings for Honesty and Ethical Standards</b>	
Nurses	89
Pharmacists	85
Doctors	79
School teachers	73
Engineers	69
Dentists	68
State Supreme court judges	64
High Court Judges	63
Police	62
University lecturers	60
Accountants	50
Ministers of Religion	44
Bank managers	33
Lawyers	32
Public servants	28
Public opinion pollsters	27
Financial planners	25
Talk-back radio announcers	19
Directors of public companies	19
TV reporters	16
Business executives	16
State MPs	16
Federal MPs	16
Union leaders	15
Insurance brokers	14
Stock brokers	12
Newspaper journalists	11
Estate agents	10
Advertising people	8
Car salesmen	5

**Table 1 Image of Professions Survey 2011**

To get the rankings, Morgan asked the following question:

As I say different occupations, could you please say—from what you know or have heard – which rating best describes how you, yourself, would rate or score people in various occupations for honesty and ethical standards (Very High, High, Average, Low, Very Low)?

Source: <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2011/4655/>

Morgan rates teachers highly for honesty and ethical standards with 73 per cent I cannot resist pointing out that according to this poll, politicians rate only 16 per cent. It gratifies my bias and judgement of them as dissemblers, who seem to pay more attention to people in their electorate when marginal seats are at risk at election time.

My response to this poll is perhaps a generalised and cynical one but it is not irrelevant to my thesis narrative in regard to public assessment of teacher status.

Morgan research shows changes over the past three decades. Teachers had “mediocre ratings back in the late 1970s (54.5 per cent)” but public “perceptions have been consistently improving — especially in the 20 year period between 1980 and 2000.” Morgan finds 20 percent improvement overall in the occupational status. The question then is why? It is surely a complex issue. Public opinion is often flighty, quirky, trendy, and not always well informed. To study the reasons for which trend takes precedence at one time or another is a full research project in itself. I touch only briefly on it here for the purposes of my narrative.

A certain amount of ‘teacher bashing’ often occurs, where teachers are blamed for society’s ills. For example, if there are motor vehicle accidents outside school involving young people, teachers should teach how to drive safely. If there is a drug problem in society, teachers should deliver drug education programs. An article in the *Herald Sun* (Mickelborough, 2010, February 15) had the sub heading, “A decline in the number of male teachers is being blamed for rising youth violence.” The report goes on to say that, in Australia, the number of male state school teachers is in short supply, that there were 6 per cent fewer than ten years ago, and that “Youth crime has soared in that time. Sex attacks, robberies, assaults and weapon offences have increased significantly.” An argument of this sort is *non causa pro causa* or a fallacy of false cause. The cause of a given effect is not the real cause (Irving Copi, 1986, p. 108). Temporal succession does not establish a connection between lack of male teachers and youth crime. Teachers and schools are scapegoats here. While male teachers can certainly be positive role models, family and media, especially television, can influence youth too.

“Blame it on the schools” has been a recurring theme in Tasmanian newspapers since early 1970 until the present day. In the 1970s one could become a teacher after two years of Teachers College training. Entry to Teachers College depended on completing one’s Schools Board A Certificate at the end of year 10. One became known as a ‘two year trained teacher’. Perhaps the limited scholarly effort required to become a teacher then, did not inspire enough public confidence in teachers to entrust them with mending society’s ills, if ever that could be possible.

In the early 1950s, ‘baby boomers’ born between 1946 and 1965, swelled numbers at schools and retention rates of students staying on after year 10 increased. The Tasmanian Government considered it expedient and cheaper to have fewer schools. In the late 1950s, comprehensive high schools offered vocational as well as academic subjects, required no ability test to attend, and took all-comers. Alan Barcan, author of a history of Australian education, writes,

The first new-style comprehensive opened at Taroona in 1957 and within a further three years Tasmania had abolished its selective academic and technical high schools for economic reasons. (2007, p. 142)

The educational administration found comprehensive schools attractive for cost-effective reasons, because they promised economies of scale (Barcan, p. 175). Clarence High was the first such school on Hobart’s Eastern Shore in 1959. Prior to senior secondary colleges for year 11 and 12 of any ability, there were three matriculation colleges solely for university bound students. These were opened between 1965 and 1968. They

...offered one or two-year courses leading to university. Consolidating the relatively few academically-oriented senior students was economical but it deprived the four-year comprehensives of many of their more mature students. (Barcan 2007, p. 154)

Barcan claims that “In Tasmania matriculation colleges had enticed students away from private schools” (2007, p. 152). Nowadays only the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania have separate senior secondary colleges which the Tasmanian Education Department saw as a solution to overlarge schools. According to Barcan, others states have years 11 and 12 attached to high schools, as a result of their opposition to separate schools by their Teachers’ Union. The union is concerned that if students leave at the end of year 10, they may drop out of the system altogether.

I must note here that Tasmania progressed at different rates to other states of Australia. My information is representative of Tasmanian education rather than Australia-wide. As far as teacher training prior to 1972–1973 in Tasmania was concerned, no degree was needed to enter the profession. Preparation was more like an apprenticeship into an institution where traditional methods of teaching applied. I have several friends and colleagues who entered the profession in this way. They are

very good teachers and I am confident that they taught their students very well. The University of Tasmania's Alumni News (Dec 2012, Issue 42, pp. 15-20) contains interesting interviews with six educators mostly in their mid-80s who experienced post-World War II teaching. One 86 year old remembers living in the Country Women's Association hostel because at the time the university only catered for men. The residents had to be in by 10pm. Her abiding memories are of companionship. An 87 year old noted that university student numbers were small in 1949 and that Teachers College studies were to take precedence over university studies because of the shortage of teachers in Tasmania. Teachers College studies were from 9am-3pm and university subjects from 4pm-7pm. Many junior trained teachers went on to gain degrees and many were first in their families to go to university.

By 1978 a trainee teacher could be awarded a Diploma of Education after one year of a post-graduate course, or complete a four-year course leading to a Bachelor of Education. There was also a three-year course at the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education for a Diploma of Teaching or four years for Bachelor of Education (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1978, p. 424).

#### *My second narrative: Motivating or assessing*

There are many reasons to assess students. It might be in order to motivate, to have control, to give feedback to students and parents, to gain feedback in order to direct teaching, to rank students, to make comparisons of students' performance, to group students, and to identify prior learning. It could be argued that some of these reasons may be more acceptable than others. In a college staffroom some teachers would contest the idea that assessment to motivate students is wholly defensible.

Although not always easy to accomplish, motivation is a challenging part of teaching. Depending on the time of the lesson, there will be apathetic or lethargic students. Motivation can be extrinsic, with some type of positive sanction, a sticker or certificate, for example. A straight-out bribe can work. "If we get this finished, you can have an early minute." If the class is dismissed a few minutes earlier than usual, it is colloquially known in Australia as an 'early minute'.

Other teachers would advise that it is better to deal with motivation that is intrinsic, that is, inherent in the students' nature. Intrinsic motivation is where a

student is curious and wants to find out. A prop at the beginning of a lesson is helpful in this case. In one Introduction to Sociology and Psychology class I had a live prop—a nine-month old baby. The baby was to demonstrate cognitive development which would then initiate discussion. There was a plan B for the mother to leave if baby became uncomfortable with the situation. He was very cute, the students loved him, he enjoyed the attention, and it was a successful lesson. Another motivational idea to start a lesson about genes and hereditary traits was to ask which students had the ability to roll their tongues upward into a U shape. Only about two thirds of any given population can do this. After much tongue rolling and laughing, the lesson proceeded.

I believe that wanting to succeed is the best motivation for students. I have observed that senior secondary students, especially those who want to go on to tertiary study, have a personal objective to succeed at pre-tertiary level. I believe too that to have control as a reason for assessment is questionable. Some teachers would say if the end justifies the means then it is permissible. For example, to insist that students complete a task in order to be able to sit an exam may be acceptable, but that they must modify their behaviour in order to have marked work returned is not.

*My third narrative: Ethical dilemmas that fly in the faces of teacher-assessors*

In the college where I teach, a teacher may have a range of responsibilities whilst marking, advising and grading students' work. She is required to give feedback to parents. She writes reports in early May of each year addressed to each student and expects parents or guardians to read them too. Her reports indicate her students' progress within their chosen subjects, and their general behaviour such as attendance, punctuality, and preparation for class. In this particular college, the first reporting time is when her students are allowed to change courses if they are experiencing difficulties, or have other legitimate reasons such as the chosen course not leading to their preferred pathway. A reason for delaying course changes is to give students time to settle in and to determine whether a change is merely a spur of the moment whim. A teacher writes a second report after mid-year exams in which she is more specific regarding grades. She invites parents to attend face-to-face meetings with pastoral care teachers and subject teachers. Repeatedly, she finds that problems such as chronic lateness or missing assignments, which parents need to be alerted to, are

not able to be solved because some parents do not attend her meetings. She must then resort to telephoning the parents.

A teacher provides both formal and informal feedback as oral or written advice to students. It is essential for her to write comments on the written work students present for her to assess, as they constantly want to know their marks and how to improve those marks. She provides on-going informal assessment within the classroom during the year and engages in verbal feedback to fully explain reasons for a particular grading. Information from students regarding satisfaction with teaching methods and subjects is discussed further in Chapter 5, Assessment and Expectant Students, *My Classroom Research*.

In order to indicate a student's place within a class, a teacher must show rankings and comparisons. This responds to school policy for reporting—rankings and comparisons, usually expressed in percentiles, appear as bubbles on lines in reports sent home to parents. In some reports, a teacher might categorise a student's place within a class as 'very good', 'good', 'satisfactory', or 'needs improvement'. As teacher-assessor I wanted to have 'excellent' as a descriptor. Some of my students deserved better than 'very good'. I found it puzzling, as well as distressing, that the system would not allow me to acknowledge the genius of some of my students. Biesta's view of teaching is that teaching should be understood as a "gift" and that giving this gift is precisely the point of the school, the place of teaching (2012, p. 41). It seems that my gift of teaching was impossibly compromised. In the reporting system of assessment I describe, the gift of the teacher is separated from the honour of assessing students.

Some students find it very difficult at exam time because they are enrolled in year eleven and have never sat an exam before. One year, I had three students who broke down and completely went to pieces—one girl was physically upset to the point of extreme nausea and vomiting. Other students breeze through and actually enjoy being able to show what they have learnt. If the final results rely on a once-off, end of year exam, some students may suffer a distinct disadvantage. If teachers assess the progress of students continuously throughout the year, students may realise more equitable results.

As assessor, a teacher wants to evaluate prior learning, especially when students come from various feeder high schools to senior secondary colleges. One cannot assume that students have been taught to a level of knowledge, skills and understanding of particular subjects that feeder schools might have promised.

A teacher of pre-tertiary subjects must survey a student's capacity to deal with the demands of her subject. As this is the first time she meets her student, she has not had the benefit of observing her student over the four previous years of her student's learning. Her subject syllabus dictates a certain pace of delivery in order to cover the topics the syllabus requires to be eventually examined. In this case, she carries out a general assessment early in the course to gauge areas in which her student shows strength or weakness. At subject meetings, some teachers have told me they make the first assessment task rather difficult in order to discourage students who may not do well in the final outcome. These teachers might encourage such students to attempt a less demanding subject.

To discourage or deny students the opportunity to engage with a subject of their choice flies in the face of the TRBT's principles of justice and integrity. Some students struggle initially with learning pre-tertiary subjects, and then go on to do well as the year progresses. I do not wish to suggest that all student ought to gain entry to the choice and level they choose. Rather I would not wish that they fail. I would wish them to flourish.

High university entrance scores attained by pre-tertiary students enhance teachers' professional reputations as well as the school's — a rather superficial measure of teacher ability which nevertheless inevitably occurs. When the TQA external exam results become available, high scoring students' names and their schools appear in local newspapers. The *Hobart Mercury*, for example, lists students with the top 100 tertiary entrance scores. Reports in the media regarding students' attainments influence public perception of which schools are the most successful. It might be a worthy activity to acknowledge success publicly. Nevertheless there are many teachers who remain un-acclaimed for battling to get less academically able students across the line. In lack of acknowledgement, I sense injustice.

As well as motivating students, giving feedback to students and parents, ranking students, and completing administrative tasks, the teacher prepares students for the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) which was first available in 2009. The certificate is based on students achieving a minimum standard of literacy, numeracy, knowledge of information communication technology, and pathway planning for their continuing education.

‘High flyers’ pose few problems for assessment. Mostly such students are self-motivated and goal-oriented. In contrast, teachers need to vigorously encourage and support less motivated students in foundation classes. Some teachers may unintentionally award ‘sympathy’ marks to a student who has worked incredibly hard, for example, or has overcome some difficulty. An award may be intentional to motivate that student or to recognise and reward effort. When Biesta visited Tasmania this year for dialogue with my fellow researchers, we discussed his proposition for awards for effort anticipated by the sensible, gifted teacher. He sees no ethical problem with rewarding a student for the effort which has gone into a task even if the end result is not as good as a student’s work where that student made little effort (Stewarts Bay, Tasmania, October 3-5, 2013).

One teacher’s anecdote shared at this dialogue related her dilemma in relation to a student whose essay other teachers might have graded ‘fail’. The teacher anticipated that this student had potential which could be unlocked. She awarded a strong pass. Her judgement proved to be right and the student then lived up to her expectations. Her sensitive insight and awareness might have come from the kind of knowledge that one develops as a teacher, that to which van Manen gives the Dutch word *mensenkennis*. In his article, “Pedagogy, Virtue, and Narrative Identity in Teaching,” van Manen refers to *mensenkennis* as

A kind of wisdom about how people are and how they tend to act and react in specific situations—the significance of people’s frailties, strengths, difficulties and life circumstances. It is a practical kind of knowledge of how people’s actions relate to motives, intentions, emotions, feelings and moods. (1996, p.138)

When assessing students with disabilities teachers are called to draw from *mensenkennis*. They express concerns about assessment procedures if a curriculum

has been modified for such students, and how assessment of modified material can then be judged against external assessment measures. Kathryn Romano and Catherine Chambliss (2000, p. 2) surveyed educators' and administrators' attitudes toward inclusive educational practices and found that teachers involved in inclusive programs urgently needed information regarding the practical impact on learning and behaviour of particular disabilities, best teaching practice and guidelines on permissible assessment variations. Inclusion specialists list parental involvement and collaboration with school staff as key components of inclusive education. It is important to assess not the students but what they do.

Assessing all class members fairly is a task that faces teachers every day. Assessment is not always clear-cut. I know of a brilliant student whose grades were low because his handwriting was appallingly difficult to read. Criteria-based assessment, of the kind that allows grading of different aspects of a student's work, such as presentation, working in groups, research methods, work handed in on time, is, for me, a positive idea. The teacher can formulate tasks where each member of her class can excel in some way. Seeing students in a positive light, with a "halo effect", could change her perceptions of the ways she assesses what they do.

Like other teachers from government and non-government schools, a teacher takes part in an external marking process at the end of each academic year. In my experience as Chief Marking Examiner (CME) for Sociology, the moderation procedure works very well. Discussions are held, resources exchanged, and moderation is generally a positive professional learning experience. Whether employed by the State Department of Education or by non-government schools, in the midst of such discussions, a teacher-educator-assessor finds herself encouraged to teach to required standards.

When assessing their students, teachers must self-assess to review and check the ethical relation of their human agency. The TQA conducts external audits of both syllabi and teachers of non-pre-tertiary subjects. For the audits, teachers provide examples of students' work and explain the awards they make. This encourages teachers to undergo self-appraisal as well as peer appraisal within their workplaces. Teachers' goals are likely to be teacher-oriented and imply a nexus between their teaching and desired student outcomes. Annas refers us to a theory of "right" action,

a notion of duty and obligation. “Right” has two senses, “barely acceptable” and “exemplary,” but it is naive to expect a virtuous or ethical teacher to do one or the other if virtue can be learned, and therefore constitute continuous development (2011a, p. 41). Peter Drucker (2006) differentiates “doing things right” and “doing the right thing.” There is no point to carry out a strategy if the policy is not “right” in the first place (p.192). There is little point in requiring teachers to assess according to pre-determined standards if the virtue of the teacher is absent.

### *Encountering virtue and eudaimonism in school cultures*

In this section, I discuss several contexts of teachers’ assessment roles in various teaching systems. I believe that many of my colleagues would say that in Tasmania the general public perceives that non-government schools are superior to government schools. There are so many different schools and types of schools though that, it seems to me, believing in such superiority can hardly be justified. More than that, what other distinctions might make justifying superiority possible? For example, does one school being superior to another depend upon the culture, ethics and values of that school, its leader and its teachers?

Australia has a dual system of education. There are government and non-government schools both of which are funded by the Federal Government to different degrees. Prior to 1964 there was no direct funding to the States for education. The States received non-regulated taxation concessions to dispense for State provided services. However, Section 96 of the Australian Constitution does provide that “the Parliament may grant financial assistance to any State on such terms and conditions as the Parliament thinks fit” (Marilyn Harrington, 2013, p. 2). Federal grants to the States can be major revenue sources for them and generally have become tied to agreements to implement certain Federal policies within the States. For instance, the most recent national school funding reform is inspired by and detailed in the Gonski Review (2013) which recommends balancing the distribution of funds for education to bring greater advantage to disadvantaged students. The Federal Government so far has adopted Gonski’s recommendations which Australians expect to be implemented in 2014.

Non-government institutions encompass small cottage schools as well as Catholic, Anglican and Quaker schools. I have experienced employment in both

government and non-government schools. In this section I develop two case studies which I draw from my lived experience. I portray the ethics and values of leadership in the orientations of the principals of the schools and of the teachers as leaders in their own right.

I am keeping before me, the five ethical principles that the TRBT encoded: dignity, respect, integrity, empathy, and justice. Though these principles could be ‘feel good’ principles, in my mind and being, they are principles that teachers might not only model for students but reward their own personal fulfillment. We teachers cannot wait around for pleasant feelings, according to Annas. We must clear out of the way passive conceptions of “pleasant feelings and desire-satisfaction” and be concerned with *eudaimonia*, the sense of which she derives from being virtuous, “Enjoyment lies in active engagement with what we are doing and how we are living” (2011, p.165).

I set out to focus on virtue and eudemonism within school cultures. Some school principals gave verbal informed consent to speak with me in unstructured interviews about their day-to-day running of their school organisations. I use pseudonyms to protect the identity and integrity of persons I interviewed. My observations take place over five years in the non-government sector, and sixteen years in the government sector, and at one stage I was simultaneously employed part-time in a government district high school, and a catholic single gender school. When I began this course of inquiry, I held a certain conviction that leadership has a ratchet effect through to teachers and I wanted to test my belief. A ratchet effect is analogous to the cogs that hold a spring tight as it is wound up — it does not fall back. In planning there is a propensity to continue any trends. I pursued the questioning of my conviction and this questioning has become a strong theme in my thesis.

When I worked in the non-government school, which I describe below, I was undertaking a university course in social research, and at the same time ruminating over questions of leadership. It was while I came to work in the government school that I found myself making comparisons with the non-government school. In the next section of this chapter, I align my experience of observing effects of leadership on teaching in the two kinds of schools that I ‘lived’ and worked in.

My observations have yielded qualitative data and my commentary is interpretive within the traditions and language of being a teacher able to discern and distinguish many nuances of teacher behavior. In interpreting the attitudes that principals and teachers reveal to me during my observing, I endeavour to maintain some distance from the events I relate so that my subjectivity might not overwhelm my commentary with personal bias. I am like everyone else, subject to traditions of language and culture. As Gadamer suggests, as historical beings we all have our own structures of understanding including prejudice, bias, beliefs and values. In a thesis such as this I invite readers to acknowledge my individual being. As I continue to pursue how links between ideologies and moral codes of educational organisations might ultimately affect the assessment of their students, I hope to reveal more of understanding and self-understanding of being an ethical teacher-assessor.

I set off first with a brief overview of the social stratification that affects school populations in Tasmania and that realistically must in the long term affect assessment. Then before I describe my experiences at two different schools, I mention various places of my employment to illustrate some acquaintance with diverse styles of leadership.

In schools where I was teaching, students came from different socio-economic areas. It is the case where I now teach as well. Some of my observations stem from having worked at a government co-educational high school, which catered for years seven to twelve, where students are usually aged between twelve and sixteen, with enrolments from a Housing Department area as well as a middle class suburb. Housing Department suburbs in Tasmania are usually built from scratch on greenfield land, and are made up entirely of welfare housing of several hundred dwellings. I found a stigma attached to living in such a suburb, as the address denotes that the occupant is a welfare recipient. Lately there has been some in-fill welfare housing in established neighbourhoods. This brought me to close consideration of the implications of State and Federal Housing agreements which had been established after the Second World War and still continue today.

I came to recognise differences that occurred in middle class suburban areas where residents had their own homes, and I learned that addresses there were not considered quite as desirable as in the more elite neighbourhoods I would drive

through on the way from my house in the bush to my work. The district high school where I taught had students ranging from kindergarten to year ten though it was still called a high school. District high schools are located in rural areas and have populations from outlying regions. The majority of students come from local farming communities, some from alternative life styles, some whose parents commute from rural areas to the city each day for work, and some students who have been expelled from urban high schools.

Socio-economic groups are generally classified in accordance with occupations and lifestyles, ranging from professional, managerial and non-manual occupations to skilled manual and unskilled manual ones. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has developed a Standard Classification of Occupations into eight major groups: managers, professionals, technicians and trades workers, community and personal service workers, sales workers, machinery operators and drivers, and labourers.

During the early time of my research I learnt that generally speaking, the higher up the list, the more status and prestige is enjoyed. Sociologists identify class as a type of social stratification. Put simplistically it would be upper, middle and lower or working class. Other sociologists extend this to have, for example, upper-middle class, middle-middle class and lower-middle class. An underclass can be identified, and many of the so-called working class may be unemployed. I can see that the class of a student's family can influence that student's schooling, and therefore assessment, and prospective employment, intelligence notwithstanding.

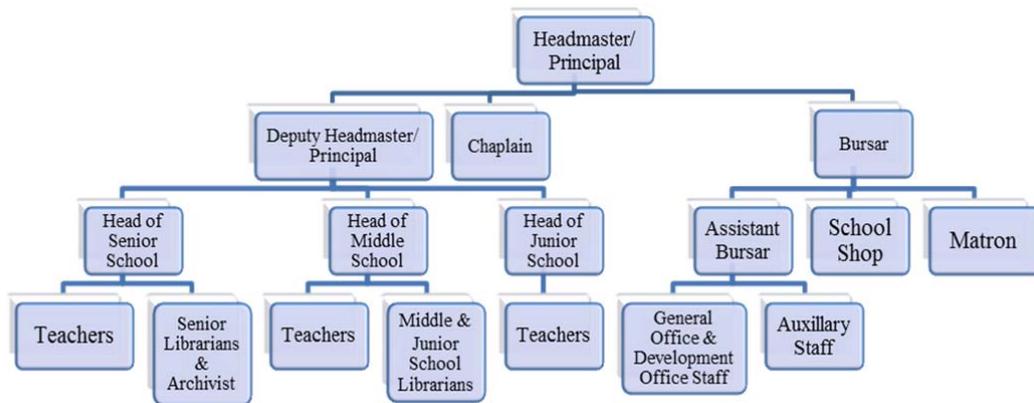
A particular private, or non-government school, which I call Acacia, where I was employed for five years, is a single gender, prestigious establishment catering for kindergarten to year twelve. The school is considered prestigious because high fees preclude lower socio-economic students unless they are very bright and are awarded scholarships. Prospective students and their parents are interviewed to ascertain their suitability. Many of the students come from a nearby high socio-economic status suburb where house prices are high, both parents have professions, and two cars, probably top of the market late models, in the garage.

The government senior secondary college which I refer to as Hakea, where I am presently teaching, has a wide range of feeder schools. It attracts students from out of area as well, especially in performing arts. Many students who started out in college drama productions have gone on to make names for themselves as actors and singers, interstate and overseas. One such ex-student is Essie Davis who has the leading role of Miss Phryne Fisher in the very popular television series *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* set in 1920s Melbourne and based on Australian women's crime author Kerry Greenwood's books. Miss Fisher's character is elegant, adventurous and clever. Davis, with her naturally curly auburn hair was a Hakea girl. In a totally different role, she brilliantly portrayed the harridan wife of Vermeer in the film *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. Students like Essie build the college's good reputation, and attract local high schools and the general public to College productions. Such a good reputation must be due in some regard to the leadership culture of the college.

I draw attention now particularly to relationships between principals and staff in Acacia and Hakea. I relate my observations of the ethics that 'leaders' in these schools adopted in their agency of leading. If I am to continue to convince myself that leadership of an institution has far-reaching effects on the culture of organisations, and consequently, significantly affects teaching staff, as well as non-teaching staff, and flows on to students, I can only write of and question my own experiences. Others might have quite different perceptions, depending on where they have taught. To help me situate the styles of leadership to which I will be referring, I begin with a study of flowcharts which show the hierarchy or status of employees in two of the institutions I focus on — a single gender prestigious non-government school, Acacia and a co-educational government senior secondary college, Hakea. The narratives serve simply to form the contexts for my lived experience as I am coming to understand notions of cultural and ethical leadership of schools in which assessment takes place.

I propose that educational practices are largely framed according to the culture of the school. If teachers are restricted in decision-making as I suggest occurs in non-government schools, they are denied the role of making judgments about educational purpose. During my time in the non-government school, there were, and my contacts tell me there still are, three distinct classes of people. The headmaster/principal and

bursar enjoyed high status and had decision-making power with input from heads of senior, middle and junior schools. They enjoyed common educational and social backgrounds, and certain privileges, as well as obligations, that were attached to their roles. I will elaborate on these privileges and responsibilities later. Office and bookroom staff appeared to be lower down in the “pecking order” and had little say in the way they carry out their tasks. Lower were cooks, cleaners and groundsmen. Figure 3 illustrates the hierarchy of non-government school employees as I experienced.



**Figure 3 Non-Government School Hierarchy of Employees**

Sound practice these days dictates that employees are treated with respect, however menial their jobs. The classic sociological study, the Hawthorne Effect, commonly referred to as the Observer Effect, backs the practice of socially supportive workplace environments. The Hawthorne Studies were carried out between 1927 and 1932 to see if Western Electric factory workers would become more productive in higher or lower levels of light. The pioneering research suggests that productivity increased when interest was shown in the workers and consequently their morale was raised (Michael Rose, 1975). Critics of the Hawthorne Studies’ human relations approach might argue that wider social or economic systems have been overlooked. Recent studies though, for instance by Louis Tay and Ed Diener (2011), found that positive feelings were most associated with fulfilment of social basic needs, including respect. It is somewhat ironic that studies continue to refer to the early Hawthorne Studies, affirming their veritable adage—their finding that

makes memorable sense and is considered true by many people according to their experience of life.

In the non-government school, the nature of school leadership was such that the headmaster had an educational leadership role and responsibility for teaching staff. The bursar had a financial and facilities manager role responsible for lower paid non-educational staff. They were both answerable to the school's board of management, which was very much behind the scenes. The public face of the school was the headmaster. Staff used to refer to him as 'headmaster' though by the time of writing, he may now be referred to as 'principal' for today's demand for political correctness. Behind his back, the headmaster was referred to as 'the boss' as if he were the head of a business organisation. The headmaster and bursar had differing authority in the school — the headmaster had educational authority, the bursar financial authority and both or either might easily have controlled school power. The bursar's management mirrored the businesslike orientation of the school. The School Board provides the principal with a house near the school, a car and a parking space.

Boarding house kitchen staff, at times substitute mothers to the boarders, had little standing because their occupation is considered mundane. A type of uniform-cum-coverall identified them, and, of course, their low remuneration reflected the occupation. I was uncomfortable during my time at the non-government school observing kitchen staff members going from boarding house to office, daily, about 500 metres, to wash morning tea crockery that teachers and office staff used.

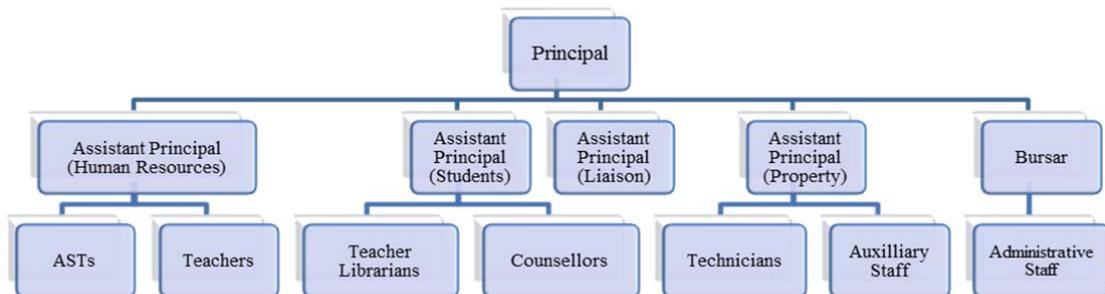
I recollect that groundsmen were sometimes called upon to take charge of students who were in detention. The principal had considered this to be a last resort. Gardeners were not trained in behaviour management, although they might have had children of their own and would have had some experience in looking after wayward boys. It did seem to me that the gardeners were effective in managing deviant students. This role of the gardeners was not common knowledge.

The boarding house staff and groundsmen of the school were not included in any festivities, for example a morning tea to farewell a teacher, in spite of perhaps having known that teacher for many years. General meetings were for teachers and the chief librarian only. Anyone ranked lower in the hierarchy than a teacher, did not attend,

certainly not any office staff, and therefore they had no voice, though much of the agenda related to matters that involved all staff.

Hierarchical structures in non-government schools come out of school historicity and cultural traditions which, in turn, influence the expectations of school parents, the community and the Board. The school prospers from public narratives of students' successes in university, work, or the community. Such endeavour toward success, I venture, must affect the ways the school conducts assessments. In contrast, the government school where I work has a flatter organisation (see Figure 4). In my present workplace I believe a feeling of equality exists. All employees have status in the government organisation. The school values auxiliary staff, like teacher aides, gardeners and canteen workers, as much as advanced skills teachers (ASTs), regardless of their positions.

Theoretically, teachers are subordinate to ASTs, but I have drawn them as co-workers, along with librarians and office staff because the climate is such at the college that all are treated as equals. Everybody joins in special morning teas and lunches and in the staff photo for the school magazine. In the non-government school, separate photos for groups of staff were taken, commensurate with status, and auxiliary staff members were usually excluded.



**Figure 4 Government School Hierarchy of Employees**

Although my current principal is answerable to the district and ultimately to the Education Department, he enjoys a mostly autonomous position within the school. Staff refer to him by his first name. He has high visibility within the school. He

regularly walks through the buildings and around the grounds, and he takes classes if there is a need, something the non-government school headmaster never did. The willingness to help out indicates a sense of teamwork.

In this school I experience a culture of fairness, exhibited by its leader. The principal's door is always open, literally and figuratively. Everyone can go into his office and talk to him with the knowledge that he is open to ideas and suggestions. He has shown on many occasions that he is willing to "go in to bat" for staff members. At the non-government school, I had to first make an appointment with the headmaster's secretary, whose office forms an anteroom to an office beyond, which incidentally, has its own toilet and washroom. That is not to say that once inside the rather luxurious suite, I did not get a fair hearing. I was treated courteously, and given ample time, but I perceived a difficulty finding a mutually agreeable appointment time.

The leadership of schools affects the qualities of teachers in each system. If the organisation is administratively regulated, or over-regulated, then a certain amount of potential would be suppressed, but perhaps operations would run more smoothly. Conversely, prior to being employed in a non-government school, teachers would have to undergo rigorous interviews and may have been headhunted, which would indicate a high level of professionalism. Teachers' qualifications are listed in the year book, *Virtus*. The principal or the board of a non-government school can remove an unsatisfactory teacher or not renew a contract. Teachers in a government school are emancipated in many ways. They can be reasonably autonomous and can enjoy tenure, unless they commit some heinous act. Therefore a mediocre teacher is quite safe from being fired. Parents would not know what qualifications teachers in a government school have.

Non-government school principals have more autonomy to 'lead'. Government school principals are hamstrung to some extent. They cannot hire or fire and must answer to the Department of Education and the Government in power, where personnel in charge change frequently according to public elections. Government school principals have little continuity of school tradition to strengthen them to 'lead'.

The differences and the commonalities I observe in my two schools lead me to some questions. How smoothly would the non-government school run if it had to accept all-comers, instead of interviewing and screening prospective students with their parents, and offering scholarships to cream off brighter students from government schools? How much better would a government school be if a principal could hire and fire? How much better would Annas' idea of "flourishing" rather than "languishing" teachers be? I am preoccupied with these questions because they are at the very heart of my questioning of ethical practices of assessment.

The leadership roles in the two schools I have been describing might be different, but appear to be appropriate for their particular circumstances and cultural traditions. It is difficult to find agreement on what constitutes successful leadership in schools. Much literature on leadership is associated with large corporations, and while there are many similarities, we need to remember that principals and teachers are dealing not with products, but with children, that is, with developing individuals.

Leadership can variously be described as a position of authority or a personal set of characteristics. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines leadership as "the dignity, office, or position of a leader; also ability to lead". Brian Hannaford, author of *A Risky Business: Changing a Secondary School* (1986) writes of his own experiences as principal of Marion High School in South Australia. He maintains that if a principal forfeits responsibility, the leadership function will be replaced with an adaptive role which lacks expert status, and is less rewarding (p. 6). He goes on to argue that, however effective and democratic committees may be in administration of schools, leadership is pivotal. He visited about 300 schools in fifteen countries, and the best schools, according to him,

...had principals whose own outlook was student-centred, and who believed in themselves as the signal persons who should be giving educational leadership. Conversely, when this was not so, sometimes in spite of the work of some brilliant teachers, the general atmosphere of the school was not conducive to learning and the tone of the staff and students was usually restless, lacking in direction and confidence and, in the worse cases, the schools were unhappy, unproductive places where rebellion and conflict were conspicuous. (p. 338)

In relation to my inquiry then, I ask, might such an “unhappy, unproductive” school be forced to focus on managing the behaviour of students, and staff, before attending to matters of ethical student assessment?

Many attest to the belief that ‘born leaders’ who have charisma are influential. Other traits ‘born leaders’ are believed to possess are courage, good judgement, flexibility, intelligence, and analytical thinking (John Grivas, Linda Carter and Jannine Bennett 1996, p. 264). Appearance could be important too. Women in authority are advised to ‘power-dress’. In other words, women should not dress in a feminine way with frills, tucks, bows, lace, ribbon and jewellery, but more business-like, perhaps they should wear a slack-suit. Solid colours are recommended, and fussy, flowery patterns are to be avoided. It is impossible to wear clothes without transmitting social signals, writes Desmond Morris (1980, p. 213).

I remember when I was a student, some teachers wore their black academic gowns in the classroom. Now gowns are usually only worn on speech nights. I recall as a beginning teacher, I was somewhat daunted whenever I had to confront a ‘difficult’ year ten class, where I perceived the boys to be enormously tall and intimidating. I took to wearing a bright red blouse, which I considered gave me clout, or at least I felt more in command. I did not resort to wearing broad shoulder pads though. However one dresses as a teacher, dress conveys an impression of a teacher’s or a leader’s status. It seems not far different from Morris’ reminders that in Renaissance Germany, women were punished for dressing above their station, and in early New England, a woman was forbidden to wear a silk scarf unless her husband was worth a thousand dollars (p. 217). It is not surprising that today we are still confounded by the messages that teachers and leaders convey through charisma, dress and bearing. I ask now, in terms of coming to understand connections between leaders, leading, and relationships amongst staff and students that influence matters of assessment, how deliberate are we in structuring and according status to one another through such traditions as dress, stature and charisma?

The way leaders dress sends different signals to those who are led—who may perceive dominance or weakness, dignity or carelessness, or integrity or mediocrity, in whichever way judge dress. It makes sense to believe that those who are led wish a leader to act and through acting gain their respect. Leading in action could demand

a variety of abilities which can be generic, even when the frame of reference shifts. A leader's action could be modelling, directing, facilitating, negotiating, improvising, diagnosing or evaluating. The list goes on. How a school leader represents the school culture has consequences for the ethical traditions a school might claim for its reputation. What kind of tradition is a principal suggesting when he turns up in jeans and runners, for instance? There was one talent I greatly admired in the headmaster of the non-government school where I taught. He was not one to bumble or speak clumsily, which makes the listener cringe. He was able to get up in front of any large audience and deliver a witty, entertaining and informative speech, engender confidence in himself as a principal and draw respect. Whether he was a 'born leader' or not, I might never know.

There are, of course, many other labels attributed to styles of leadership. Peter Senge (1993) observed that leaders who are just speech-makers fit the traditional view of leaders as special people, which is based on myth and an assumption of people's powerlessness (p. 340). He describes leaders as designers, stewards and teachers, in a new view of leadership where people can expand their capabilities. The leader as designer must develop vision, values, and purpose or mission (p. 343). The leader as steward has a sense of purpose and an ability to lead. The leader as teacher is not so much about teaching, as fostering learning for everyone (p. 356), and this is empowering. It is obvious that a manager is not necessarily a leader, and vice versa. Titles of leader, manager, director or supervisor designate formal authority and responsibility.

Whilst this is not a thesis about leadership, it is going to be helpful for my inquiry about ethics of assessment in schools to portray leadership qualities that influence a school's *ethos*. Leading, as Senge says, is to bring ethics into shared vision, values and purpose. What does make a good leader? Talent? Charisma? Influence? Power? Moral standing? Humour, even? Sir Winston Churchill led with his stance of opposing 'appeasement' policies in World War II. There may well have been a very different outcome had he not done this. I like the words in his famous speech to the House of Commons in September 1941,

I see it said that leaders should keep their ears to the ground. All I can say is that the British nation will find it very hard to look up to leaders who are detected in that somewhat ungainly posture.

Leaders who are acquainted with what is going on around them and who pay attention to their subordinates, will find their position more tenable than a leader who thinks power comes automatically. In relation to the question of power in education, one might suggest that a good leader has power, but in most school systems, principals apply for the job, win it and are then designated formal authority and therefore power. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, a sociologist who examined gender dynamics within an organisation, points out that most of us know that power does “not necessarily come automatically with the designation of leaders, with the delegation of formal authority” (1977, p. 165). Her study, carried out over five years, found that power comes from a more hidden process. Kanter calls it a loaded term, but defines power as the ability to get things done, to mobilise resources needed for the goals that a person is attempting to meet. Talcott Parsons (1960) moves from the individual to society as a whole and defines power as,

...the capacity to mobilize the resources of the society for the attainment of goals for which a general “public” commitment has been made, or may be made. (pp. 220-1)

Dr. William Edwards Deming (1986) disagrees that the attainment of goals is where the power and authority of a leader lies. Deming links leadership and management, and says that management should eliminate goals and standards because they cap performance. Setting goals gives people permission to stop and wait for the next goal, they give only what is asked for, though capable of more. He goes on to submit that it depends on whether reinforcement is positive or negative. If a leader encourages only the latter, people will do enough to get by in order to escape or avoid the consequences of not meeting goals. They will attain or exceed goals as a means of receiving positive reinforcement. Some teachers may have a pact with students — I won't work too hard, you won't work too hard. Some teachers may be leaders, some may be managers.

Does power matter greatly if leaders encourage teachers to build ‘warm climate’ classrooms which have a welcoming and supportive atmosphere? In a warm climate

classroom, I observe teachers leading their students in the class without being authoritarian. Richard Harnish offers an example of the difference between warm and cold climate classrooms. Note the changes in wording and the difference in tone in the second instance.

#### **A Cold Climate Notice**

Office Hours: 8:30 – 9:30 am jbloggs@edu.edu If you need to contact me, you may email me or contact the department and leave a message. I will return your call.

#### **A Warm Climate Notice**

Student Hours: 8:30 – 9:30 am jbloggs@edu.edu Individual assistance is always available by appointment. I look forward to seeing you during student hours. Stop in. (2011, p. 26)

Richard Harnish, Rory McElwee, Jeanne Slattery, Sue Frantz, Michelle Haney, Cecilia Shore, and Julie Penley (2011, pp. 25-27) suggest six strategies for ‘warming’. These are: tone, rationale, self-disclosure, humour, compassion and enthusiasm. Tone reveals itself in positive and friendly language for students to feel at ease. If students know the reasons for assessment and how it relates to their personal goals, they are more likely to be positive about set tasks. Rationale for completing assigned tasks motivates their intention. Self-disclosure encourages sharing experiences — sometimes it is helpful to provide concrete examples rather than theoretical ones. Humour always wins attention. It often relieves tension in student-teacher relationships. I liberally use cartoons, jokes and anecdotes appropriate to the topic in my classes. I return to humour in depth in Chapter 6. Can these six strategies integrate rigour, discipline and purpose in the best interests of educating young people? Might such strategies produce more humanly charged outcomes than exercise of power and control and attainment of goals?

If schools desire these kinds of warm climate classrooms to flourish, in what ways might school leaders deal with the formal authorities designated to them, including formal assessment requirements? I return to my experience of the two leaders and their dispositions. Annas makes the point that “virtues are dispositions worthy of a distinct kind of admiration, which inspire us to aspire to them as ideals ...[and that] virtue requires a commitment to value” (2011a, p. 6).

The headmaster of the non-government school was committed to upholding the tradition and reputation of the school, which was not difficult because his students came mostly from elite families who expected their boys to go on to the more elite sectors of university education, that is the professional faculties, and a professional occupation. He valued these goals of academic excellence and this influenced his attitude towards assessment, which was for his students to gain the highest possible tertiary entrance scores and fulfill their parents' expectations.

The principal of the government school on the other hand, has an *ethos* which regards matters of assessment more broadly. Many of his students will not attend university. They will probably progress to semi-professional, semi-skilled or unskilled occupations, or remain unemployed. His disposition is to give all students, whatever their background, the opportunity to realise their potential. I admire him for being a compassionate person.

#### *A virtuous and courageous teacher*

Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful.

Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (1623, Act III, Scene I)

Virtuous teachers and leaders show compassion. Students are not exempt from unexpected life events such as family upsets or illness, which affect their demeanour. While ethical assessment cannot allow a teacher to evaluate a student's work on the basis of feeling sorry for that student, a teacher can take into account such trials and reschedule a test or in-class essay.

An empathetic teacher is rewarded when mutual understanding evolves between a teacher and her student. Students recognise an approachable teacher and there can truly be understanding between both parties. I do not think it is too big a leap to draw the conclusion that empathy has far reaching benefits. Studies in New South Wales (Stephen Dinham, 2000, pp. 18-36) have shown that most teachers gain satisfaction from the intrinsic rewards of teaching, the feeling of a job well done. Annas reinforces this idea, "Enjoyment is felt most when we are engaged in goal-directed activities, where achieving the goal typically involves responding to feedback" (2011b, p. 106). In a relationship of mutual understanding a teacher is able to gain a sense of her self, who she is, what she stands for. She can experience

something of her own dignity and become open to revealing the truthfulness of her personal integrity. As my understanding and questioning unfolds, might Annas help me see more, and see the ways that ethical principles of empathy connect with principles of integrity?

Some teachers I work with think that their subject takes precedence over all other subjects. I have experienced students in my class asking me if they could finish an essay during my class time with them because their essay is due to be passed in to another subject teacher. I hear them say, “She is harder than you and she will be angry with me”. Or instead of doing the work I want them to do with me, I hear, “Do I have to? I’ve got a maths test next lesson and I have to revise.” Although I might sympathise, I insist that, at year 11 and 12 level, students are responsible for their own learning and need to manage their time. As a virtuous teacher, I call them into responsibility and respect — in this case, they can show respect through managing their use of time appropriately. Annas prompts me to consider that “for a disposition to be a virtue, possessing it involves the person’s orientation to something the person takes to be valuable” (2011a, p. 6). Along with developing mutual understandings between teacher and student, where dignity, integrity and empathy become visible, so might respect, as an ethical principle, come into the interplay and connectedness of a teacher’s ethical orientation toward her students and her school community. I come closer to understanding the notion that living ethics cannot be theorised. Living ethics is an event lived in experience.

Remarkable, virtuous and courageous teachers exist in my lived experience. I describe three of them to counterbalance some of the negative portrayals that occur in my thesis and to affirm my understanding of what constitutes a truly virtuous person. There are very different ways of being virtuous and how a virtuous person might present. The following portraits illustrate some events from real life.

Mr W, my high school maths teacher, sometimes called students up to the front of the class to write answers on the blackboard. I was chosen. It was algebra. I had not been paying attention and did not have a clue what the solution was. My back was to the class but I could hear murmuring, then tittering amongst my peers. The more I tried to figure out the problem, the more my thoughts became confused and tears welled up in my eyes. Sensing my distress, my teacher surreptitiously wrote

the answer, C<sup>2</sup>, on my hand as he gave me the chalk. I was profoundly grateful to my empathetic teacher who saved me from derision. I clearly recall this seemingly insignificant event which demonstrated a compassionate, virtuous teacher.

An example of a brave teacher, who is unafraid to take on a challenge, is a close colleague who runs a vocational education class for job readiness. She has a saying which guides her intake of students, “everyone deserves a second chance”. She bravely accepts students, mostly boys, who have been overlooked by other VET teachers because of a history of behavioural problems or truancy. She is not indifferent to the boys’ lack of motivation. She aims for them to reach their potential in order to ensure some kind of meaningful future employment. She admits that the class can be very trying at times and her success rate is not as high as she might wish. She is a truly virtuous teacher as she aspires to give “a second chance” by providing support, being insistent about completing activities, and having expectations of the students.

My third portrait is of a pre-tertiary geography teacher. I recognize that this teacher is virtuous, but I find the reasons somewhat of an enigma and therefore not easy to specify or describe any particular event. He has never to my knowledge raised his voice in class. He is not uncaring, nor particularly effusive. The students like and respect him. They enjoy his subject probably because he likes it and is enthusiastic about it, and they appreciate the varied ways he delivers the lessons. He maintains a positive, non-threatening learning environment and most students achieve well at the end of year exams. I conclude that this benign, articulate, albeit quietly-spoken teacher has mastered the skill of appropriate responses to classroom situations in which he finds himself, and is thereby virtuous.

I imagine Annas would consider that these teachers have acquired and exercised virtue in their everyday life, and that virtue will be part of their intrinsic satisfaction.

Some of Dinham’s ideas in his article, “Teacher Satisfaction in an Age of Change”, include the need for teachers to: receive feedback from their subject departments as well as from their students, have their students gain good results through positive means, and have their subject department and their school community support their educational initiatives. Dinham advises school leaders and

teachers to work at breaking down the traditional and competitive barriers they erect between subject departments, such as subject status, student and class numbers, battling for monies for professional development, and competing to get the most highly skilled students into their classes. He encourages positive co-operation amongst all teachers, avoidance of internal competition, and promotion of the idea of everybody winning. If a school's leaders and teachers were to lead supportive feedback practices to engage one another in cooperative activities rather than competitive ones, are they apt to be more strengthened in applying humanly ethical principles—such as dignity, integrity, empathy, respect and justice — courageously?

Parker J. Palmer, in his book *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*, says that “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (1998, p. 10). As a virtuous and courageous teacher, might one, as Palmer says, choose integrity? If I choose integrity, he says, “I become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am” (p. 14). If I acknowledge the whole of who I am, I acknowledge my capacity for ethical agency in embracing dignity, respect, integrity, empathy and justice.

### *Ethics as events*

Andy Hargreaves, in “Rethinking educational change” (1997, pp. 3-25) suggests that relationships between students and teachers, parents and schools are largely determined by the leadership and teaching culture of the school. He categorises these relationships into four broad types: market-based, managerial, personal and cultural. The market-based relationship treats parents as clients and consumers. The principal of a market-based school is clearly catering for middle to upper class clients, depending on the prestige of the school. Parents are articulate and well organised and can exert considerable influence on the school. This can serve their best interests and their own section of the community. The non-government school headmaster that I describe could fit this category. I did learn however, whilst employed by the non-government school, that some parents sacrifice other wants in order to enrol their children or have two jobs to meet the fees.

Hargreaves maintains that managerial relationships, whether government or non-government, “presume that schools are rational organisations within a decentralised system” (p. 19). Such an approach is better at creating committees, which gives influence to parents who want to participate in running the school with the principal accountable for procedures. This also links with my experience in the non-government school. The managerial type contrasts with the personal relationships type. The latter type, similar to the government school principal I describe, concentrates on the most important interest that parents, teachers and principals have in schools — the welfare of the children and the need for them to have the best educational opportunities possible.

Cultural relationships are founded on principles developed collectively in the school and the wider community and such relationships are accommodated by the government school I portray. At times garments are too grubby to peg out on my invisible clothes line, but they still need to be cleaned and aired. I take them to Hargreaves’ “beautiful laundrette” where they can be attended to. Hargreaves observes that principals “often fear washing their ‘dirty linen’ in public for fear it will occasion criticism and disrespect” (p. 20). His idea of a “beautiful laundrette” where school and community do their washing together, is to be applauded because it is a combined effort for the good of the school, and the community has some ownership of what occurs. How different to the situation where the school conceals an on-campus suicide of a seventeen year old. My son was a friend and a pall bearer at the funeral of his classmate. I remember feeling extremely sad to see my own son dressed in a borrowed black suit going to the funeral, and I kept thinking that this is something older people do, not teenagers. Why would one be concerned that there might have been something concealed? Were there problems that the school and the community were not able to acknowledge? Was there a drug problem amongst the boys? I had heard that the school had been a target for drug dealers. Was ignoring the problem a way of making it disappear? What sacrifice is made to protect the school name at the expense of the wellbeing of the school community? What counts more—morally good intention or pragmatic enrolment intention? These are the kinds of questions with which I interrogate the ethical responsibility of school leaders. Exploring these questions has required me to draw from different nuances of my perception.

I pause for a moment to remind myself of the questions I ask in this chapter. In what ways does leadership in schools influence possibilities for ethical assessment? In what ways is ethical assessment related to the forces that drive the moral good of a school? Positive aspects such as honesty and transparency come to mind. Could it be the role of principal, and, with it, the type of leadership in the educational establishment, that sets the tone for its culture and ethos? The stories I have related so far in this chapter help me to show many of the ways a school's cultural traditions can determine the ways in which educative practices of the school proceed and therefore influence the interpretation of the code of ethics the school adopts.

A school can acquire a good reputation and become too popular — this occurred in a southern Tasmanian school. This school boasts notable alumni such as a Tasmanian Senator, a former Premier of Tasmania, a Crown Princess, and a former Lord Mayor of Hobart ('Taroona High School Notable Alumni,' n.d.). Between 1989 and 2008 there have been four Rhodes Scholars (Taroona High 2012 Prospectus, p. 5). The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITS) named the principal 'Winner of the 2011 Australian Secondary Principal of the Year'. He is described as "an inspirational and visionary school leader focused on preparing all students to be active global citizens and well-equipped for the future" (<http://www.aitsl.edu.au/recognising-excellence/2011-awards/australian-secondary-principal-of-the-year.html>). This was a school that became a lighthouse for parents looking for somewhere to give their children the best possible education. The school became somewhat crowded as parents flocked to enrol their children there. With a greater influx of students, the pressure on the school may have tarnished some of its gloss. That is not to say that the principal became less of a leader, but that he had to deal with a different situation.

In order to ethically assess, leaders and teachers consider many factors. Ethical assessment encompasses a code of practice that might be adopted so that no student, regardless of background, is disadvantaged in any way. For example, which feeder schools students come from, whether they are from different socio-economic or ethnic backgrounds, or have different language ability. Educators need what Palmer terms "connectedness" in order to take these backgrounds into account. Palmer's distinction between authority and power is useful to consider,

Authority is granted to people who are perceived as *authoring* their own words, their own actions, their own lives, rather than playing a scripted role at great remove from their own hearts. (1998, p. 33)

Playing a “scripted role” or being indifferent to students’ needs seems to point to emotional detachment, and is not yet empathetically ethical. Connectedness does not allow insincerity and in my experience, students know when teachers have their best interest at heart.

A virtuous teacher is sincere and empathetic. Daniel Goleman, in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, relates empathy to emotional intelligence. He names empathy, along with initiative, adaptability and persuasiveness as personal qualities which will be needed in future workplaces. He writes that while intellectual ability and technical know-how are necessary, a combination of heart and head is paramount to effectiveness. He observes that people with well-developed emotional skills are more likely to be capable and experience satisfaction in their lives (1995, p. 36). Satisfaction relates to Annas’ eudaemonist account of flourishing. To live ethically allows personal fulfillment and is consistent with functioning well in one’s life. An ethical teacher, when assessing students’ work at college, is able to stand back and adopt an attitude of respect for the student’s individuality, and becomes empathically ethical.

Goleman’s ideas of emotional intelligence and empathy are echoed by Michael Fullan, in his article “Emotion and Hope: Constructive concepts for complex times” (1997). He adds the notion of energy to emotional intelligence and says it can lead to change in attitudes towards assessment. A positive side to this is enthusiasm, which tends to be contagious. It occurs when teachers know their subject matter and when they have a desire to communicate what they know. It would be hard to dispute that such enthusiasm engenders learning. Fullan builds on emotional intelligence to suggest that with emotional energy, initiators of change can learn from resisters. They can hear about discontent to find out what others perceive.

I am reminded of Hargreaves’ “beautiful launderette” where school and community combine to ameliorate problems. However, Fullan points out that enthusiast-reformers can run the risk of increasing the gap between themselves and others if they do not subject themselves and their ideas “to critical scrutiny by

naysayers who have a different point of view” (p. 233). By gap he means there will be a small group for change and a larger group opposed to it. While the notion of emotional energy appeals to me and could be harnessed to bring about better ethical practices, change, I believe, is not necessarily always a positive move, especially not change for change’s sake.

Returning to the view that ethics are events of lived experience, I wish to relate my own involvement as a student in the sixties when positive change occurred, and where respect for students was demonstrated. At a time when girls studied cooking and typing, and boys studied metalwork and technical drawing, the principal of my school demonstrated a culture of gender equality by encouraging girls to undertake technical drawing and boys to study home economics, something previously unheard of. My own moral code is compatible with that principal’s actions of striving, not just for gender equality, but for equality for all students.

I envisage the TRBT’s *Code of Ethics for the Teaching Profession* as an umbrella, which overarches the teaching profession. The spokes stand for the ethical principles and the teacher is standing under this umbrella and understanding the qualities which can inform and help evolve a virtuous disposition toward her everyday practice.



*Code of Ethics for the Teaching Profession*

**Figure 5 My Ethics Umbrella**

I imagine a teacher being protected from extraneous distractions while looking out through the events in which ethics happen. It can be a sun umbrella which filters and moderates extremes or a rain umbrella which protects from despondency and

attenuates difficulties. The teacher would need to change umbrellas depending on the circumstances because according to Annas, “virtue is a dynamic, rather than a static, disposition” (2011a, p. 25). The dynamic nature occurs in her idea “the drive to aspire”.

The drive to aspire” can be enhanced by a school’s principal. The *ethos* of my school community hinges on my principal’s assurances. My principal, who is mindful of his staff’s wellbeing, encourages, but does not coerce, interaction between staff members as a means of developing collegiality. He holds staff meetings in different areas of the government college. It is a good way to get teachers to venture into ‘foreign’ areas such as the art room, or the science laboratory. Sporting events, such as the football world cup, or the famous horse race, the Melbourne Cup, and the Australian Football League grand final, are celebrated, the latter with ‘footy franks’ and tomato sauce, and wearing club-coloured scarves and beanies. There is much camaraderie among staff. Less ardent staff members play tennis or go for lunchtime walks.

Although voluntary, all members of staff are encouraged to join a committee relating to health, information technology, or professional development. Staff from different faculties interact with other staff members and a sense of cohesion is engendered. Teachers can hear about challenges and achievements, and debates often take place. I belong to a ‘Chocolate Lovers’ informal group which meets quarterly in the library, where we eat wonderful chocolates, and discuss literature which comes in boxes from a Sandy Bay bookshop. What started as a somewhat lightweight activity has developed into a serious discussion group, this benefits us greatly—our confidence increases, and we gain new and thoughtful ideas for our teaching and alternative ways to evaluate our assessments of students’ work.

The footy group and the chocolate lovers, though constituted from people of quite different life interests, turn out to demonstrate something worthwhile for educational collegiality and congeniality — Gadamer’s notion of “serious play”. Gadamer says in “The Historicity of Understanding” (1986a), “Play is an elementary phenomenon that pervades the whole of the animal world and, as is obvious, it determines man as a natural being as well” (p. 23). He aligns play with nature because play is effortless and stress-free. In *Truth and Method* (1975, pp. 99-117), he

describes playing as a task where individuals commit to certain rules which have to be respected. Play frees up the individual and in allowing oneself to be “played” leads on to the discovery of unexpected dimensions of one’s own existence. It is not a solitary act and the goal is not to win, but to keep playing. In Gadamer’s view, play enables transformation and leads to self-knowledge. Further, in a foreword to the second edition of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer writes,

I must emphasise that my analyses of play and of language are intended in a purely phenomenological sense. Play is more than the consciousness of the player, and so it is more than a subjective act. Language is more than the consciousness of the speaker, so also it is more than a subjective act. (2000, p. xxxiii)

Participation in the footy group and the chocolate lovers is more than a subjective act played by each participant. The act of participating in play evolves into serious talk about the deep interest they share, other than footy or chocolate. They talk deeply about education. Footy and chocolate are catalysts for their coming together in safety. Later as bonds strengthen, vulnerability and honesty can come into play for serious life and vocational purposes.

Other shared experiences within the government college, such as whole school professional development sessions, often obligatory, do not always engender the same commitment as the voluntary interest groups. Speakers include, for example, Dr. Barrie Bennett, Dr. Julia Atkin and Dr. Michael Carr-Gregg. Bennett (1991), whose field includes teacher learning and pedagogy, advocates the benefits of cooperative learning. He instructs teachers on ways they can integrate teaching strategies in order to generate meaningful learning for students. Atkin designs and presents ‘Strategies for Effective Learning’ (2010). She advises educators to focus their reflection and dialogue around two key questions: What is powerful learning? What is powerful to learn? Her work characterises an approach that attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice. She encourages educators when assessing, to “measure what matters” in qualitative ways rather than value only that which is easily captured through quantitative processes. Carr-Gregg, a high-profile psychologist, is a founding member of the Australian National Centre Against Bullying. He has written several books relevant to senior secondary students, such as *Surviving Year 12: A sanity kit for students and their parents* (2004) and *Surviving*

*Adolescents: The must-have manual for all parents* (2005). These deal with issues relating to students' emotional wellbeing, and school and study problems. Carr-Gregg's advice alerts teachers to consider emotional issues when assessing students. The speakers affirm and endorse the competence of the teaching profession and thereby appeal to open-minded teachers who care about ethical challenges.

Although professional development sessions do not always capture the imagination and appreciation of teachers, those who attend often make their colleagues' attendance valuable through their questioning and sharing their insights. My government school principal supports his staff by attending such sessions, unlike Roland S. Barth. Barth recalls his days when he was a school principal in his book *Learning by Heart* (2001) where he reflects upon his experiences as teacher and principal. In his early days, he used to tiptoe away from a staff development activity back to his office (p. 24). At the time he thought he was too important to need to learn — professional learning was for unimportant people. Much later, he re-examined his attitude and came to identify and reflect upon his mistakes. In *Learning by Heart*, Barth confesses openly that “engaging visibly and publicly as a learner...is to admit imperfection” (p. 146). To admit to imperfection is to make oneself vulnerable, human. Should a principal do so, he might encourage teachers to learn to be honest and open-minded too and grant dignity and integrity to each other.

Once our college was accused of marking English students' papers at too high a level. At the Statewide Markers' Meeting which I attended with college English teachers, it was hoped that we might 'dumb-down' the marks so that other colleges might appear to have better results, as their students were performing poorly compared to ours. To us, that put the result our performing students deserved at risk. We did not wish to back down. If our principal backed down, we would all have not only lost face amongst ourselves but we would have visibly dishonoured each other's high standards of teaching. Our principal acknowledged the quality of our teaching, and bravely spoke out against lowering the standards at the principals' forum he attended even when his own standing amongst his fellow colleagues might have been at risk.

Annas suggests a principal sharing attendance at obligatory staff development sessions fulfills his part as a member of his school community (pp.54-55). It might

also be that his participation could be described as both brave and loyal to his staff members. “People becoming brave will share certain reasons, feelings and attitudes in a way that renders them distinctive and can be thought of as forming a community of the brave,” suggests Annas. “Learning to be brave or loyal,” she says, “takes place in and among people who are engaged in becoming brave or loyal, and thus in learning to think, talk and react in certain ways.” Might we say then that acts of bravery, loyalty and courage, as well as humility, appear in school events that are ethical?

While a leader might derive satisfaction from his school’s performance, he must inevitably encounter downsides. My principal is answerable when something goes wrong because the final responsibility rests with him. Questions of ethics and morals must always confront him. If he is to be a worthy principal, one who is brave, loyal, courageous, and humble, he is to stand by colleagues and never use one as a scapegoat to absolve himself. Might we suggest that there is always time and space for right agency in events of ethics?

My aim in this chapter has been to show that socio-cultures in the schools where I have worked enable, or not, good practice of the principles proposed by the TRBT in its code of ethics: dignity, respect, integrity, empathy and justice. I do not mean to suggest that I am more in favour of government schools than non-government ones. I write of my own experiences and understanding, and my involvement as a teacher. A parent or a student might have different viewpoints. To situate one versus the other would be too vexing a conundrum for the purposes of my thesis. By sharing my lived experience of teaching in two school systems, one government and one non-government, my aim is to contextualise modes of leading and teaching within the kinds of events that demand ethical agency, and to bring myself nearer in my inquiry to examining the kinds of ethical responses that occur when one considers assessment as an ethical event.

## Chapter 3

### Intended or Unintended Pedagogy

In my writing I am speaking for others as well as for myself. What right do I have to speak for others? Teachers and students have shared their lived experience with me and it is my moral responsibility to relate these narratives and discover how these individuals experience their lives and construct their worlds. I am aware that knowledge of their worlds is partial and subjective, but I do not see this as a disadvantage because we cannot escape subjectivity. I respect and believe those I write about.

In this chapter, I discuss teachers' ethical expectations and how teachers consciously and unconsciously influence their students' behaviour by way of the hidden curriculum. As van Manen writes,

Even our gestures, the way we smile, the tone of our voice, the tilt of our head, and the way we look the other in the eye are expressive of the way we know our world and comport ourselves in this world. (2007, p. 22)

As we comport ourselves, we model certain behaviour and convey certain attitudes.

As 'real' teachers are role models, teachers described in fiction and non-fiction also influence their students. I describe some of the remarkable and inspirational teachers one can engage with in literature and go on to look at how we might understand ethical events through literature. *Lore*, which is a body of knowledge, especially of a traditional, anecdotal or popular nature, is involved in many texts. Lore comes from an Old English term meaning the process or act of instruction; it is cognate with Germanic *Lehre* meaning teaching. I discern the lore of teaching throughout my inquiry. Gadamer (1975) focuses on engagement with literature when he says,

Literature is a function of intellectual preservation and tradition, and therefore brings its hidden history into every age. All reading that is understanding is always a kind of reproduction and interpretation...[and]...understanding always contains an inner speaking as well. (pp. 142, 143)

The important thing, Gadamer reminds us, is to be aware of our own bias. We do not need to be neutral, or forget our own ideas, but we do need to be mindful of our own “fore-meaning and prejudices” (p. 238). Then we can compare the “newly” presented text with our preconceptions, and be prepared to accept new information.

Sometimes Tasmanian teachers must be prepared to accept new information and implement directives formulated by the senior management of the college or by the Education Department. Often they find they must assist in making changes of a kind that may offend their dispositions and become uncomfortable in implementing them in their classrooms with their students. Some teachers have seen so much change over time that they are somewhat reluctant to embrace yet another variation to either the syllabus or to the way subjects are assessed, or indeed another change to pedagogical approaches. Many teachers have “comfort zones” to where they retreat when teaching becomes difficult, or when change occurs as teaching continues to evolve.

Alister Jones (1999) observes that many teachers have had other careers before teaching, and this influences their acceptance of — or reluctance to accept — innovation. “Their attitude to change and the stage they are at in their teaching career” (p. 164) depends on their individual experiences. Many are reluctant to change and want to stay in what Donald Schon calls the “stable state”. He reminds us that “we are no longer able to afford the relatively leisurely process of adaptation which has until now allowed us to keep the illusion of the stable state” (1971, p. 27).

Annas proposes that teachers need not fear learning new skills but by being courageous enough to acquire the drive to aspire, they have an opportunity to improve their skills. Annas finds skills analogous to virtue, where the need to learn and the drive to aspire are united (2011, p. 16). By adopting Annas’ approach teachers can become virtuous. She claims that “virtue has a structure which can be found in cases of skill which do exhibit the features of need for learning and drive to aspire” (p. 19).

Tasmanian teachers are generally expected to engage in meaningful professional learning, which includes new technology. At my college, mentors help their colleagues with matters technological, but some still feel unable to deal with new

information technology, such as electronic whiteboards. My principal encourages participation in courses which advance technological knowledge. The State Government Department of Education supports a Graduate Certificate course for teachers to gain recognition for their learning in technology education. At a Federal level it is one of the key learning areas in *The National Statements and Curriculum Profiles* framework. In fact, Tasmania was jointly responsible for developing the *National Statement and Curriculum Profile for Technology* on behalf of the Australian Education Council (John Williamson and Trudy Cowley, 1995, p. 93). Might embracing, developing and practising new skills be a virtuous act by teachers? In Annas' words, might this be an act of aspiring to become a better teacher? She writes that "aspiration leads the learner to improve, to do what he is doing better" (p. 18). In other words, not perfecting a routine, but learning to do what is being done, but better.

Teachers who are uncomfortable, unable or unwilling to embrace the advantages that information technology offer, might transmit their disapproval of learning skills to their students. Julie McLeod and Lyn Yates (2006) in *Making Modern Lives: Subjectivity, Schooling and Social Change* describe informal transmission of values as a hidden curriculum which teaches attitudes, values, and behaviour learnt in school that are not part of the formal curriculum. Students soon realise, via the hidden curriculum, what is praised and what is tolerated and what is not, simply through their teachers' comments, body language, the setting or teachers' expectations. Biesta believes that "students not only pick things up from what we say but also from how we say it and how we do it" (2012, p. 39). A hidden curriculum influences students' self-esteem and can both positively and negatively affect involvement in the college experience and the pathways they choose for their futures.

I reflect on my own place in the field of sociology. I usually introduce the topic of sociology of education to my students by retelling my stories of the hidden curriculum to each new class. My narratives are temporal experiences, but not necessarily linear. I tell about my experiences as a year seven student at a government school. Though I was not personally involved, I still feel very cross about how students were treated. A teacher had singled out a student for having

‘dirty’ hands, and proceeded to berate the unfortunate boy in front of the whole class. His hands were in fact stained from fruit picking because he had to help supplement the family income by picking fruit during summer holidays.

The teacher demonstrated a lack of respect for the student involved, and what was enraging me was that he violated the dignity of the boy. Sharon Todd (2001) asks “Does becoming a teacher necessarily mean learning to make certain concessions to rules and routines that might be hurtful, at times, to students in the class?” (p. 434). The teacher may have wanted to uphold the rule of clean hands. Todd might label the coercion to have clean hands, and the teacher-student encounter, as violence.

When one reflects upon the conditions of violence and non-violence present in the pedagogical encounter, the question of what constitutes the possibilities of response may seem easy to ask, but far more difficult to answer. (p. 448)

She asks educators to “consider the uncertainty of meaning and the vulnerabilities often displayed in the classroom” (p. 448). The student who had helped boost his family’s income and had given up part of the holidays experienced a conflict of roles, that of son and that of student.

My approach is to look at some events in a particular circumstance at a particular time—events that raise ethical dimensions of relationships. Another story I tell is when my year 7 teacher asked students to say what their fathers’ occupations were. I do not know why this information was required, perhaps for statistical purposes. One student’s father worked on the ‘night cart’, a vehicle which collected waste from suburbs which did not have sewerage connections or septic tanks. Of course the other students thought this was hilarious much to the embarrassment of the child who had confessed it. In my mind, to humiliate a child in such a manner overlooks the dignity of the child and shows no respect for him. It must breach any possibility of trust between teacher and student.

Some of my colleagues remember other appalling experiences from their own schooling. In Home Economics, the teacher treated a student who could not sew fancywork as ‘naughty’ — sewing was ripped undone. The teacher twirled a sock that a year 6 student was knitting - a complicated task - in the air in front of the class

as an example of incompetence and therefore bad behaviour. This illustration has its place in teacher lore, it is said that this is what teachers do — label discriminately, offend dignity, and show lack of respect.

In order to demonstrate the concept of and to investigate the influential strength or otherwise of hidden curricula, I undertook a small research project involving my Behavioural Science classes. I set a task (see Figure 6) for them to write an anecdote or short story about a single classroom experience, giving an example of ‘hidden curriculum’ from their previous school. I discussed the task with my students and advised them that I may use the results in my thesis, that they could choose not to complete the task if they felt uncomfortable about it, and that they would not be penalised in any way. Their voluntary responses would only be seen by me, and if they wished they could submit anonymously. They chose to put their names on the descriptions and gave permission for their responses to be used. I assured them of confidentiality and anonymity, and I use pseudonyms. Many of their narratives have common elements about the way a teacher related to them. A selection of the stories is included below. I quote at length to give the reader a sense of how students defined their ‘hidden curriculum’ situations.

**Sociology**

We have been discussing the sociology of education and how the hidden curriculum can affect your learning.

The hidden curriculum is a set of values, attitudes or principles, apart from the formal curriculum, that is implicitly\* conveyed to students by teachers.

Task:

To illustrate your understanding of the hidden curriculum, write an anecdote using an incident that relates to yourself or someone you know.

What was being taught?

Was it fair?

Why or why not?

\* Implied or unspoken

Note:

This task is not compulsory. You may withdraw at any time if you feel uncomfortable writing about it.

**Figure 6 Task for Year 12 Students about the Hidden Curriculum M.J. Keller**

### *Student stories*

**Nick:** Last year one of our teachers would not accept hand-written assignments. The assignments had to be typed on a computer. This meant that students who didn't own a computer had to spend time at a friend's house to type the assignments. This is hidden curriculum as the teacher was marking work on the basis of whether a family could afford computers or not.

**Gina:** I walked into Geography and was surprised to see most of the class had already sat down and I was nearly ten minutes late. The teacher did not seem to notice so I slipped into my seat, quietly feeling relieved. Since the start of the year I have sat with the same people, two I know quite well and another girl who had recently moved from a prestigious private school to our government school. She was not yet in class. Half an hour later she appeared at the doorway and attempted sheepishly to creep into the class without attracting too much attention. The minute the teacher saw her he started yelling at her and going into a detailed lecture about how slack he thought her attitude was and how she needed to sort herself out. The girl tried to explain that she had missed her bus and there hadn't been another bus until a long time after. In response to this the teacher simply said in an aggravated tone, "If you want to come to this school you need to respect the way things work here otherwise go back to ....."! After this I sensed that the majority of people around me thought that his reaction was a bit dramatic and I considered myself lucky that I had escaped such a confrontational talk. I wondered if I had been any later to class, would he have given me the same type of treatment.

Gina's narrative gives an example of a teacher's perceived prejudice. It is difficult to defend the teacher's reactions but the whole story is not known. There may be a history of previous encounters with that particular student.

**Eric:** Within one of my classes I sit with a friend. The teacher has an expectation that my friend who sits next to me distracts me and is the "rebel" in the class. When the both of us completed an assignment together, we handed in separate work, however we both had the same answers. When we got our answers back I had A's and my friend had B's. The teacher was influenced by his perception of this person when he was marking the work, maybe an example of favouritism.

Eric identifies what he perceives as a favoured student. On the surface it seems that Eric may be right, but he may not know the real circumstances surrounding his teacher's assessment.

**Maddie:** One student in my year 10 English class received higher marks than I did for a group assignment even though we did the same amount of work.

Maddie identifies a type of favouritism too. Maddie may not understand other facets of teacher assessment — marks for group work in which students participate reflect the teacher's observation of each student's participation in the group.

I could continue to defend the teachers who are subjects of the students' stories that follow. The stories appear here rather to illustrate the kinds of encounters that students still have today with teachers they suspect do not act with values the students consider appropriate. Students seem to be revealing a desire for justice and respect in the ways teachers relate to them and assess their work.

**Steve:** Two students in my year 9 Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) class were throwing paper planes around the room. Only one student received punishment even though both of the students were throwing the paper planes.

**Lucy:** One Physical Education (PE) class in year seven a girl brought a note to not join in because she had her period, and in front of the whole class the teacher who was a male teacher said just because you have your period it's no excuse not to do PE.

**Nicole:** In primary school we had a teacher who was really judgemental, he had his obvious favourites and the ones he disliked. He always picked on the ones he didn't like and yelled at them and constantly praised and rewarded his favourites—luckily I was one of the ones he liked. You could do nothing but feel sorry for the ones that constantly got in trouble.

**Gavin:** In high school in our class we had two distinct groups. Our home group teacher liked the other group better than us and treated us differently. Once when we had home group the teacher spent most of the lesson talking to the other group (not about school) and we had nothing to do so we talked to each other as well. At the end of the lesson the teacher came up to us and got

mad saying that we wasted our time talking and not doing school work when the other group had done exactly the same as us and did not get into any trouble.

**Mel:** On the first day of college when we had shortened lessons, I remember one boy at my table who talked the whole lesson. The teacher ignored it at first but towards the end he mentioned to the boy that he needed to listen. Every lesson since, whether he is talking or not that particular boy gets in trouble. The teacher doesn't seem to notice when other people are being noisy, he only takes notice of this one boy. It seemed like the teacher was always going on his first impression so the boy can't change the teacher's mind even if he does good work.

**Kevin:** It was a really cold wet morning when I woke up and wasn't feeling too well, but I still went to school, late, but I went. When I got there it was about 9:30ish and my teacher was very annoyed with me. She told me off in front of the class without even knowing why I was late. After class finished I stayed behind to explain. The teacher said I was not going too well in this class because I was behind and had missed so many days due to sickness. I said to her that I really wanted to pass this class and that I really enjoyed it so we made an agreement that I would not miss any of her classes throughout the year. So then I went and had something to eat. I was thinking in my head that I really want a career out of this and then I decided not miss any more of school or any of my classes even if I was sick.

**Kate:** The hidden curriculum is when teachers favour or single out students because of their knowledge, behaviour or race. For example if the student is of a certain race or ethnicity the teacher may become racist in this instance and downgrade the student for this. The teacher may also pick on this student in class and always tell them off even when they were not doing anything wrong. This does not allow the student to achieve the highest degree they can. The hidden curriculum and material deprivation are linked together most of the time. For example, if students are asked to complete an essay, some may hand in their work as a hand-written piece but others as a typed piece. Some teachers prefer typed pieces and would downgrade the students who hand-wrote their work because it was 'too messy'. This is unfair to these students who were unable to type their assignment because they may not have had a

computer or printer at home. Male teachers may favour female students and vice versa with female teachers.

**Colin:** My experience of the hidden curriculum through high school was to find ways to get along with teachers on more mature levels so they would treat me better than other students and I could get away with behaviour other students couldn't.

**Annie:** When kids who were always naughty did something wrong they didn't get in trouble but if one of the good kids did the same thing they would.

**Natalie:** When I was in high school there was this girl who got treated differently than the others. When she was angry or upset she would leave the classroom and the teachers would just let her go. She would get away with a lot of things, for example she would just sit there and not work, while everyone else had to. The teacher knew that she wasn't doing her work but didn't try to get her to work. On a rare occasion if the teacher did even try, she would agree and then look like she was about to work and then just sit there for the rest of the lesson and not do anything. The rest of the class ended up getting annoyed that she got treated like this, whereas if any of us had attempted to do what she did we would have been in a lot of trouble. This went on for the entire four years of high school, nothing changed even when we asked the teacher what was going on.

**Maria:** In primary school, there was a range of ethnicities. But most were from countries such as Germany, Poland, Ireland, and Switzerland and so on. In year two a group of friends and I were subjected to a teacher blaming solely our group for everything that went wrong in the classroom. Coincidentally our group was the only coloured group in the class. This teacher continued to pour the blame onto us until one of the student's Brazilian parents was called in because we were being mistreated. That teacher left two days later, and we all knew why.

**Kellie:** It was my first automotive lesson. I had just joined the class half way through the school year. I walked in through the side door and into the automotive garage. The teacher looked over at me and sniggered. It was obvious he was still one of the 'women's feet belong under the kitchen sink,' men. But I knew I would prove him wrong.

My students recount their stories frankly. They reveal their truthfulness in the ways they call out for fairness and honesty whether or not they know of or understand their teachers' personal circumstances and biases. Gavin pleads justice and fairness. Kellie perceives a certain sexism in her teacher's approach towards her to which she rebels and which spurs her on to do well. Many virtuous teachers would be horrified to think that they might treat students unjustly, unconsciously, without intending to or understanding. Ultimately how students perceive a teacher's intentions is what must count. "A brave or just person acting intelligently will navigate difficulties and solve problems carefully and with attention to the details of the situation" (Annas, 2011, p. 77). It must not appear for the purpose of my thesis, that I portray all hidden curricula as negative. The selection of stories I recall from my school days serves to illustrate that teacher folklore, or lore, still invades perceptions of teachers today, by teachers and by students.

Everyday conversations and discussions about teachers encompass lore. There is lore in literature which reveals certain traditions and knowledge told by a certain group about a certain group. The certain group is teachers. Students' lore is traditions and knowledge that students hold around their teachers. From within the students' lore of teachers there is a constant crying out for justice and fairness and wanting to not be subjected to racism, sexism or relegation to inferiority, as demonstrated in their stories.

I would like my readers to note that I do not suggest that all hidden curricula are negative. There are positive examples of exemplary teachers who shine in students' memories. A 'star' teacher makes her classrooms a fascinating, appealing place and involves all her students in all forms learning. She is an ethical assessor, a virtuous teacher.

### *Star teachers*

Everywhere, we learn only from those whom we love.

Goethe, quoted in Johann Peter Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe*, May 12, 1825.

My purpose of introducing the inspirational role models and brilliant teachers portrayed in literature is to illustrate the personal significance of the reading

experience. van Manen says of the lived experience of reading “that in opening a book I open myself to it: I make myself vulnerable” and furthermore, “Pedagogy has to do with what is to be gained in the lived experience of reading” (1983, pp. 9, 11). Might the personal significance prompt a teacher to compare the kinds of ethical responses that occur in the texts and relate these to their own teaching and assessing practice?

I portray brilliant teachers, some real, some fictitious, who abound in texts. van Manen writes, “Fiction, by definition unreal, is often experienced as more real than life itself. Fiction is so ‘unreal,’ so unreally real, because it is so believable” (1983, p. 5). Sokolowski too, draws attention to fiction writers. He notes the way Henry James speaks about human understanding,

His novels are highly sensitive to the nuances of human interaction, not only in regard to what people do toward and with one another, but also in regard to the way things show up for them. (2008, pp. 304, 305)

James often uses the term “taking in” to name the event when an individual understands something or has insight. Alexander McCall Smith’s novels encompass a similar sensitivity regarding human interaction. In McCall Smith’s *Espresso Tales*, little Bertie discovers the kindness of his teacher at the Steiner school, and responds (2006, pp. 144-146). The aptly named Miss Harmony tells Bertie “I’m on your side you know.” After sending a note purportedly from his mother, Bertie “... thought there would be recriminations and a summons to the principal’s office. He had not expected sympathy. “You see,” went on Miss Harmony, quietly so that the neighbouring tables could not hear, “this school is based on love and respect” (p. 144). Jaspers speaks of love when he reflects on education. He calls it

...the driving force and true authority as the source of genuine education. He does not believe that these two factors are mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are inseparable. Love protects education from the will to dominate and shape pupils for finite purposes, and makes it a personal encounter instead. (Hermann Horn, 1993, p. 725)

Miss Harmony demonstrates empathy by being tolerant and compassionate towards Bertie. He suspected that “he might be happy at this nice school, which was

a good place – even if it had been his mother’s choice. After all, there were some things which she might just get right” (p. 146).

According to van Manen

Empathy and sympathy are usually discussed as certain types of relational understandings that involve imaginatively placing oneself in someone else’s shoes, feeling what the other person feels, understanding the other from a distance (telepathy), or more generally, to be understandingly engaged in other people’s lives. (2007, p.20)

Ivan Weatherall is another fictitious teacher who demonstrates empathy in Elizabeth George’s crime novel *What Came Before He Shot Her* (2006). It is the story of Joel, an eleven year old boy of mixed race, Ness, a fifteen year old girl, and Toby, a seven year old intellectually challenged boy (p. 230). Weatherall runs a class entitled “Wield words not weapons” in which Joel dreams of being a “poet, playwright, novelist, lyricist, speechwriter, journalist, and giant of the biro”. Joel wins the “Poet of Promise” award one evening, which proves he has talent, but circumstances intervene. The Weatherall character encourages Joel to write poetry. For one moving and precious moment amongst the disasters of his life circumstances, we see someone who respects Joel’s wishes and aspirations and regards him as a worthy individual — he treats Joel with dignity.

Another wonderful example of a virtuous teacher, although not fiction, is found in *Mao’s Last Dancer*, the autobiography of Li Cunxin. He writes of his teacher Xiao, who

...began to try to find out what kind of boy I was ... He discovered that I remembered every word he said, as long as I was interested. So he made me interested in ballet, and quickly realised that I didn’t cope well with forceful shouting, which was common practice among the teachers at the Beijing Dance Academy. Instead I responded well to gentle encouragement. He noticed every subtle improvement I made. He made sure that I knew he’d noticed. He gently and gradually led me into the intricacies of ballet, nurtured me, dealt with my self doubt and inadequacies with encouragement, and slowly moved me from the back of class to the front. (2003, p. 153)

The teacher's actions have positive pedagogical consequences for Li. In Li's case as with Bertie, the concept of social class comes into play. Bertie and Li are successful in the particular school system they attend, but it is the background and family that make a difference. Bertie's father is fairly well-to do, and his mother is well-meaning. Bertie is given much encouragement and sometimes more than he needs. Li's family, on the other hand, are extremely poor. In spite of this they make sacrifices to enable Li to attend the ballet school. The Chinese Government contributes to Li's training, but it is for political, rather than humanitarian reasons.

My question is, what is a teacher to do when she has no control over family background? Students who receive little parental interest or expectations, or maybe have to work to contribute to the family income, will generally not do as well their peers. An empathetic teacher may be aware of the background of such students, and thus consciously or unconsciously make allowances when assessing, posing a dilemma of being fair to other students in the class. A teacher may agonise over such dilemmas especially when expected to produce certain 'learning outcomes'. Biesta (2007) reminds us of the long tradition to steer the educational process towards the production of exam-driven, pre-specified learning outcomes, to exert control over learning. He tells us that we are there to teach our students, not produce them.

A non-fiction work in which 'star' teachers help the narrator overcome the shackles of working class life in Manchester in the seventies and eighties is *Once in a House on Fire* by Andrea Ashworth (1998). It documents her growing up in a dysfunctional family. Ashworth writes,

I will always be grateful to Barbara Wallis, who was my superb English Literature teacher...Before that...it was my great fortune to be taught and inspired by Jude Cooper: she radiated a crucial sense of possibility and cast a benign, probably life-saving, spell on me. (pp. 328-329)

Ashworth, encouraged by her teachers, was able to survive a very bleak childhood which included looking after her mother, her two younger siblings, and all the while, enduring physical abuse from stepfathers. In spite of her appearance, dictated by the impoverished circumstances in which she lived, her teachers recognised her potential.

Frank McCourt who wrote of his poor, miserable childhood in Ireland in *Angela's Ashes* (1996) also wrote his memoirs of teaching in various schools in underprivileged areas of New York. In *Teacher Man* (2005) McCourt's responses to situations are unconventional to say the least, but are clearly from the heart. He identifies and empathises with his students, many of whom are underdogs, but in addition, are rebellious. He finds ways of teaching which hold their attention, usually by telling stories. Although he is not always successful, he "hit pay dirt" more often than not, that is, finishing a lesson knowing he had overcome student apathy. McCourt is a sympathetic assessor,

Give the kid credit for being there....He could be someplace else getting onto trouble, bothering people. Three points for showing up, for selfless citizenship. Is his writing legible?...Another two or three points.

Does the student use paragraphs? Look how he indents. (p. 107)

It continues in this vein. McCourt awards points for a topic sentence, for an essay title, for using a semicolon, for being polite and helpful, even for having a sick or dead father. McCourt contrives to make up enough points for the school to pass the State English examination. As a result, that particular school would not have been penalised regarding funding. It could be said that McCourt practises positive discrimination, a form of affirmative action intended to redress disadvantages that groups of individuals experience. A teacher may treat some students unequally because treating them equally would be unfair.

### *Inspirational role models*

The story of an inspirational teacher, Annie Sullivan and an extraordinary student, Helen Keller is portrayed in William Gibson's three act play *The Miracle Worker* (1956). "Audiences responded with tears and applause, and the play was a Broadway triumph" (Nat Segaloff, 2011, p. 92). While teachers cannot expect to be miracle workers, it is worthwhile to contemplate reasons for Annie Sullivan's remarkable success with this deaf, blind and mute seven year old girl. This is not to ignore Helen Keller's own extraordinary mind. She had originally been assessed as mentally defective, and it was taken for granted that it was impossible for her to be taught.

Annie was, by all accounts, a courageous and compassionate teacher. She thought Helen Keller should be treated as an ordinary child. Helen herself writes about her beloved teacher, Annie in *The Story of My Life* (2002). “I had made many mistakes, and Miss Sullivan had pointed them out again and again with gentle patience” (p. 15). Further on she writes of the difficulties a blind and deaf child experiences. “At the beginning I was only a little mass of possibilities. It was my teacher who unfolded and developed them” (p. 20). In *Conqueror of Darkness* Phyllis Garlick (1958) also relates the Helen Keller story and reveals the difference a caring and empathetic teacher makes in Keller’s life.

There are many more stories of virtuous teachers described in works of fiction and non-fiction. I love to read books. I re-read them. Books are crying out to be read. Since beginning my thesis, it seems that every book I pick up contains stories of teachers, most of them positive.

A book has its own voice and thus speaks to our sensibility with a sensuous power of its own. Of course, no one is a stranger to the experience that novels “teach.” And any particular book that captures us may edify our consciousness — it is unlikely to leave us indifferent or unaffected. (van Manen, 1983, p. 2)

As well as books, there are many films depicting remarkable teachers. One is the 1939 film, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*. It tells of an inspirational educator, who although a disciplinarian, has a sense of humour (“Goodbye, Mr. Chips 1939 film,” n.d.). The role of Mr Chips was played by Robert Donat, who won best actor award, beating the likes of Clark Gable, James Stewart, Laurence Olivier and Mickey Rooney. Ronald F. Delderfield (1972) tells similar story of an extraordinary teacher in his novel *To Serve Them All My Days*. It was on television, stage and radio. The central character discovers a vocation in teaching when he is employed to teach history at a fictional public school after World War I. He is respected by many of his colleagues and is told “You’re a born teacher” (p. 142).

A more modern take on an inspirational teacher is the 1989 film *Dead Poets Society* directed by Peter Weir. The film won an Academy Award for best original screen play. Robin Williams plays an English teacher, John Keating, who inspires his students through poetry. He has rather unorthodox ways, including telling his

students to stand on desks in order to see the world in a different way and to rip the introduction out of their books. He motivates them to rebel against the status quo, which they do in their own ways. He aims to instil a joy of learning by being enthusiastic about poetry. Keating asks his class

O Captain, my Captain. Who knows where that comes from? Anybody?  
Not a clue? It's from a poem by Walt Whitman about Mr Abraham  
Lincoln. Now in this class you can either call me Mr Keating, or if  
you're slightly more daring, O Captain my Captain. (Retrieved April 12,  
2013 from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097165/>)

The quote indicates to me that Keating is using humour at times and that he wants his students to take charge of their own learning, if they are daring. He advises them to “seize the day”, to take the opportunities offered to them. The film depicts mutual respect.

### *Responsiveness to texts*

I briefly step back in time here because my evolving understanding of ethical events and their connection to literature requires unravelling. In the seventeenth century, John Locke (1931) in *A Treatise on the Conduct of the Understanding* says, “Reading furnishes the mind only with material of knowledge; it is thinking makes what we read ours” (p. 58). Following this, until we contemplate on what we have read, we cannot claim it as understood. Roland Barthes, in his 1967 essay ‘The Death of the Author’, argues that the state of an author’s mind is unknown to the reader and therefore the meaning in the text is open to various interpretations. Barthes maintains that if a reading relies on aspects of an author’s identity, for example, mindset, religious affiliation, political affiliation, or historical setting, then it is unsound. Readers must separate a literary work from its author in order to free the text because to assign a single meaning is to enforce a limit on it.

There are many meanings in language and more so in translations. A written conversation can have a different meaning to a spoken conversation and different emphasis can change the whole connotation. For Barthes, the text and the author are unrelated. Not only that, but since meaning cannot come from the author, the reader must independently interpret what is written. The reader, or the “I that approaches

the text is itself already a plurality of other texts, of infinite or, more precisely, lost codes (whose origins are lost)” (1970, p. 16, in Jonathon Culler, 1981, p. 113).

Various readers can glean various meanings. Barthes describes two types of texts, a “readerly” one where the reader is restricted to reading; and a “writerly” one where the reader is active in a creative process. The reader is independent, free to decide on the interpretation and not restricted by a dominant author. van Manen comments that,

In one sense it is true that the reader produces the text, interprets it, first naively then reflectively. Reading is the making of meaning as well as a form of communication via the text. (1983, p. 9)

Foucault’s 1969 essay ‘What is an Author’ challenges Barthes’ ideas. Other scholars, amongst them Camille Paglia and Sean Burke, have totally rejected Barthes’ argument. Paglia (1990), an American feminist author and teacher at Philadelphia University writes scathingly of Barthes’ ideas,

Most pernicious of French imports...is the notion that there is no person behind a text. Is there anything *more* affected, aggressive, and relentlessly concrete than a Parisian intellectual behind his/her turgid text? The Parisian is a provincial when he pretends to speak for the universe. (p. 34)

Irish literary theorist from Durham University, Sean Burke (2010) also opposes Barthes’ ‘The Death of the Author’. He penned a response called *Death and Return of the Author*. Unlike Barthes, Burke stresses authorial intent.

I refer to these examples to illustrate that authorial intent is not always clear. As an undergraduate, I too was scornful of Barthes. I dismissed his argument out of hand and felt quite indignant about it because at the time it seemed obvious to me that I could deconstruct a text and interpret the dominant reading. After engaging with Gadamer’s writing in *Truth and Method* about “distanciation” — standing back to look at a new way of being in the world — it becomes clear to me that Barthes was onto something, albeit he uses a rather sensational title for his essay. Gadamer explains about understanding meanings,

Not occasionally only, but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive, but

always a productive attitude ... It is enough to say that we understand in a different way, if we understand at all.

Does an author really know so exactly and in every sentence what he means? (1975, pp. 264, 489)

And further,

An everyday event brought into language may seem like an arrow pointing in a right direction, but the meaning it projects all too often glosses over the objective indeterminacy of the situation submerged in the strategically crafted text. (1982, p. 351)

I turn now to illuminate that in the classroom, a text can have several interpretations. I gave my English year 8 a cleverly crafted poem titled 'Mushrooms' by Sylvia Plath. I did not tell them the title because I wanted them to use their imagination and explore as many possible meanings as they could, to tell me what the poem said to them, not just accept what the author says it is about. Here is what I gave them:

Overnight, very  
Whitely, discreetly,  
Very quietly  
  
Our toes, our noses  
Take hold on the loam,  
Acquire the air.  
  
Nobody sees us,  
Stops us, betrays us;  
The small grains make room.  
  
Soft fists insist on  
Heaving the needles,  
The leafy bedding,  
  
Even the paving.  
Our hammers, our rams,  
Earless and eyeless,  
  
Perfectly voiceless,  
Widen the crannies,  
Shoulder through holes. We  
  
Diet on water,  
On crumbs of shadow,  
Bland-mannered, asking

Little or nothing.  
So many of us!  
So many of us!

We are shelves, we are  
Tables, we are meek,  
We are edible,

Nudgers and shovers  
In spite of ourselves.  
Our kind multiplies:

We shall by morning  
Inherit the earth.  
Our foot's in the door.

*Lines to Time: a senior poetry anthology 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* J. K. McKenzie, editor (1996, p. 383)

The students did not come remotely close to guessing the title, but in a “readerly” sense they would have probably accepted the poem as a description of mushrooms growing, *if* they had known the title. Without the title and in a “writerly” sense they certainly had many ideas about what the author is saying. Some thought it is a threat. Others thought it portrays pregnant women. It is the feminist idea of mistreatment. It is about women’s rights. Yet another interpretation was that the meek would not be suppressed. Are the mushrooms a metaphor for some sort of terrorist attack? Whatever the subtext, it is not entirely clear what Plath is conveying to the reader as she cleverly slips in evocative lines, she personifies the mushrooms.

For Gadamer, there are no purely literal interpretations. We bring our own preconceptions and biases, in other words our cultural baggage, to a text. Prejudices are essential for there to be any understanding, but we should not rest on our prejudices. The text may have something to say that overthrows our biases and we are “pulled up short by the text” (Benson, 2005, p. 31). Insight gained from interpretation and understanding a text can afford insight into our own situation. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer explores the notion of *phronesis* that is, a kind of practical self-knowledge or wisdom. The difference between what is right and proper and what is improper becomes a moral distinction (1975, p. 22). *Phronesis* underlines our own practical situation and is connected to our experiences, not to theoretical situations.

Morals distinction is evident in fairy tales, fables and urban myths. Bruno Bettelheim analysed fairy tales and discussed their emotional and symbolic importance. He believed that if children interpret these fairy tales in their own way, they would achieve a sense of purpose that would better prepare them for their adult life.

A parent who from his own childhood experience is convinced of the value of fairy tales will have no difficulty in answering his child's questions; but an adult who thinks these tales are only a bunch of lies had better not try telling them, he won't be able to relate them in a way which would enrich the child's life. (1975, p. 118)

An example is Aesop's fable about *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* which reminds children that liars are not rewarded, notwithstanding if they later tell the truth, nobody believes them. Another is Hilaire Belloc's 'Cautionary Verse' which many of us learnt to recite at school for elocution lessons, about "Matilda Who told Lies, and was Burned to Death". The title and the last lines relate what happened to such an incorrigible liar and serves to deter children from telling untruths.

For every time she shouted "Fire!"  
They only answered "Little Liar!"  
And therefore when her Aunt returned,  
Matilda, and the House, were Burned

(1970, pp. 262-264)

As demonstrated, narrative is everywhere. It is found in novels, fairy tales, fables, film, short stories, social histories and conversations. From toddler to teenager, we learn to listen and tell stories. Narrative is found in all places and societies, at all times. Urban myths or legends serve as morality stories. Anyone behaving in an immoral way will end up in trouble. A particular myth about courting couples parked in 'Lovers' Lane' tells of a narrow escape from harm, or possibly death. The young couple upon hearing strange noises decides to drive off. Later they discover scratches on the car where presumably some evil person or 'thing' tried to attack them. Might the story have meant to deter pre-marital sex, in the days when a girl's 'honour' had to be protected, and probably before reliable contraception was

available? Social attitudes are different now. Myth serves as way to impart a kind of awareness without passing judgement on a person's behaviour.

The above-mentioned are examples of the need to often disregard the literal meaning of text and look to the subtext. Many more truths can be told under the guise of fiction. van Manen tells us,

Fiction solicits an experience of the world and then elicits a reflective interpretation of the textual experience. Thus, fiction offers a double, but subtle, pedagogy: It cultivates our pre-reflective and our reflective life. (1983, p. 2)

In George Orwell's satire *Animal Farm*, the animals take control, and in that power find their own corruption. Originally titled *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story*, this 1945 fable shows how socialism, when perverted, can develop into tyrannical totalitarianism. I will never forget poor Boxer, whose conscientiousness inspired everyone, but the harder he worked, the more there was to do. In order to generate their own profit, Fat Pig Squealer, along with other pigs who manage the farm, manipulates the other animals. They indulge in drinking alcohol, sleeping in beds and dealing. The novel addresses exploitation by leaders and shows how naivety and apathy can allow horrors to happen. Sokolowski writes that Orwell has shown "modern tyranny is complete only when the subjects are willing to disavow their own exercise of truthfulness...depending on what the Party says" (2008, p. 96). Whether a novel is 'truthful' or not is beside the point.

van Manen (1990) states that literature "serves as a fountain of experiences...[to] increase practical insights" (p. 70). Of fiction, he writes,

Through a good novel...we are given the chance of living through an experience that provides us with the opportunity of gaining insight into certain aspects of the human condition. (p. 70)

He maintains that the significance of story allows us to broaden our horizons. It involves us in a personal way, and enables us to encounter situations and events that we would not normally experience. It is one good reason I read novels. Not only do I love reading them, they guide my understanding. For this part of my thesis, I find analogical situations in novels to help me illustrate how individuals perceive their school experience.

An individual's school experience usually revolves around relationships with teachers and peers. They recall significant events from their school days. Part of the school experience also relates to the physical environment and some studies about student academic achievement and building conditions conclude that the quality of the physical environment significantly affects student achievement. Glen Earthman writes, "There is sufficient research to state without equivocation that the building in which students spends a good deal of their time learning does in fact influence how well they learn" (2004, p. 18). Julia Ellis (2005, pp. 57-61) maintains that schools and classrooms can be more than a place to inhabit — they can acquire an emotional significance. One perspective on this, she says is that educators play an important role in constructing classrooms and schools, and therefore students' identities. An extension of the idea is that children's environments have an effect on their cognitive and behavioural development. Looking at learning space is about more than structures — it is about social interactions within the space.

Other research has recognised that "student achievement lags in shabby school buildings" but goes on to say that this research "does not show that student performance rises when facilities go from...decent buildings to those equipped with fancy classrooms, swimming pools, television studios and the like" (Mark E. Stricherz in Steve Higgins, Elaine Hall, Kate Wall, Pam Woolner, Caroline McCaughey, 2005, p. 36). A qualitative research study undertaken by Pam Pointon and Ruth Kershner (2000, pp. 117-127) examined three experienced teachers' beliefs and perceptions about organising the primary classroom environment as a context for learning. The teachers have differing opinions. One is more concerned about displaying students' work. The other two agree that the physical environment is not as important as the teacher. Providing that the classroom has the necessary seating, lighting and equipment, might not the teacher be the most important part of school experience for the student?

In this chapter I have been reflecting upon the ways a student's lived experience may differ from a teacher's lived experience when their experience occurs simultaneously in the time and domain of their school. I have shared my engagement with reading literature where I have found remarkable examples of teachers in fiction and non-fiction to illuminate ethical events in education. I have narrated, first hand,

stories of Tasmanian teachers and their students and how they relate to one another. Tasmanian teachers make sense of their lives mainly in terms of specific events or chains of events. By truly hearing their stories, I offer the stories as ethical events in a broader process, that of educating.

## Chapter 4

### Inquiring in Foreign Lands

Though a large part of what we do in our human minds is to conceptualise and theorise our life experiences, my intention is to investigate lived experience as it is lived rather than theorised. Looking through my sociological lens, I empathise with teachers as they narrate their experiences from the everyday lives they live in schools in societies. I find it impossible to generalise or universalise the experience of teachers' assessing lives. The narratives and anecdotes that I gather as evidence for my inquiry about teachers' lived experience of ethical assessment provide many parallel themes in the stories that animate the ethical dilemmas faced.

While travelling overseas I encountered many teachers on my ways to and from countries I visited and worked in. Some insights came to me about systems of education that, although different, were in many ways similar to mine. Teachers' lived experiences coincide and intersect, and although my interviews and conversations were held miles apart, when I reflect upon the narratives I recorded, I can see that they tell a collective story. It is a story which illustrates the intentionality of teachers' actions and makes individuals and societies intelligible to them. Our narratives allow us to examine our own actions and to aspire to modify the course of our lives. Annas tells us "It is the drive to aspire which leads us to the need to think in terms of reasons and explanation" (2011a, p. 54). In our narratives of reasoning, examining and modifying our actions, in relation to ethical assessment, we see ourselves being virtuous and doing the right thing. The stories I heard on my journeys abroad are significant to my thesis because they shed light on similar circumstances, needs, objectives, and outcomes that affect Tasmanian teachers. They offer me an opportunity to bring moral dilemmas to life perhaps in more robust ways than the relatively quiet politically lived life that teachers engage in here.

Perhaps more profoundly they give insight into the ways that individuals apprehend their world narratively and so can tell about their world narratively. What I relate in this chapter represents parts of the mix of garments on my clothesline, rather than an entire outfit. These are garments that express my understandings of lived experience and of the parallel events in people's lives that contribute to shared

understandings of who we are and how we act as ethical human beings. I have found during my inquiry that I must absolve myself from my human tendency to generalise from ranges of situated interviews, observations and other narratives. I cannot avoid embedding values in my writing as I write about the teachers I interview. I speak for them as I describe their lived events — I impart meaning and depict ethics. Through my recurring theme of ethics, I portray the complexity of ethical assessment, of doing the right thing, by way of teachers’ lived experiences. I want to hear, to understand what it means to be ethical, to act ethically, as a teacher and assessor in whatever an education system might constitute in Britain, in USA, Canada or Europe, not as a generalising influence upon me but in any event in which I could possibly participate as the human being that I am.



**Illustration 2**     *Australian Hills Hoist*

Consider my clothesline. If it is an Australian Hills Hoist (see Illustration 2), I may not see all that hangs on it because the outer objects are obscured from my view, whether I stand before it, look down upon from a higher reach of the garden, or look up at it from a squatting position as I search for something in particular. But I know they are there because I pegged them out. My perception is a blend of what I see and what I know is there. Sokolowski reminds us that “pictures do not just convey information; they are also able to bring to light a deeper intelligibility; they can show what the thing is” (2008, p. 137). I ask my readers not to just look at the picture of the clothesline, but to think and speak about its significance. As I listen to my

interviewees, I hear what they are saying, but my listening involves more than just hearing the words. I can see and sense body language, pauses, and hesitations when nothing is uttered. These say something to me. The storyteller may be uncertain and may shy away from making statements. My perception involves these layers. I can wind my clothesline up, then I would see more, but from a different angle.

There were many different angles as I held interesting and varied conversations on my journeys. I conducted informally guided research exchanges with teachers, parents and students. I intend to show parallels in thinking and developing attitudes of teachers in other countries with those in my own. van Manen cautions us not “to indulge in over-interpretations, speculations, or an over-reliance on personal opinions and personal experiences” (pp. 66-67).

With this in mind, when conversing or conducting interviews, I made clear that I was enquiring for the purpose of a thesis, and that the responses would be anonymous. The participants were not pressured in any way and they freely consented to my using the information. I oriented my questions specifically towards assessment and the ethical decisions to be made when teaching and carrying out assessment tasks. I asked open questions that might elicit more than a single word response. I did not want to influence response rather I wanted the respondents to answer in their own words, to give me detailed and in-depth descriptions of their human experiences. I wanted to understand the teachers’ feelings, perceptions and insights. The teachers displayed professional interest in the subject and though it was very easy to digress, they seemed to have a capacity to understand my quandary regarding fairness when evaluating students’ work.

A particular conversation or interview embodies common themes. Not all respondents volunteered all themes and I did not succeed in acquiring a lot of detail. I recognise there would have been some impediments to my respondents disclosing detail. I have to take into account the vulnerability, shyness or uncertainty about their own personal evaluations, as well as language barriers and cultural differences. I must also consider that there might have been either reserve in sharing through loyalty to ‘home’ or even exaggeration in the freedom felt by being away from home. I kept a notebook of my interviews and conversations but was not able to record every word due to the contextual situations I was expediting. I wondered whether

there were some things left unsaid that could be revealing. I could recognise an undercurrent of frustration, exasperation or annoyance in the body language and facial expressions of some of my respondents. I call this recognition my 'gut feeling'.

### *Parallels at sea*

The first part of my overseas journey was on board a large ship departing Sydney and ending up in Los Angeles. On the ship, I organised a meeting which proved to be a productive, unexpected source of information. After noticing on the daily itinerary that engineers had an interest-group meeting, I requested a teachers' meeting and about twenty-five teachers and ex-teachers attended. Representatives came from many countries, including Great Britain, Canada, USA, and Australia. The teachers who had retired from the profession had been primary school or special education teachers. There were some secondary teachers, and a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) teacher from New South Wales, Australia. Naturally, some teachers had been out of the classroom longer than others, and though they could not comment on contemporary assessment procedures, they kept up-to-date by subscribing to educational journals. Of the teachers still active in the classroom, most had strong views on the topic of assessment and how it might be ethically practised.

So that the group would know how my own thoughts were developing, I discussed Earl's (2003) ideas in *Assessment as Learning: Using Classroom Assessment to Maximise Student Learning* about assessment *of* learning and the movement to assessment *for* learning, and assessment *as* learning. I aimed to express my understanding that assessment *for* learning is a powerful method of assessment. It is the process used by teachers of understanding evidence to decide how best students can proceed with their learning. It is an on-going method which drives the teaching program. For me, I told them, it is a very attractive concept but I had discovered it does not appeal to all teachers. Some of the teachers I spoke to felt they were obliged to measure outcomes because they could be called to account, although they did express a wish for students to explore ways of thinking and acting.

One teacher referred to the institution of League Tables that have become prominent in England for comparing the performances of schools in relation to National Outcomes proffered by the British Qualifications and Curriculum

Authority. When national resting days are set for eleven and twelve year old students, teachers begin to prepare their students according to the expected and standardised outcomes set by the National Authority. The teacher who spoke was concerned that teaching for tests would narrow the depth and restrict creativity of a curriculum for teaching children. For him, League Tables have become a competitive force and something to distrust. Whilst the meaning of ‘league’ in ‘League of Nations’ promotes cooperation and protection, ‘League Tables’ promote championship, in say, football or rugby, and consequently, competition and exclusion. League Tables in which schools are forced to participate, constitute organisational aspects beyond the control of the schools’ influence, except through teacher and student performance in nationally standardised tests, and challenge the vocational ethical intentions of many teachers. For this teacher, they are distasteful, and create fear for the capacity of teachers to be ethical agents in assessing a child’s unique intelligence. The compelling question left for this teacher might be similar to Biesta’s, do we choose what to assess or assess what is valuable? Then we ask, how do we know what is valuable beyond what is nationally standardised to assess? What is permissible, by whom? The ethical event that this teacher suggests is happening is quite well encoded by Biesta,

...accountability is often limited to choice from a set menu and thus lacks a real democratic dimension, that the elasticity of school choice is generally very limited, and also that equality of opportunity hardly ever translates into equality of outcomes. (2009, p. 33)

What are teachers to do?

### *Encounters in America*

In New York City I found some teachers grappling with consequences that flow from the concerns that were deeply touching the hearts of American teachers — standardised assessment and measurement, corporal punishment as discipline, and the attractions of private schools for parents and perhaps teachers. This was expressed to me by one teacher who was lamenting the ways the practice of measuring outcomes which resulted in League Tables lacked an ethical propriety. I am aware that one particular teacher’s comments cannot be applied to American teachers in general but I am reasonably confident that many teachers feel the same

way. There was an event involving literacy and numeracy tests and how their measurement has an impact on educational practice. There had been an increase in standardised testing in the USA due to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (No Child Left Behind). American States, districts and schools that improve achievement are rewarded. Schools were to be penalised if students failed. Mavis, the teacher I spoke with, said that there were no details of the penalty. She assumed that it is economic sanction. States that implement annual reading and mathematics assessments in years 3-8 early were to receive a one-time bonus. She also told me she heard that a school in Kansas was paying eight year olds two dollars for every book they read. She wondered if this was the way to engender a love of reading.

Biesta in his paper 'Good education in an age of measurement: on the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education' (2009, pp. 33-46) helps understand the implications of this teacher's concern where he pointed out that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has resulted in USA Federal research funding being available only for research which uses evidence-based methodology in order to produce scientific information about 'what works'. Evidence-based methodology is an instructional approach, or teaching program which, when scientifically tested, results in consistent positive results. The practice began in medicine in the 1970s and was initially used with students who were diagnosed with autism. Evidence-based methodology was adopted into the field of education with the NCLB Act in 2002, and since then would be used to inform educational practice. The NCLB legislation does not contain any multiple intelligences framework, such as Bloom's *Taxonomy of educational objectives*, Kolb's *Learning Style Inventory*, or de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats*, in test design, or application. It was perhaps the arbitrariness of the legislation that was tearing at teachers' hearts.

American teachers, I found from my partners in conversation, had to confront dilemmas of punishment in their schools. Jolene and Mavis told me that some States in America still supported corporal punishment in government schools, and they thought that many parents chose private schools for their children to avoid submitting them such so-called 'discipline'. Australia banned corporal punishment in government schools between 1985 and 1999, with Tasmania being the last to do so. Teachers here would conceivably see it as anachronism that in America, teachers

use a paddle to spank children.

More than 200,000 US schools pupils, some as young as three, were punished by beatings last year, Human Right Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union say in a report released yesterday. Corporal punishment is legal in 21 states and typically takes the form of ‘paddling’ where the child is struck on the buttocks with a long, wooden board...Educators who beat children have immunity under the law. (*The Australian*, Friday August 22, 2008, p. 9)

Mavis told me she perceived such a terrible state of affairs as ‘spare the rod, spoil the child’ mentality. Boys were more likely to receive corporal punishment, Afro-American and Hispanic students were more likely to be paddled, and parents expected it. Supporters of corporal punishment at her school justified it as better action than suspension because a student can resume learning after punishment instead of having free time out of school. Detention, particularly Saturday detention was inconvenient for teachers and parents. Might not, asked Mavis, corporal punishment be ineffective because it could lead to low self-esteem in students, increased hostility and other negative outcomes, including low retention rates?

A Catholic School teacher, Naomi, who lived in the leafy suburb of Forest Hills, New York City, commented on the differences between private and government schools that related to behavioural problems, concepts of rigour in education and social circumstances. Naomi’s colleagues saw private schools as having a more structured teaching environment and being more rigorous than government schools. Behavioural problems existed to a lesser extent in private schools than in government schools there. Naomi thought that government school teachers must first deal with a variety of social problems before embarking on teaching course content and assessment. She referred to an example in early childhood classes, where one of the teacher’s roles, among other duties, is to change nappies. The school is not an institution for children with disabilities, or a child-minding centre, but an *ordinary* government school. Naomi said, teachers take over mothering roles, and teach children to tell the time, to tie shoes, to button jackets, and to count — things children used to learn at home, she said. As I write, her comments make me imagine my invisible clothesline full of nappies.

What do teachers do when the arbitrariness of political decision-making, societal

prejudices and biases, privileged circumstances and poverty strike at the heart of the virtue of their vocation?

### *Conversing through Scandinavia and Europe*

I had an unexpected research opportunity on board a diminutive canal boat, the *Diana*, over a seven day period on our way through Sweden. With only forty-four passengers, we slowly travelled through the beautiful countryside. The perfect weather made sitting on deck most enjoyable and conducive to conversations with fellow travellers. There were no televisions, radios or mobile phones.

On board was one particular passenger, Stephanie, a Canadian teacher from Vancouver, who engaged me in many discussions about pedagogy. As we enjoyed a glass of wine before dinner, she told me she thoroughly enjoyed interaction with her students. A lively, amiable person, Stephanie taught English in a government school in Quebec, where French language was a compulsory subject, and all teachers had to be bi-lingual. She said the Quebec Government aimed to preserve the French language by compelling its use through language laws and compulsory education policies, although according to her, First Nation children were exempt from the language law. Teachers were not. A friend of Stephanie's wanted to teach in the Montreal area but first had to exhibit proficiency in French. She had to spend many hours at a French language course before being granted a position. The same laws and policies affected student assessments and awards. Some schools permitted students to transfer credits from one school to another but it was still complicated and problematic. The students must furnish official transcripts, and some schools could charge a transfer credit assessment fee. Each school had its own requirements, and a different way of dealing with transfer credits. Transferability of qualifications appeared complicated because of the arbitrariness of the procedures.

Here I pause again to ponder the choppy arbitrary worlds of politics, history and tradition that masks teachers' capacities and possibilities for aspiring to bring the deep sense of justice and fairness that lies in their hearts and souls into their teaching and assessing lives. How might a teacher be an agent of virtue in such worlds?

My discussions on that little canal boat found me contemplating different systems in different countries. Disembarking the little boat and travelling by ferry in

Friedrichshafen, the pace was slower still. In Denmark, the trains were running very late because the hot weather had buckled the tracks. The journey from Friedrichshafen to Odense took many hours longer than anticipated and serendipitously created another opportunity for conversation with a fellow traveller. After preliminary niceties, such as nodding and smiling at one another, commenting on the weather and the terrible state of the railway, we asked the reasons for our journeys. Astrid, a Danish lecturer who taught mathematics at London University, was returning home on holiday. One of her tasks at the university was to travel to Singapore to prepare students for external exams. According to her, there were over 9,000 London University students who lived and studied in Singapore at major local institutions. Students took their exams locally, but academics in London assess them — an arrangement they are happy about. Students accepted the assessment was fair and took pride in gaining the certification, which gave them a positive status because of the name of the issuing university. Astrid was proud of her achievements in Singapore.

Germany became a stopping place for me. It disclosed to me a far richer experience of understanding an education system in another country than I gained from the more casual meetings with teachers I met on my way. My particular affinity with Germany came about after several lengthy visits there. One visit was to a small town of about 11,000 people in Bavaria. The Goethe Institute had granted me a nine-week study trip after I fulfilled certain prerequisites — the ability to speak and write German fluently, good knowledge of grammar, and cultural literacy. The Bavarian dialect proved to be somewhat of a challenge. I was there in the northern winter, so different to ours in Tasmania. I had never before lived in deep snow where avalanches fell from my roof and icy footpaths made me so cautious.

The Institute arranged for me to visit various schools in the area, where I met students who seemed similar to those in a middle class area school in Tasmania. I taught in four schools — a comprehensive high school, a primary school where I mostly read Christmas stories, a Rudolf Steiner school and a district high school. I helped with English classes in a college, the Ludwig Thoma Gymnasium, where students had to pass an entrance examination. I was also a guest speaker at a sanatorium where about fifteen adults were recovering from various illnesses.

In one classroom, I observed the teacher stay at the front on a raised dais. He did not wander around the room as I was wont to do. The students at the back of the class went largely unnoticed. I saw a kind of assessment methodology of one teacher in the schools I visited, and wondered whether this kind of pedagogy was common. In a test, students were to translate from English to German. The piece the teacher chose was an article about the rabbit-proof fence that was built in Western Australia to protect crops and pasture lands from the destructive plague of rabbits. He might have known that this fence was also used discriminately as a tool of the White Australia Policy to keep Aboriginal people in a reserve away from White people. He might simply have wanted to draw the students' attention to an environmental problem. I felt though that it was unlikely that the students would have heard of the fence. I could see that many of them were puzzled. It occurred to me then that the teacher was trying to trick them, perhaps me—was this a language test, a test of general knowledge, or an attempt on his part to raise an issue that might dupe me? How ethical are such tricks?

Apart from this incident, my Bavarian experience my immersion in the linguistic landscape and cultural experiences that the Institute organized for me—a day in Regensburg, two days in Vienna, and one in Salzburg to visit the Christmas market—enhanced my German language teaching, and my confidence and capacity to teach across the curriculum. As well I had developed a rather ironic questioning of methods of assessment.

### *Re-visiting Germany*

When I returned to Germany later and when my inquiry was drawing me more and more deeply into philosophical inquiry, I made two further visits of four weeks and six weeks. Armed with a letter of introduction from my supervisor, I visited several schools, some of which were in the former East Germany. I spoke with teachers, sometimes briefly and other times they were able to spend longer speaking with me.

Gadamer's work bespeaks of involvement with literature. One cannot 'know' literature in the same way that one acquires 'knowledge' through measurement and calculation. Scientific rigour is taken to mean objectivity. Gadamer points out that an object can mean a thing or something objected or opposed to. Taking the side of qualitative research, he says that scientific discoveries are unnecessary because

human thought is “continually dominated by questions for which science promises no answer” (1977, p. 109). He maintains that the spoken word, after reading, is valid for understanding. For Gadamer “a conversation has a spirit of its own” and “the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner” (p. 383). In other words, individuals conversing never quite know in advance how the dialogue will progress and even detours can be fruitful. In *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Gadamer refers to Jaspers’ contention that the self-limitation of science should be mediated (p. 138). Jaspers wrote extensively on the threat to human freedom posed by modern science and modern economic and political institutions, no doubt coloured by his World War II experiences when he had to relinquish his teaching post because his wife was Jewish. Jaspers was in no doubt that,

He who believes that he understands everything is no longer engaged in philosophical thought. He who takes scientific insight for knowledge of being itself and as a whole has succumbed to scientific superstition. (1951, p. 45)

Jaspers (1973, p. 20) created the concept of the boundary or limit situation (*Grenzsituation*) in order to advocate the important social and collective conditions of human integrity. Boundary situations such as distress, conflict, responsibility, and chance occur in human life when individuals must make choices without needing to be guided by scientific knowledge.

Teachers in Germany have had to make difficult choices over the years—mostly political. The teachers I spoke with tried to remain politically neutral, especially those from the former German Democratic Republic. In Rhineland Palatinate, I interviewed a teacher and a group of students, and spoke informally with some parents. I came to understand from them that, in the German system, the Federal Government (*Bundesregierung*) delegates overall responsibility for education to the States (*Länder*). There are sixteen States in all and each resolves to create its own distinctive characteristics, each becoming markedly different, depending on the political ideals of the various states. Put simply, as they led me to understand, conservative forces, like the male-dominated Christian Democratic Union (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands*) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (*Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern*) are not averse to an elite system

of schooling, whereas the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) prefers a more egalitarian approach. The Social Democrats espouse freedom and social justice. Generally in education there are common structures and minimum requirements, with states comparing assessment and exams customary.

The structure of the Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany is set out on the Federal States Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultus- und Wissenschaftsministerien der Länder*) website, and the *Goethe Institut* describes German schools and training (*Schule und Ausbildung*) on its website. The German school system separates children after primary school into one of three tiers: a *Hauptschule*, which is a school that delivers basic education at a lower secondary level; a *Realschule*, which offers a more extensive general education at lower secondary level, but has the opportunity to go on to upper secondary level, and can lead to vocational courses or to university education; and a *Gymnasium* which offers in-depth study for students wanting to go on to university. Students who are not up to requirements in certain major subjects will not be promoted to the next class. Reaching the requirements for promotion stage puts assessment demands on teachers and students. Teachers at the *Realschule* must be more qualified than their primary school counterparts, and have a minimum of five years university training and an exam after two years of service.

A teacher from a *Gymnasium* explained to me that there was some unrest among teachers at the moment. In some schools, assessment was secondary to behaviour management because there were more fundamental difficulties, usually with older students. Students kicked doors in, used waste paper baskets as footballs and cigarette lighters to set off fireworks in class, and tore framed pictures from the walls. There were cases of spray can brandishing, jumping on desks, throwing chairs, smashing windows and computers, and bullying, or beating teachers. German people called it '*mobbing*'. In Australia, we would call it bullying to the extreme. In East Germany, students 'mobbed' teachers, videoed the incident by mobile phones and posted the videos on the Internet. The teacher said he felt that management did not support his colleagues in resolving the situation. He mentioned that in areas where there were many immigrant students, part of the problem related to different cultural norms, and a lack of language skills. Boys had a greater propensity to

violence, whereas girls engaged in verbal abuse. Though difficulties were being addressed, when a school had a certain percentage of foreigners, native speakers tended to withdraw their children and send them to private schools, such as Rudolf Steiner schools.

Some teachers gave structural reasons for the lack of attention to and assessment of pupils because their time was increasingly taken up with administrative chores. They told me that group assessment or peer assessment was generally not undertaken in the state schools I visited. I found an example of the type of situation a teacher in Germany might experience in the local newspaper. The *Tagesspiegel* 30 March 2006 published a letter which had been sent a month previously by the staff at *Rütli* High School to the Berlin Senate's Department of Education. The school is situated in Neukölln, a Berlin suburb characterised by poverty, high unemployment and a large proportion of foreigners. Only 17 per cent of pupils at *Rütli* High School were from families of German origin. Teachers wrote the letter to complain about the aggressive behaviour of some of the pupils and their own desperate situation as guardians of youngsters deprived of any meaningful perspective. The letter stated that unacceptable behaviour of students in many classes is caused when students completely reject the subjects to be taught, and display attitudes of utter contempt. Students treat teachers dismissively and ignore instructions. Some teachers would only enter certain classes if they had mobile phones in case they needed to call for help. The teachers wanted *Rütli* closed down. One of the teachers protested they had written their letter to the newspaper too late — the situation had escalated by the time those in charge of the school did something about it (Susanne Vieth-Entus, 2007).

If were to find myself amongst those protesting teachers, I know my morale and my capacity to teach passionately and assess fairly would be seriously compromised by the upheaval that the students' behaviour was causing. Teachers would find it difficult to treat students with respect or empathy if their behaviour is such as exhibited at *Rütli*. What was causing the rebellious force of the students that teachers would write collectively to the Senate and publish it in the newspaper? What passion of virtue and courage drove their inspiration to express a collective voice publicly?

The teachers' voices hit the news time and again whilst I was in Germany and I watched and listened to many discussions about how to solve the basic problems inherent in multicultural situations. It seems that some solutions have been found. Since that time, the school has been integrated into a new facility with new programs, renovated classrooms, and a museum to inform visitors about the school's past. The last I read about it was in the *Spiegel online Schulspiegel* (Annick Eimer, 2010). The headline was 'Vom Schlachtfeld zum Bildungsidyll', from Battlefield to Educational Idyll.

If I believe that it is through telling personal stories of their lived experiences in the school, that teachers can make cultural and social change possible, I surmise that it must have been with the power of the stories, the passion and will to share them and the virtue and courage of teachers' agency that a certain group of Rütli teachers motivated other group members to rise to the cause and *ethos* of teaching.

### *Getting to the essence of teachers' experience*

The garments on my clothesline have taken on a distinctly international essence. The term essence stems from the Greek *ousia*, which means the inner essential nature of a thing, the true being of a thing. The Latin *essentia*, from *esse* means 'to be'. Essence is what makes a thing what it is. van Manen refers to Husserl's idea that 'essence' "often refers to the *whatness* of things as opposed to their *thatness* (i.e., their existence)" (1990, p. 177).

van Manen submits that when we are capturing the essence of lived experience in our research narratives,

We are less interested in the factual status of particular instances: whether something actually happened, how often it tends to happen, or how the occurrence of an experience is related to the prevalence of other conditions or events. (1990, p. 10)

Instead of asking, for example, 'How do teachers actually assess the work of students?' Rather I might ask, 'What is the nature or essence of the experience of assessing students' work?' That way I might better understand what a particular experience is like for the teacher.

Even though I do not aim to attach meaning specific to particular cultures, I

nevertheless believe it is possible to learn from the attitudes of another culture while making observations of ordinary day-to-day educational experiences. Then these experiences may have parallels with other teachers' experiences.

Gadamer (2004) suggests we might not only learn from examining our own Western cultural traditions, we might look to the East as well, as Richard E. Palmer reports him saying,

At the end of a conversation I recently edited (in "The Greeks, Our Teachers," in *Gadamer in Conversation*), Gadamer unexpectedly replied to a classicist professor who understood him to be saying we really must go back to the ancient Greeks to find wisdom today, saying: "Yes, but perhaps we have something to learn from the East..." Here he is showing respect for another tradition with another history, suggesting that he could have something to learn from another culture.

(Retrieved March 1, 2013 <http://textos.pucp.edu.pe/pdf/2095.pdf>)

Although it seemed that Gadamer found ancient ethical thought attractive, he actually points us in the opposite direction. Heeding Gadamer's suggestion to look to the East, I engaged in dialogue with two teachers who have links with Asia. The teachers had been employed in Japanese and Chinese schools. What I learnt from the interviewees in personal meetings, I can intertwine with the lives, expectations and dilemmas of many teachers.

I undertook two in-depth interviews, one with a native Japanese teacher and the other with an English-born teacher who spent many years in China, and is now teaching in Australia. Both respondents gave verbal informed consent and were keen to discuss their teaching experiences. Palmer (1999) finds that conversation and dialogue are key terms in Gadamer's philosophy, and Jeff Malpas (2009) declares "Indeed, he (Gadamer) is one of the few philosophers for whom the 'interview' has become a significant category of philosophical output" (Retrieved March 1, 2013 from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives>). van Manen (1990) writes that the interview "in human sciences...serves very specific purposes." van Manen believes these purposes are to explore and gather experiential narrative material.

The main aim of my interviews was to gain an understanding of educational practice and in particular, to capture the essence of the assessment experience. The

interviews were unstructured with open questions to encourage the teachers to elaborate on their narratives. I made brief notes during the conversations and immediately afterwards reconstituted the narratives I heard. I have substituted pseudonyms for privacy's sake.

Akari Kibuishi, native to Japan and now the Japanese Language Adviser for government colleges in Tasmania, has spent considerable time teaching in Japan and in Australia. She is experienced both as a teacher in these countries in government schools, and as a parent of a secondary school-age daughter who is a student in a non-government school in Japan. As she is a rather reserved person, I was grateful to her for engaging in dialogue with me and trusting me with accounts of her experiences. Kibuishi speaks of 17 and 18 year old students in Japan.

Kibuishi explained that schooling in Japan is compulsory from year 1 to year 9, and it is free. There is no preparatory school. Years 10, 11, 12 are not compulsory, but places are highly sought after and students are very competitive. In the larger cities such as Tokyo and Osaka, private schools are generally perceived as 'better', but government schools are quite alright, Kibuishi says. At the time we spoke, the cost to attend a government school was about \$2000 per annum, compared to \$20,000 to \$30,000 per annum for a private school. Japanese schools have fewer subjects to choose from than in Tasmania. About 70 per cent of the academic subjects are compulsory and 30 per cent optional, for example music or art. Foreign language is compulsory, and in some schools, from about six years of age. Sport is important, with baseball being the main sporting activity played in schools. The year 1 to year 9 syllabuses are the same over the whole country and the Japanese education ministry decides which texts are on the curriculum or, in some cases, there is a choice between texts. A typical student's day is from 8.30am to 3.00pm at school, then sport, then home around 5 or 6.00pm to eat. Schools have three terms. A typical school conducts two exams in terms I and II and one exam at the end of the year, when the term is usually shorter. Students are then streamed at the end of the year. The levels seem to equate good behaviour with academic achievement. Level 4.5 or above is good behaviour and below 3.0 is very bad behaviour, Kibuishi told me. After five levels of junior high, students are streamed into 10 levels.

There are many school rules. For example, makeup is not allowed, nor

piercings, nor hair dye, nor nail polish. Students are required to wear a uniform to both government and non-government schools. Members of the public can easily identify them if they want to complain or praise certain students. There is more responsibility attached to a school. For example, if police find students in town at 9.00 pm, their teacher is phoned and expected to remedy situation. Kibuishi said she would think it unethical to relinquish charge of her students. As a school-based teacher, she accepted her duty to supervise at weekends. In spite of having extra duties, she said there is considerable support for teachers.

In Japan, 95 per cent of universities require English as an entry prerequisite. There is currently much discussion amongst educators whether to introduce English earlier across the board. Assessment, which is mostly summative according to Kibuishi, is a serious undertaking because the university entrance exam is 'severe and highly competitive'. To enable students to better their opportunities, there is a 'Cram school' which runs from 7.00pm to 9.00pm at night, two to three times a week. There are teachers skilled at organising 'cramming' because results are expected or rather, required. Students are therefore focussed and prepared to work harder. They mostly study Mathematics and English. Students who cram are respected. There is no stigma attached to attending these evening schools, because many of their friends attend. Compared with the 70 per cent of students who go to high school, roughly 45 per cent go on to university. Lately, there is talk of a Toyota University said Kibuishi and she wondered if it was to be a serious educational contribution to society.

While my interview with Kibuishi was from the perspective of a native Japanese teacher, my second interview about Chinese educational practice is reported through the eyes of an Australian teacher and may therefore be involuntarily subjective. Angela Hogan is an experienced English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher who has taught in China and in Australia. Angela is of Anglo-Saxon background and was able to comment on her experiences in China from a non-native point of view. van Manen reminds us that we "cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience" (1990, p. 10). Reflection is always retrospective, rather than introspective, and it is recollective. It is reflection that is already passed or lived through. Angela reflects that there is a high regard for teachers, but says this is

gradually changing. She said that teachers in China have university degrees similar to teachers in Australia, and that until recently all the schools were government schools but there are now some new private schools in Beijing and Shanghai. The private schools are closely aligned with the state schools regarding teaching and assessment. Schooling is very competitive, from kindergarten on, Angela told me. Students in kindergarten have a stripe on their sleeves to indicate first, second and third places in the class because parents want to know this.

Summative assessment of Chinese students begins very early. Younger students are expected to sit still. They are strictly reprimanded if they do not. Another sanction is public humiliation in front of a class. Loss of face brings shame on the individual and school reputation is very important. Corporal punishment has been banned in China in theory, but in practice, students are caned or paddled in some schools. Angela reports that, though teachers can hit, it does not usually occur because it is deemed not good teaching practice. In the older years the behaviour system relies on a monitor. A list is posted and students take it in turns being a 'behaviour monitor', which seems to work quite well, she said.

There are no single gender schools. The classes are mixed and large—usually around sixty pupils, which means there is a lack of individual attention. The teaching practice is usually 'chalk and talk', and much of the learning is by rote. There is a large volume of work to get through quickly and students have to keep up. Text books in Mandarin are produced centrally by the State Communist Party and radio and television are broadcast in Mandarin. In country areas teachers switch between the local dialect and Mandarin, but in higher education, for example, university teachers speak only Mandarin.

The assessment for years 11 and 12 is 100 percent external. Prior to this, there is constant testing and placement. Every week, every subject is tested. There are tests set by the state once a month, but if students want to get into top 95 per cent (for university), then they complete small test every day. Exams take place two times a year and the bar is set very high for university entrance. There is pressure to do well, and constant pressure to see where the student is situated in the class. The subjects are academic, not vocational, and therefore not competency-based. The pass mark is higher than in Australia, and 'fail' exists. There appears to be a definite black and

white approach. There are no parents and friends associations as we have in Australia, and the parent/teacher relationship has no great impact, according to Angela.

Although an egalitarian approach lingers, a social divide nevertheless exists between city and country. Many country students finish school at year six because their parents are too poor to support further education. In the cities, the burgeoning middle class appears to be materialistic and the education system has not caught up, observes Angela. It could explain the increase of Chinese students coming to Tasmania. In the last five years, independent thinkers have been encouraged but unlike in Japan, students generally cannot disagree with teachers. Angela said she was looked up to because foreigners have higher status than locals in China.

Looking to the East and hearing the narratives of Kibuishi and Angela provided me with perceptions of Japanese and Chinese students' classroom experiences and the relationships they have with their teachers. Though the two narratives tell about particular individual involvement in Eastern schools, there are parallel themes with Western teachers' narratives. For example, the group of teachers on board the ship, in light of their experiences, held strong views on how assessment might be ethically practised. American teachers too, felt concern about standardised assessment. They disliked corporal punishment as a sanction for misbehavior. In China, although permissible, my interviewee did not feel the need resort to corporal punishment. Her students respected her. In Japan there is high regard and significant support for teachers. While many German teachers were mindful to be politically nonaligned, some found the courage to publicly express their concerns about rebellious students. They were not afraid to seek ways to ameliorate the situation they found themselves involved in. The teachers' telling of particular experiences, however varied, lead me to identify the emotions involved in the way they teach and assess. By contemplating the essence of the various experiences, I perceive that positive emotional responses influence the process of educating.

## Chapter 5

### Assessment and Expectant Students

My clothesline, on which I am pegging my mental apparel of many shapes and sizes, is filling up with all manner of garments. Garment and garnish derive from the French *garnir*, to garnish or prepare. When I put on garments, I am preparing or dressing up and when I hang out my garments I am allowing them to be visible. I relate now some visible events of my lived experience of assessment. I integrate these events in the conceptual framework of my thesis in order to come to some understanding of the total account. I do not claim my account as all-encompassing. First, I describe what is available for my students to study and how this might be assessed. I then contemplate directions in learning, equity in the classroom and methods of gaining insight into ways that students learn.

Sokolowski writes about insight occurring,

Suppose we go from a vague use of a name to a distinct one: we achieve the thought, we understand something of the thing being named, and the intelligibility clicks into place for us. (2008, p. 154)

Our world is made intelligible through language. By using distinct ethical names or terms, my understanding connects to a capability of dealing with equity involving assessment. Care with assessment is very important. When marking, we must recognise that we expect certain answers because we know what we are looking for. Stop and think that if the question were interpreted differently and certain assumptions were made, the answer may be correct from the student's point of view.

Sokolowski explains that we go from uncertain experience of a thing, in my case, methods of assessment, to an insight into what it is, into some of its essentials. I present five models which cater for a wide range of learning abilities, and therefore possible assessment tools. In order to inform my teaching and assessing, my classroom research is directed towards my gaining understanding of how students feel about my subjects. I conducted anonymous student feedback surveys early in the year and again at the beginning of third term to ascertain students' perceptions. The surveys indicate the students' satisfaction with the actual subject.

I undertook a longitudinal study to research the effects of absenteeism as I was also interested to explore the nexus between student's results and their attendance at college. While attendance per se is not directly relevant to assessment, students' results are affected if they absent themselves from class. Absence can be caused by illness or by lack of engagement on the part of the student, which then involves teacher reaction. I demonstrate modes of assessment that I employ, show how students relate to their teachers, including pastoral care teachers, discuss the significance of the student-teacher relationship, and cite some sobering experiences.

I look specifically at year 11 and 12 students and subject choices available to them. It is expected that students will choose, with the help of subject teachers, a course they are interested in and that will assist them to achieve their chosen pathway. There are over two hundred subjects on offer at my college. Some are pre-tertiary, leading to a university pathway, some are non-pre-tertiary, leading to TAFE perhaps, or making up the hours required for attendance. Most students combine pre-tertiary and non-pre-tertiary subjects to make up their loads. Vocational Education Training (VET) packages are also offered. These may lead to jobs or apprenticeships. Subjects are either solely internally assessed within the college, or are a mixture of internal and external assessment by the TQA, usually 50 per cent of each. Subjects that are internally assessed can be awarded grades measured against criteria, or competencies, and although internally assessed, standards are set down by the TQA. The standards of As, Bs and Cs throughout the year are translated into either an excellent achievement (EA) a high achievement (HA) a commendable achievement (CA), or a satisfactory achievement (SA).

The pre-tertiary subjects are externally examined by the TQA and receive scores needed for tertiary entrance. Some universities have prerequisite subjects—usually English, Mathematics and Science, depending on the faculty and some faculties require higher scores than others, for example, Medicine. Other year 11 and 12 subjects are measured against competencies, that is, the student is either competent or not competent. There are subjects available that are termed “college-based”. These are not under the auspices of the TQA, but are offered and assessed only by the college. In light of all the pathways and various means of assessing the many

subjects, a sound set of ethical guidelines as a means of promoting equality in the classroom is desirable.

I was given the opportunity to make a contribution to fair assessment of Behavioural Science when TQA invited me to join in writing a syllabus and standards document. The past pre-tertiary syllabus was fairly rigid and narrow, and during the course of teaching it, I found that there is not enough time to cover all the required subject matter of the course, *and* investigate more enjoyable topics, *or* go more deeply into notions that may interest a particular group of students. With this in mind, the writing party attempted to make the new syllabus more ‘user friendly’ to allow teachers and students to follow certain lines of enquiry if an interest is shown, but still keep within the subject discipline. Nevertheless, some teachers will ‘teach to the exam’ because students chase university entrance scores. Pushing students towards gaining high exam scores “always comes at a (high) price – perhaps the most difficult task for the teacher is how to deal with such trade-offs” maintains Biesta (2012, p. 40). The problem lies here because the examination allows a student merely to restate information learnt during the year. Students have been known to memorise entire essays, which is enough to gain a pass in the subject. A highly prescriptive curriculum denies teachers the autonomy to make responses to what Biesta calls the “always unique situations that emerge from the encounter between teachers and their students” (p. 40). During my time as Chief Marking Examiner, I have encouraged markers to reward candidates who demonstrate a deeper understanding of the subject.

Non-pre-tertiary Behavioural Science subjects have much more latitude to explore ideas, especially contemporary ones. Students are much more interested in the sphere of their own lived experience, rather than in Marx, Weber or Durkheim, the sociological giants of their era (Ian Robertson, 1989, p. 9). Pre-tertiary students on the other hand, need to have an understanding of the strong influence on Western sociology that these social thinkers had.

The assessment of non-pre-tertiary subjects, internal to the college, can be much more relaxed, while still adhering to the standards set down by the TQA. Such an approach may be inflexible, or the award too high, in which case it appears the teacher and the school are doing extremely well. An ‘excellent achievement’ from

one school might be equal to a 'commendable achievement' from another. There are state-wide moderation meetings for non-pre-tertiary subjects where teachers may agree on a certain evaluation, but back in the classroom, especially under pressure, some teachers tend to revert to their 'comfort zone'. TQA does question results if they appear atypical. For example, one year a whole class received 'excellent achievements', reminiscent of Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon where "all the children are above average" (*A Prairie Home Companion*, 2006).

In a senior secondary college it is practical to focus on specific subjects because students want to specialise in order to follow certain careers. Teachers generally conduct classes in one faculty, rather than teaching a whole range of subjects. The departmentalising of subject areas has evolved and subject subcultures have emerged. Dean Fink and Louise Stoll (1998, p. 317) argue that "many secondary teachers tend to be more loyal to their departments than their school". Alister Jones laments that subcultures have "direct influence on the structure of lessons and classroom strategies". He goes on to observe that social studies teachers focussed on societal aspects, and English teachers focussed on journalism and media studies and that "no one teacher had a broad view of technology education" (1999, p. 170).

### *A dawning cyber age*

In my lived experience, Tasmanian teachers on the whole do have a broad overview of technology education, evidenced by their use of electronic whiteboards, multimedia projectors, intra- and internet web pages, and the many databases which are available. Software in the language laboratory enables me to control from my computer what the class logs onto. I can check what is on each student's screen, speak to the whole class, or to just one student. The equipment is a helpful teaching and learning tool, which I would not use exclusively, but in addition to other approaches. Teachers email students, attendance is entered directly onto the database, as is reporting midyear, and end of year results are exported to TQA. Students word-process most of their assignments, use Excel for graphing survey results, and set up blogs.

Senior secondary students in computing classes five years ago had a basic knowledge of information technology. The students coming through from the high schools now are much more computer literate because they are learning earlier in

primary schools. It may indicate that teachers have embraced the new technology, in spite of the difficulty of bringing about change. It is true, as Jones (1999, p. 170) concludes: “innovation takes time and ownership”, but is reluctance to embrace technology a lack of knowledge on teacher’s part? Does technology’s effectiveness need to be questioned? Robyn Ewing and David Smith raise issues concerning ethical questions related to cyber-learning. They are concerned whether cyber-learning is “equally attractive and effective for all learners” (2000, pp. 65-68).

Technology generally holds little terror for modern children, and they “may know more about [it] than their teachers and be able to access learning more easily through it” (Hargreaves, 1997, p. 6). With technology being more accessible now, and more user-friendly, teachers can co-learn with students in this period of rapid change. Students of today are referred to as ‘digital natives’ and the previous generation as digital immigrants. Marc Prensky (2005) maintains that “students of today are no longer the people the educational system was designed to teach”. He goes on, [They are] “all native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the internet.” I would add *Facebook* and *Twitter* to this. The change has not been incremental, submits Prensky, “but a really big discontinuity has taken place; the arrival and rapid dissemination of digital technology” (p. 29). Teachers on the other hand, are not born into this technological world. They adopt new aspects at some later point in life.

### *What is essential to learning?*

Adopting a new curriculum was not popular though. Dubbed “a curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century” by the Tasmanian Department of Education, *Essential Learnings* (ELs) was developed as a new curriculum. I focus on my experience with *ELs* to indicate that unless a radical change is accepted and fully embraced by the teaching profession, it is doomed to fail. Teachers who cannot muster any enthusiasm for change are not likely to engage their students, who soon pick up on teachers who are lukewarm about such curricula. ELs were introduced in 2005. The curriculum was organised around five “essentials” which were thought to describe what young people needed to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These five “essentials” were listed as Thinking, Communicating, Personal Futures, Social Responsibility, and World Futures. As well, there were 18 elements which described what students needed to

learn in each of the five essentials. Examples of the elements included Being Literate, Being Numerate and Inquiry. The essentials and the elements were to be the same from kindergarten to year 10.

In 2005 feedback on the progress of only three elements was reported: being literate, being numerate, and maintaining wellbeing. It was envisaged that reports would gradually include information on the progress against other elements as assessment against them began, and that the full 18 elements would be reported on in 2009 (Annual Report, Department of Education, 7 October, 2005). However, following the 2006 State election when David Bartlett became Education Minister, he spoke of reducing the number of Essential Learning elements from 18 down to about 6 or 8. (Stateline Tasmania Broadcast: 30/06/2006). The ELs framework of teaching was abandoned when Bartlett became State Premier in 2008.

When introduced, the ELs reform was intended to enhance the learning environment for the students. How to assess and evaluate the ELs was of concern to teachers, and opinion was divided. The Tasmanian Branch of the Australian Education Union recognised difficulties with assessing and reporting ELs. There is anecdotal evidence amongst colleagues, and from Education Union representatives, of teachers becoming stressed, to the point of resigning. Might it be that by its very nature, there always has been, and always will be a certain amount of stress attached to the teaching profession?

Many students were unhappy about the ELs program. I am told that there was a student petition against the program at one high school. Some of the reasons they did not like the ELs included: ‘could not go further’, ‘everyone passed’, and ‘I didn’t learn from it’. Some students’ comments were reported in *The Hobart Mercury*. When asked, “What do you think of the *Essential Learnings* Curriculum?” Answers were mixed,

It’s really bad. It’s proven to be worse than it was before. They say it’s really detailed, but it doesn’t give us enough information about where we’re at.

They say that if it works it will be exactly the same as the As, Bs and Cs system, but why change it if it’s going to be the same?

I think our year is being used as a test, we are the guinea pigs. It gives us a chance to show our skills, but in different ways. The new system gives us a chance to bludge and not do work, because it's our choice whether to think or not. ('Vox Pop', 7 October 2005)

The 'Vox Pop' comments are from an opportunity or grab sample, using whoever is available to participate, so it is not representative. However, the comments do demonstrate that ELs were a subject of discussion among students and the wider community, and had aroused the media's interest. With a new State Premier, in 2007 a completely different approach to education was mooted.

### *New directions*

Following a consultation period mid 2007 the Tasmanian Government decided to transition to the *Tasmania Tomorrow* model. The initiative was aimed at improving post-secondary education, and commenced 1 January 2009. It was predicted that the restructure would be completed before the start of the 2011 school year. The Tasmanian Academy came into existence 1 January 2009. Hobart, Hellyer, Don and Newstead Colleges changed to the new structure. Two other statutory authorities were formed, the Tasmanian Polytechnic and the Tasmanian Skills Institute. Each authority was governed by an independent Board which reported to the Minister for Education. The Polytechnic was to focus on providing vocational qualifications, while the Academy focussed on preparing students for tertiary education. Initially Academy and Polytechnic campuses were located on the one site (Tasmania Department of Education-*Tasmania Tomorrow* public document). The model was partially dismantled, due to teacher and union concern, before it was completely implemented. The initial changes were rushed and poorly executed, and therefore were sternly criticised by the Tasmanian Teachers Union.

One idea of *Tasmania Tomorrow* was to improve retention rates of students after year 10. Tasmania has one of the lowest post-year 10 and 11 rates in Australia. In 2006, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) males in Tasmania had the lowest apparent retention rate (56.4 per cent) and females the second lowest (73.3 per cent) after the Northern Territory. The Australian average is 69.0 per cent and 80.6 per cent respectively. The ABS advises that the ARR:

Refers to the number of full-time students in Year 12 divided by the number of full-time students in the first year of secondary school (Year 7 in NSW, the ACT, Vic. and Tas.; Year 8 in Qld, SA, the NT and WA) when the Year 12 cohort began secondary school. Care should be taken in interpreting apparent retention rates as they do not account for students repeating a year or migrating into or out of the relevant school student population. (Table 2 Education and training, State Summary, 7 August 2007)

Even accounting for students who repeat or migrate, it is obvious that there is a major difference between Tasmanian rates and those of the mainland. The wider community hoped that more positive outcomes would be delivered and that all students would be engaged, which in turn, would ultimately help the Tasmanian economy. While the ideas may be soundly based, the introduction of the sweeping changes was handled in such a way as to foment uncertainty among teachers at senior secondary colleges. Many teachers felt that their concerns were not taken into consideration. *The Tasmanian Education Reporter* (2010) when writing about *Tasmania Tomorrow* states,

Currently our TAFE and PY10 members are continuing to feel the pressure of the changes being implemented through the *Tasmania Tomorrow* reforms while trying to achieve the best outcomes for their students. (Volume 17 Number 2 • 18 February 2010)

Following this, in March, the President of the Tasmanian Branch of the AEU released the following message:

The year has begun with stop work meetings being conducted around the state by post year 10 members opposing the *Tasmania Tomorrow* reforms. (*Ed.Lines* volume 9 • number 1 • 2010 | 3)

Dissent was used as a political tool and taken up by various factions. Several colleges made the transition to the academy and polytechnic model, and the rest were due to change over in 2011. A compromise on the reforms occurred in 2010 — called ‘refinements’. In reality it seemed a rollback of reforms occurred.

### *Is equity just?*

Is bureaucratisation of teaching practice an adverse move? Politicians may try to coerce teachers and teachers may in turn oppress students. How then might a teacher avoid oppressive situations in education? Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* writes of struggles for equity and justice. He draws parallels between traditional teaching methods and the means used by oppressors to maintain control. He attributes to such tradition and narrative, a *narrative* character that exists in many schools — the teacher is the “narrating subject” and the students are “listening objects” (2000, p. 57). The relationship between them, teacher and student, has no transforming power. Students can memorise and repeat information without knowing what it really means. Freire calls it the “banking” concept of education. Students are allowed to receive and store deposits. Here the teacher is knowledgeable and the students are ignorant. It sets up the student-teacher relationship as opposites. The students’ creative abilities are stymied in this model.

Marxist theorists might agree with Freire that “banking” education serves to recreate the class system and thus disadvantages many students. Marx depicted schooling practices as preparing students for the workforce, particularly in an industrial economy. Punctuality, passivity and obedience cultivate the right attitudes for working futures. Children of lower-class parents tend to be eased out of the system and into the workforce early. Middle and upper-class children are more likely to continue onto universities (Robertson, 1989, p. 281). Inequality is legitimised if it is perceived as fair. It gives rise to the idea of a meritocracy, where hard work or scarce talent is rewarded. However, lack of opportunity or an “uneven playing field” is not taken into account. My dilemma concerning equity and justice re-surfaces here.

A classic study by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976, p. 110) found a direct relationship between educational attainment and family background. They concluded that there is hardly any relationship between IQ and academic qualifications. Further, they maintain that there is a “close correspondence” between the workplace and the education system—that education is subservient to the needs of those who control the workforce, or as Marx would put it, the owners of the means of production. Daphne Habibis and Maggie Walter in *Social inequality in Australia:*

*discourses, realities and futures* echo Bowles and Gintis' sentiments. "...Students from privileged backgrounds are automatically advantaged within the education system as they have been socialised into the dominant culture" (2008, p. 132).

I return to Freire, whose idea was not new. Freire proposes to liberate education with a "problem-posing" model. Both teacher and student are taught through dialogue. They are jointly responsible for a process in which the student learns and the teacher learns how better to teach. Alfred Whitehead in his lectures *Process and Reality* (1929/1978) espouses a similar philosophy, where teacher and student jointly gain knowledge. Whitehead in *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* writes of creativity being a definitive value. "Students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development" (1959/1929, Preface, p. v). The pre-condition of this statement is that teachers should also be alive. Whitehead writes that the successful accomplishment of education depends on a delicate adjustment of many variable factors because, "We are dealing with human minds, and not dead matter" (p. 4). Most teachers would not deny the validity of Freire and Whitehead's philosophy, but the difficulty then arises how to ethically assess this type of learning.

Although research into the ethics associated with assessment of Behavioural Science subjects is a focus of my thesis, it has become apparent during my ongoing research that most academic assessment has common characteristics. After teaching and assessing pre-tertiary Sociology, Introduction to Sociology and Psychology, pre-tertiary English, Business Computing, and non-pre-tertiary German, the commonalities of criterion-based assessment becomes apparent. For example, some of the TQA generic criteria across the subjects are: "communicate ideas and information," "plan, organise and complete activities," and "work constructively with others." Subject specific criteria are: "demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological terms and concepts," or "demonstrate understanding and appreciation of text structures and features," and so on. It can be seen that the criteria are similar, but specify the subject in the wording.

Vocational subjects, on the other hand, though having similar wording, for example, "Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of computer terms, concepts and applications" are usually competency-based. That is, performance-based

assessment which determines student achievement in skills and knowledge against a predetermined benchmark. There are usually six competencies, but some subjects may have up to ten. Each competency in the syllabus is described by performance standards. Final assessment is an overall on-balance end result based on evidence supplied by the student. A student is deemed either competent or not. All is not lost if the student is deemed ‘not yet competent’. Further opportunities are available for learners to demonstrate competency. The question arises then — how many times do we let students re-sit a test, or re-submit an assignment? Do we keep going until everyone has passed? It has been suggested by a member of a VET audit team that students should get 100per cent. Might this not be a counterproductive goal because it would encourage teachers to make tests and assignments so easy that students are able to achieve 100per cent?

I draw attention to Biesta’s concerns, in an interview with Philip Winter, about “making education into a risk-free experience, a zone where we can no longer be put into question, where we can no longer be addressed” (2011, p. 540). Competency-based assessment seems to give total control over the educational process which turns it into what Biesta calls a “process of production,” where all teachers need to know are the causal connections between inputs and outcomes. This way our assessment cannot be called into question but it defeats the whole point of teaching — we suffer the loss of Biesta’s “beautiful” risk of education. He asserts that when “we put up our fences, close our eyes and ears—and perhaps even our hearts” to avoid being called to account, education becomes un-educational (p.540).

As ethical teachers, when we open our eyes and ears and use our hearts, we take learning styles into account. My recollection is that different ways of learning were not addressed in the past. Students who did not pass certain literacy or numeracy tests were kept back in the same grade. The end of year report stated “Mary will be promoted to grade II (III, IV, etc.).” If Mary were not promoted, she would spend a whole year repeating the same lessons. The idea of extra help or tutoring did not seem to have currency at my old school. There would be little disagreement that the practice of ‘staying back’ needed to be abandoned. There was a particular boy in my primary class who missed school when he helped out on the family farm. He had to repeat classes. He was a well-built lad who towered over the younger children, who

cruelly teased him about his lack of ability. Abolition of corporal punishment was also a much needed reform. It is hardly dignified or justified to thrash a child. Arguably, the use of the cane would have the effect of stultifying any interest in learning.

Consider a modern day rotary clothesline (Illustration 3). To the casual observer it looks much like the old Hill's Hoist of yesteryear, but on closer inspection, there are changes. Modern material is used and the clothesline is more aesthetically pleasing. With its green stand, it appears less obtrusive, but is nevertheless strong and serves its purpose well. I imagine the old clothesline, like old school methods, as somewhat authoritarian and the new one as doing the job by superior means. Using this metaphor, I now recount changes in teaching methods. The analogy of the heavy-duty wire being replaced by plastic indicates strength and pliability.



**Illustration 3.** *Taken from a colleague's garden 1, November 2013*

Anecdotally, opposition to reforms in education is labelled as an inability to accept change, and opponents are written off as intransigent old-school diehards, but change merely for change's sake could be considered a fad, a whim or a pet project. Fads are not easily identified when they occur. For example, secondary criterion-

based assessment was considered by many to be a fad. Up until its introduction, students could study hard at the end of the year in order to pass exams. Now, a student must demonstrate completion of tasks throughout the year, which seems a much more equitable form of assessment. For equitable assessment to occur, a virtuous teacher might consider students' different learning styles. .

### *A quintet of methods*

The realisation that students have different learning styles is well documented in Benjamin Bloom's *Taxonomy of educational objectives* (1956, in Kevin Barry and Len King, 1993, pp. 52-53) which identifies different kinds of cognition. Bloom's scheme sorts questions asked of students into levels of sophistication. Forming a pyramid, the simplest and most common questions are at the bottom, for example, the acquisition and recollection of facts and definitions. The next is comprehension, then application, then analysis, followed by synthesis and finally the most uncommon and most complicated level of thinking is evaluation, at the top. The pyramid suggests a wide base to support building to a higher level domain. It is a useful structure for examining the tasks set for students and helps cater for a wide range of abilities in the classroom.

David Kolb (1976, 1981) developed a *Learning Style Inventory* and *Learning Style Type Grid* to gain insight into how learners function. He identified four stages in a cycle of learning. These are: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualisation, and Active Experimentation. According to Kolb, Concrete Experience focuses on active involvement. Reflective Observation is where the learner watches and listens. Abstract Conceptualisation is the application of ideas and logic. Kolb's last stage is Active Experimentation which involves conducting tests and carrying out plans. Kolb urged learners to recognise their own learning style, including its strengths and weaknesses, so more can be achieved in each learning experience.

Gardner's (1983) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* proposes that each student has capacities in all the intelligences, but with different levels of functioning. He initially formulated a provisional list with the following precepts: verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical-rhythmic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. As mentioned, Gardner insists

that a notion of intelligence based on IQ tests is far too limited. He maintains that his intelligences rarely function independently, and that they help teachers to understand the conditions in which education takes place (Gardner and Thomas Hatch, 1989). Additional to the original seven precepts on his list is naturalist intelligence, which involves features of the environment and possibly, spiritual, existential and moral intelligences (Gardner 1999, pp. 48-76). Seven or eight or more kinds of intelligence allow many different ways to teach, and this links well to the principles of empathy, respect and justice. By identifying the ways in which students most likely learn, teachers can vary their methods of delivery so that all students have an opportunity to understand the lesson. Gardner's theory can be used at all levels of education. With regard to assessment, it would be difficult to identify and measure the different intelligences, but it need not be problematic. Multiple intelligences theory can be used as an overarching concept when setting assignments and marking them. Teachers can expand their focus, and reflect on their methodology.

Edward de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats* method is designed to "unscramble thinking so that a thinker is able to use one thinking model at a time - instead of trying to do everything at once" (1985, p. 199). Each hat corresponds to a different way of thinking. The red hat is for feelings, the yellow hat for strengths, the purple hat, which was originally black but changed because of negative connotations, is for weaknesses, the green hat for new ideas, the white hat for information, and the blue hat for thinking. Questions can be formulated for each hat colour. The purpose is to change thinking from the traditional argument style to a mapmaking style. Each student has a role or task to complete for the whole group to be successful and it encourages interdependence.

Calvin Taylor's 1985 multiple talent model is yet another framework for planning an inclusive learning and assessment environment. Taylor recognises that students have different abilities in wide-ranging areas. He suggests how the abilities can be developed and gives examples of activities. Scott Isaksen and Donald Treffinger also have a critical thinking and creative thinking model. One could probably list more such models. The point is that the focus is moving towards teaching models which centre on the learning requirements of individual students and which seem to be equitable.

It can be seen that the notion that learners function differently is not new. In order to take these different learning styles into account, a variety of effective assessment tools can be developed. Richard Stiggins (2002), in a discussion on assessment of achievement, proposed that better assessment is needed, and that classroom assessment held the key to learning for students. Stiggins suggests that the optimum approach is assessment *for* learning, using formative assessment as opposed to assessment *of* learning, which is summative. Earl (2003, p. 25) goes one step further and says assessment *as* learning extends the role of formative assessment for learning. It focusses on the part of the student as contributor and self-assessor, while the other two approaches have the teacher as key assessor. Stiggins' and Earl's approaches seem appropriate in the primary school arena but may be problematic in the senior secondary domain where there is a need for 'checks and balances' in the name of equity and justice, where, for example, a university entrance score is needed.

Earl does not advocate dismissing assessment *of* learning, because "there are times when information about students' achievement *of* key outcomes and the degree to which they compare with others is important" (2003, p. 26). It is the repetitive use of assessment of learning to the extent it leaves no place for other approaches that Earl eschews. It might be argued that a certain amount of knowledge has to be learned, even rote learned. For example, science students must know the symbols and valencies, and foreign languages require repetition of words and phrases in order to become proficient. In these instances, it is easy to give the students a test where they can memorise information and regurgitate it, but this is not the aim of effective assessment, nor the aim of a virtuous teacher.

### *Separating wheat from chaff*

My research aims to identify different methods of evaluation which take into account the wide range of students from a variety of backgrounds that we have in our schools and colleges. I provide examples of the types of assessment tools I use. Behavioural Science classes are usually large because the subject is very popular with today's Tasmanian senior secondary students. At enrolment time, when I interview students, they acknowledge being influenced by television programs featuring forensic profilers. Known as offender profilers, criminal profilers, or criminal personality profilers, these forensic experts are depicted in television shows and in films. One

such film is *The Silence of the Lambs* from 1991, which may have started the trend of behavioural profiling. There are many examples of television series. These include: *Profiler*, which ran from 1996 to 2000; *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* which reran in 2010; *Crime Scene Investigation*; *CSI Miami*; *Criminal Minds* from 2005; and the BBC's *Silent Witness*. The latter also started in 1996 and is still being broadcast. Although very popular with viewers, according to the ratings, such programs can be criticised for failing to convey the true nature of forensic profiling. Rightly or wrongly, students are impressed and inspired by these crime dramas. Another reason for the 'popularity' of Behavioural Science classes is that prospective students have a perception that it is an easy subject, which leads to many of them enrolling in order to gain points towards tertiary entrance.

Sometimes students are not really interested to complete the whole course. Such students often come late, distract the class and loudly ask "can we do some fun things today?" They probably mean "can we waste time chatting, listening to music, or watching a video that has no relevance to the course." Others may attend a class because their friends have enrolled in it, or they do not realise what the syllabus involves. Students less serious about pre-tertiary study are able to enrol in less demanding subjects. To ascertain whether students would embrace the subject enough to learn some basic meanings, I devised a test on definitions (see Table 2). I have given one answer and a hint at another because I find it helps get students started on the test.

I asked my two classes of Sociology students to address criterion number two "define and demonstrate understanding of sociological concepts." I am required to assess each criterion, some of which are generic, and some subject specific, several times, and show evidence in my mark book. (See Appendix II for The TQA assessment information and the latest list of criteria for Sociology.) Table 2 is a summative test where the correct term is required to be entered in the space provided. It is easily marked by the teacher or the students themselves. The students had been given the terms in the previous lesson and were told to find definitions from the sociological text books

<b>Sociology Test</b>	
Name..... Line .....	
<b>Task:</b> Write the appropriate term in the box	
<b>Assessment:</b> Criterion 2 - Define and demonstrate understanding of sociological concepts.	
<b>Definition</b>	<b>Term</b>
1. The chances an individual has in sharing the economic, social, and cultural resources of the society in which s/he lives.	
2. A complex of factors such as income, type of occupation, educational level, and sometimes place of residence.	
3. A socially defined position in society.	
4. The inequality of entire categories of people who have different access to social rewards as a result of their status.	
5. Changes in social status between generations.	Intergenerational mobility.
6. A system in which people are grouped according to economic position.	
7. The tendency for class system to reproduce itself from generation to generation.	
8. Status which is given to an individual at birth and usually cannot be changed.	
9. Movement from one status or stratum to another (up or down).	
10. Two components of wealth are:	A..... and I.....
11. The unequal sharing of social rewards such as wealth, power and prestige within a society.	
12. People who are poor only in relation to others who are not.	
13. Patterns of behaviour which are expected from people in different positions in society.	
14. The existing state or condition.	
15. The inability to afford minimum standards of food, clothing, shelter and health care.	
16. That which is achieved through an individual's own efforts.	
<b>Mark</b> _____ /15	
M J Keller	

**Table 2            A summative test on sociological definitions**

. The procedure was explained and students were told what was expected of them. I tick or cross, write in the correct answer as necessary and add up the marks to give a total out of 15. I apply a rubric to convert the mark to A, B or C. Students actually favour this type of test, because they can, without difficulty attain an A grading, and they can easily see the number of 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Some came up with the 'right' term for the definition according to what the sociologists had written in the text books. These students superficially 'did well' in the test, but judging by essays

submitted later, I am not convinced that they understood the actual concepts. An essay mark is considered subjective to a certain degree. Students have been heard to say “The teacher gave me a bad grade because she didn’t like me”.

Name.....Line.....	
<b>Comprehension Test</b>	
<b>Assessment:</b> Criterion 3 Interpret information from a variety of forms	
<p><b>A</b>USTRALIA’S leading human rights advocate Justice Marcus Einfeld speaks of the “myth of equality” exuded in Australia – a privileged country and the largest democracy in its region where, nonetheless, social and economic inequalities persist.</p> <p>In Hobart recently the Federal Court judge and foundations president of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission reflected that all around us in this lucky country, hardships and poverty exist – whether among the 40% of</p>	<p>Australian children who live in families which rely on welfare benefits or low incomes which make them the working poor”; or among the 30,000 victims of child abuse or neglect substantiated last year; or the youth suicide rate which is among the highest in the world; or a youth unemployment rate running at nearly 30%; or the plight of Aboriginal people which is “our greatest shame.</p> <p>Such are the challenges faced in this, one of the most prosperous countries in the world.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>The Mercury 26.9.2001</i></p>
Read the above excerpt and answer the following: <span style="float: right;">Marks</span>	
Cite article .....	(2)
Name the major focus of the article.....	(1)
Name 5 major areas of concern according to Justice Einfeld:	
1. ....	(1)
2. ....	(1)
3. ....	(1)
4. ....	(1)
5. ....	(1)
Give 2 pieces of empirical evidence:	
1. ....	(1)
2. ....	(1)
Mark <u>    </u> /10	

**Figure 7 A test on comprehension of a stimulus article**

The comprehension test (Figure 7) where the students must interpret the information and answer the questions fully, is a better assessment document. It is relatively easy to mark. Although not as structured or detailed as I would expect an essay to be, it nevertheless does require the students to actually contemplate what they are reading, that is, to do a close reading, reflect on it and come to some conclusions. The stimulus article ties in with class discussions about stratification, or class, in Australian society. It is to encourage students to think about notions of inequality —



### *More tests*

Students need to discuss concepts in paragraph form in the tests, Figures 8 and 9. The marking is more complex for the teacher because there is more reading involved. The stratification test (Figure 8) is one where students, after note taking and class discussions, have been told the focus, can go to the library and prepare for it. The idea is that they will explain in their own words the concepts of poverty and social reproduction, again linking to inequality and the difficulties individuals face when caught in poverty traps. The test is done in class time and usually hand written. Depending on the handwriting and general neatness of the exercise, subjectivity could rear its head. In years 11 and 12 styles of handwriting vary considerably, think of your doctor's handwriting, so the teacher must be fair. The two tasks, figures 9 and 10 are formative tests and can be classed as assessment for learning.

Introduction to Sociology and Psychology

*Childfree Zone*

You have watched the video *Childfree Zone* which looks at several childless couples.

Task

Answer the following questions with reference to the video:  
What are some of the reasons given for not having babies?  
Are these couples selfish?  
Why or why not?  
Is it unpatriotic to remain childless?  
Why or why not?  
Do we need kids? Explain your answer.

Assessment

Criterion 1	Display understanding of general principles in the fields of sociology and psychology
Criterion 8	Discuss social issues relating to particular stages of the lifespan

**Figure 9**      **A Formative test requiring students to give explanations**

The task described in Figure 9 is undertaken after viewing a *60 Minutes* television documentary 'Childfree Zone' (Tara Brown, 2002). Students are told beforehand that there will be an assignment which can be completed in class, or if insufficient time, for homework. The video contains interviews with couples who give reasons for electing to remain childless. The idea is to illustrate types of families in Australia, and follows on from a lesson about nuclear families, extended families, blended families, single parent families and same sex families. The idea of reliable contraception and the subsequent ability of women to choose when or if they want children is explored, which then leads to discussions about changes in family structure, particularly involving gender roles. The notion that career opportunities are now available to women is presented.

### *A right response*

Students when given a task, generally ask, "Will this count?" or "Do I have to hand it in?" The question indicates that perhaps they perceive a different response is required, depending on whether the work is for their information or to be assessed by a teacher. I have had students express disappointment when I did not collect work, "I wouldn't have gone to so much trouble if I'd known it wasn't going to be handed in." It could indicate that students are not intrinsically motivated, that they do not achieve any self-satisfaction from completing a task. When assignments are returned, students quickly check the mark they received and compare it with neighbours and others in the class. It is important for them to know whether a grade is better or worse than their peers. Students quickly learn who the high achievers in the class are and I feel that this is then a yardstick to measure their own performance.

Students who have a strong sense of fairness find it hard to come to terms with the idea that there is not necessarily a 'right' answer when a task is set. I have found it to be the case with year 11 classes. They are imbued with the idea, possibly from primary school when completing arithmetic or recalling facts, that something is either right or wrong. For example, when they are introduced to the nature or nurture debate, or the theories of deviance, they feel uncomfortable that there can be several 'right' answers or explanations and that some are counter-intuitive. The principle of empathy is important here, because some students feel very strongly about certain issues. For instance, in Sociology when studying Durkheim, we

discuss suicide, which can be a very sensitive topic if someone has been directly affected by a family member taking his or her own life. Another topic which always invokes strenuous argument is that of the death penalty which we discuss when studying crime and deviance. Similarly religion, homosexuality, surrogate mothers, 'gay' marriage and adoption of children, are all hotly debated issues. Debriefing is paramount and empathy to understand others' feelings, and respect for others' opinions are essential.

The notion of there being right or wrong answers occurred to me when undertaking assessment of external exams for TQA. In my capacity as Chief Marking Examiner (CME) for Sociology, I meet with the markers and spend time discussing the exam, procedures when marking and possible answers to the questions. Some markers have quite rigid ideas of what the answers should contain and expect students to provide sociological definitions, depending on the way they teach the subject. It is not easy for them to remain objective when certain preconceived models do not appear in the answer. Might not a script where the student plainly displays understanding of the topic be more commendable?

On one occasion I marked a script that had many definitions which had been rote learnt and then strung together in sentences. The essay actually contradicted itself at times, and the student clearly did not understand what she was writing about. A student may be told to cite the Family Law Act (1975) when discussing 'power and politics' in the institution of the family. If the student writes about no-fault divorce, it is obvious she understands without actually naming the Act. It is far preferable that students answer the questions rather than 'dump' information, much of which may be irrelevant. It may sound like stating the obvious, but some markers are impressed by pages of information unrelated to the area under discussion.

External assessment or quality assurance conducted by TQA provides checks, or measurement against the internal marks awarded by the teacher. When the two sets of marks are compared it is preferable that there is not a wide variation between them. Qualifications are at risk of being devalued if the grades are too generous. This does not apply to primary schools, rather to senior secondary, where certification is needed for jobs or university entrance. I propose that assessment be separated from evaluation.

The word assessment derives from the Latin *assidere*, to sit beside, and evaluate comes from the Latin *valere*, to be worth something. Much of our assessment is really evaluation and as such, is appropriate at times. For instance, when teachers need to place students in different learning ‘streams’ for Mathematics and English, or take into account learning styles, appraisal or evaluation is needed. However, the most important and major focus in the classroom should be learning, and therefore assessment should be *for* and *as* learning which enhances the scholarship. The justification for the evaluation approach is that students appear to be more motivated and proactive when there is less pressure to pass a test, for example. Many avenues are able to be explored. Earl maintains that assessment *for* and *as* learning should be a large part of the school day, as a seamless part of the learning process (2003, p. 28). This suggests that students should receive descriptive feedback which links their thinking with other alternatives they could consider.

Assessment is a contentious issue. On the one hand, teachers want to engage students in order to encourage imagination, deliberation, and reflection when learning. They want learning to be a positive experience. I would be mortified to think former students looked back on their school days as being unpleasant. Many older generation adults do have ‘horror stories’ of their time at school. On the other hand, assessment is in the public and political domain, because of the many stakeholders involved, and thus merits scrutiny in order to satisfy all the requirements or demands that are made.

### *My Classroom Research*

Is learning a positive experience in my classroom? My research focused on gaining an understanding of students’ satisfaction with the actual subjects. I conducted anonymous student feedback surveys in three different classes to ascertain their perceptions. One time was early on in the year and another towards the end. See Figures 10 and 11. I discussed the possibility of using the results of the surveys in my thesis with my students and they agreed to this. Most students felt they could be honest about answering the questions because I would not recognise their writing at that stage, and many had similar writing in any case. The main advantage was that they could have some input into how the subject would be delivered. It was interesting to read their answers, albeit with some

trepidation on my part. I was, after all, making myself vulnerable and open to scrutiny. The feedback from the first surveys was informative. Generally the feeling was that ‘some laughs’ help with learning.

***STUDENT FEEDBACK (anonymous, open questions)***

*Complete the following questions*

*At this stage in the year how are you feeling about Sociology?*

.....

.....

.....

*What are aspects of the class which you enjoy?*

.....

.....

.....

*What things about the class could be improved? (eg type of activities, teaching style, per interaction, other)*

.....

.....

.....

*What could you do yourself to improve your performance and your enjoyment of the class?*

.....

.....

.....

**Figure 10 - Research tool 1 Student Feedback early in year**

Some students commented on the seating arrangements, which, while easy to accommodate, was difficult in practice because the room was shared with other teachers who had different ideas about seating. Some students requested that music be played. Most students liked a variety of delivery in the classroom, sometimes ‘chalk and talk’, sometimes a short video, work in the library, or practical work carrying out surveys. Class discussions were very popular. Overall I think they felt

somewhat empowered. First, because they had been asked and could reflect on their learning, and second because they were having a say about it.

The second research tool was more specific with questions relating to the actual content of the course, and how I was delivering it. I used a Likert Scale over three classes at the beginning of third term. The idea was to evaluate the intensity of students' feelings about a given statement and see if a pattern emerged. It could be argued that answers were subjective, but I found it a useful tool. Teachers may consider themselves to be impartial, but some students perceive it not to be the case, and therefore teachers need to be overt and be seen to be fair.

A criticism of Likert scaling is that with five points, students can opt for the neutral or middle point. I think 'neither agree nor disagree' is needed because the students may really not have a view, and if students are not 'forced' to choose one of the other categories then a more accurate result is achieved. Another criticism is that some students avoid using the 'strongly disagree' or 'strongly agree' answers. Again, I think that students generally are not afraid to air their opinions, especially if the survey is anonymous. It is very useful to gain information about how the students perceive the subject is progressing. Sometimes the answers may be positive and confirm that the teacher is heading in the right direction. Other responses may not be particularly complimentary, and then steps can be taken to ameliorate whatever seems to be the problem. It is important though to avoid rash reactions and to explore every perspective. The surveys had a good number of positive results, but as with most presentations there is always room for improvement. The statements about finding the subject easy or difficult were mostly answered at number three, neither agree nor disagree. The students who found it too difficult equalled those who found it too easy. I interpreted this as being about the right delivery, but set about providing extension work for the stronger students. I started a weekly half hour tutorial session in the lunch hour for students to drop in if they needed some extra help. About a dozen students took up the offer, although some did not need remedial support, rather they wanted to expand their learning. The tutorials addressed the low scale of "The teacher is available when I need help" statement. One issue was that the students expected assignments to be returned sooner than they were. A fortnight was the longest, but usually turnaround time was quicker.

Although it must be said that generally the students who were late getting work in, were the keenest to get it back.

**M.J. Keller**  
**SOCIOLOGY STUDENT FEEDBACK**

This survey is anonymous. Please indicate your honest opinion regarding the following statements:  
 On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. The teacher provides clear assessment criteria					
2. The teacher is consistent with assessment					
3. The assignments have improved my learning					
4. The assignments are returned in good time					
5. Feedback I received is helpful					
6. The teacher clearly explains concepts					
7. The teacher encourages me to ask questions					
8. The teacher knows the subject well					
9. The teacher is organized					
10. The teacher uses technology effectively					
11. The teacher uses effective methods					
12. The teacher shows respect for me					
13. I find this subject difficult					
14. I find this subject easy					
15. I have learned a good deal in this class					
16. The teacher is available when I need help					
17. The teacher is fair					
18. The teacher challenges me to think					

**Figure 11 –Research Tool 2 Student Feedback later in year.**

There was a minor difference between two of my classes about the statement, “the teacher clearly explains concepts.” I thought about it and concluded that it may have been due to differing abilities of the students or the time of day of the lesson, but decided, after reflection, that I possibly went through the concepts more quickly because I had already delivered a similar lesson to the other class. Following that, I determined to take more care with explanations and to make it

easy for students to ask questions if they did not fully understand the concepts. Many students are reluctant to admit this, and are afraid they may look foolish in front of their classmates.

I set up groups of mixed ability to make the environment discussion-friendly. The task was to brainstorm whatever topic we were researching, to put it into words other than the sociological jargon. Another task was to complete a group essay on say, the family. Two students worked together to come up with an introduction, another two explained different types of families, socialisation in the family, technological advances like IVF, legal social attitudes, the conflict theorists view, the functionalist theorist view, and so on. The whole class shared the material, asked questions and gave explanations. It contained much of the information the students needed.

Were there enough questions or statements in my survey to find out what needed to be addressed? Were they the right ones? I have found that too many questions or statements can be off-putting and respondents do not take the time to answer reliably. Such research is a personal undertaking — it is challenging and potentially embarrassing. However, if I want to improve my teaching then I owe it to my students and myself to conduct such surveys from time to time. It is tempting to say ‘well, so what’ to the data collected. I consider that my interpretation helped improve my classroom delivery of the subject, and with both surveys, class members appreciated being able to air their opinions.

As well as obtaining student feedback, I have carried out a longitudinal study of the link between students’ results and their attendance at college. Obviously if students are absent, they miss out on lessons which, if not caught up on, will result in poorer grades. Once the absenteeism goes beyond 10 per cent, the average student will not perform as well. Stronger students are usually able to succeed in spite of non-attendances, as long as they have been to at least 75 percent of the classes. Most subjects have a generic criterion regarding working with others. If a teacher has scheduled group work on the days that the student is absent, then the overall mark for the criterion relating to ‘working with others’ will be lowered. It is therefore axiomatic that the lower the attendance rate, the lower the chances of passing in the subject.

Apart from non-attendance, lateness to class has a negative effect. I have charted the punctuality of my students over the years and observed that serial late-comers do not achieve their potential. If I add up the time lost, it equates to several lessons. There is the added problem that instructions have been given, work has started, and the late-comer not only disturbs the class, but the teacher has to repeat what has been said. One student completed a major assignment about the wrong topic because he had missed what was expected, and did not ask for an explanation. At the other end of the scale, students ask to leave class 15 to 20 minutes early, to go to their part-time work. Early departure causes a drop-off in results too, because it is a time when the teacher recaps what has been covered in the lesson and answers any questions that may arise. Arriving late and leaving early can be disruptive and is unfair to punctual students.

An empathetic teacher reflects upon the reasons a student is absent. If there is a genuine reason, for example, an illness, it can be excused. All efforts should be made to assist such a student to catch up. If on the other hand, students decide to go to the local shopping centre with their friends, then understandably the teacher is not impressed and is unlikely to give up a lunch hour to help them. I wanted to know if students wagged class because they were not particularly interested in the subject being taught, or did not like the way it is taught, even though they had chosen the subject.

Back in the classroom, today's young people will need different knowledge, or indeed specialist knowledge, to be able to deal with the complexity of their lives — more than any previous generations. As Freire (1998, p. 30) reminds us, “to teach is not *to transfer knowledge* but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge.”

### *Latest crop*

Students need construction of knowledge to prepare for different jobs. Jobs now are mostly in the service sector of the community rather than in the primary and secondary industry sectors as they were in the past. The students we are teaching, dubbed generation Y, have a different culture (Mark McCrindle, ‘Understanding the New Generation’, 2001). Students of the future need to be motivated and inspired,

and they need problem-solving skills. Today's teenagers do not appear to be as materialistic as their parents, society is more secular, and social attitudes have changed which results in a changing morality among students. Many students come from blended or single parent families. In 2009 – 10 for example, 27 per cent of families with resident children were stepfamilies, blended families or one-parent families. Of the one parent families, 85 per cent were lone mother families. The proportions for intact families with older resident children were lower than those with young children. Intact families are those in which the children are the natural or adopted children of both parents and there are no step children (ABS 2011). All these factors have consequences for students' learning and assessment.

The ABS figures indicate that it is important for teachers to be socially and culturally aware of their students' backgrounds. An empathetic teacher cannot avoid being affected by some of the events happening in students' lives. A close colleague recalls 'show and tell' at her primary school where kindergarten children were innocently recounting how "daddy came home and hit mummy, and I hid in the wardrobe" or how "many 'uncles' came to visit mummy". Or worse, "daddy got his gun out and said he would shoot so-and-so!" A very different world to that of middle class teachers is depicted.

In my experience, a number of students arrive in the classroom in the morning without having eaten any breakfast. It is difficult to learn on an empty stomach. Others appear very sleepy because they have had to babysit younger siblings or have part time jobs which require them to stack supermarket shelves late at night. Rather than reprimanding such students for their seeming lack of interest in studies, allowances can be made and solutions sought. The support teacher is the first port of call.

#### *As students relate to teachers*

At senior secondary college, different subjects have different specialist teachers. In order to provide a support system for students, teachers generally have responsibility for a pastoral care group, which comprises students who are normally taught at least one subject by that teacher. The support group meets weekly to discuss any 'housekeeping' matters, such as attendance, tutoring, pathway planning, or to deal

with any other queries or problems that arise. These may include the wellbeing of the students, their safety, or some may feel victimised or bullied, either by peers or teachers. At times the support teacher takes on a nurturing role. The teacher must put aside her specialist subject role and adopt a persona that looks at the whole ‘organism’, the student. I liken the relationship between support teacher and student to that of physician and patient. Gadamer uses the analogy to encourage health practitioners to take interest and enter into a philosophical dialogue, “the nature of the whole includes and involves the entire life situation of the patient, and even of the physician” (1996, p. 41). Gadamer tells us that “dialogue and discussion serve to humanize the fundamentally unequal relationship between doctor and patient” (p. 77). The possibility of humanising communication between teacher and student is appealing because teaching practice is always a relationship with the student. We ask “how are you?” and enquire not just about curriculum but the student in general.

The Catholic Education Commission of NSW introduced *The Student Wellbeing Program* in 2012, and many Catholic schools have separate Student Wellbeing Coordinators who specifically address the perceived concerns of students (The Catholic Education Commission, 2012). The aim is for students to enjoy their educational experience. Terence Lovat, Ron Toomey and Neville Clement (2010, pp. 23-24) also highlight the importance of student wellbeing not only for enjoyment but in order for them to participate appropriately at school. It includes taking part in assessment-related activities, and engaging in behaviour which will lead to future wellbeing.

The activities of students could be physically as well as intellectually demanding, and all teachers have a duty of care. At times activities go horribly wrong. When a fifteen year old high school student drowned, the coroner was critical of the supervising teachers.

A Tasmanian coroner has found a [.....] High School student was not being supervised by teachers when he drowned on a school excursion.

Coroner [.....] has handed down his findings in the death of [.....], 15, who drowned during a swimming trip to [.....] in 2009.

Mr [.....] told a packed Magistrates Court in [.....] that the student was not being observed by teachers and the actions of the senior teacher, [.....] had contributed to the death.

(‘Coroner blasts school,’ 2012. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-05-07/coroner-blasts-school-over-student27s-drowning/> 3995660 I have suppressed names of people and places for ethical reasons.)

Another such accident happened in the north of the state on 3 December 1998. A Year 9 class, with a teacher and two kayaking instructors were there. A student attempted to reach a rock in the river, slipped and became snagged. Attempts at rescue failed until the water flow was stopped at a dam. The student later died in hospital (Andrew Brookes, 2003). A previous tragic accident occurred in 1990 during a caving expedition when three teachers and eight students from a southern high school were attempting to enter a cave. They were in thigh-deep water and had formed a ‘human chain’ when one student slipped and was carried away by the swiftly flowing water. A second student went to assist, and a teacher went to assist both. All three drowned. The survivors were rescued after being trapped for seven hours (Brookes, 2003).

Brookes also documents many other student fatalities. I have recorded above some of the Tasmanian incidents to emphasise the sometimes onerous duties of teachers. It seems that teachers have to juggle many responsibilities in their profession, keeping in mind their duty of care, not only in case of an enquiry when things go wrong, but in order to abide by the code of professional ethics. Thankfully, tragic occurrences are rare and usually everything goes according to plan and leads to intrinsic satisfaction for the teacher—the feeling of a job well done. Apart from physical hurt, teachers sometimes unintentionally cause psychological discomfort to students, especially teenagers. At a time when they are developing relationships, they are particularly sensitive to their peers’ reactions. Sometimes teachers award grades that might upset students.

### *Rubric of constructive comments*

Being aware of the principle of empathy, I have been worried on occasions about returning graded work in case those who did not achieve high scores would be upset or suffer loss of self-esteem. With this in mind, I conducted one-to-one interviews regarding assessment within my support group. Twenty year 11 and 12 students were involved.



Ruth Butler (1987), in a study of two hundred students found that giving students marks alongside careful diagnostic comments completely washed out the beneficial effects of the comments. She asserts that it is a waste of time and no more effective than marks alone. Students who get high scores do not need to read the comments and students who get low scores do not want to, writes Butler. In my experience, such is not the case. The majority of my students in the Behavioural Science classes want clarification after their work is returned. Questions revolve around what exactly is meant by such and such a comment. As long as comments by teachers are constructive and there is a genuine desire to assist the student to better understand the subject that is being taught, a positive outcome can be achieved.

The guiding principle of empathy comes into play here, likewise the idea of mutual respect. I trust that the students realise I am not marking up or down to pass judgement on their worth, but am indicating where the work is at, according to my expectations and the syllabus. I firmly believe that each student deserves to be valued. Teachers can model courtesy, and treat students with dignity, which significantly boosts their self-esteem and in turn enhances the teacher-student relationship. A teacher, when assessing, ideally provides constructive feedback for students who can then judge their progress and find out what strategies they need to develop for future learning. Positive comments on assignments can provide satisfaction for students who achieve or improve. Self-assessment, that is, students marking and grading their own work can help them reflect and set their own goals.

Earl's (2003) notion of "assessment *as* learning" where students actively participate in the assessment process, is of particular relevance here. A positive relationship between teacher and student can make a difference between the student feeling unintelligent, or saying "Oh, I see," or having an 'aha' moment. I find such moments very rewarding. There is a sense of achievement which is important to teachers, because too often, focus tends to be on the negative aspects of the classroom, for example, behavioural problems.

Freire's chapter four is entitled "Teaching Is A Human Act" (p. 85). He reminds us that,

A climate of respect that is born of just, serious, humble and generous relationships, in which both the authority of the teacher and the freedom

of the students are ethically grounded, is what converts pedagogical space into authentic educational experience. (2001, p. 86)

We can afford to be humble. Freire touches on the idea of commitment to truthfulness. Admitting ignorance “opens up a credit with the students” (p. 88). I have known some teachers go to great lengths to avoid admitting they did not know an answer or the meaning of something. Is it not unethical to try and cover up lack of knowledge? While we should know our subject well, we are not expected to know everything. In any case, older students soon realise if a teacher is ignorant about a certain topic. It is not really difficult to say “I don’t know, but I will find out” or better still “Let’s find out together”. It could be said that lack of truthfulness equates to lack of integrity. van Manen in his article ‘Pedagogy, Virtue, and Narrative Identity in Teaching’ writes of the “smart teacher” who says,

I am sorry. I must not have explained it very well. Let us go over it again. We’ll do it a different way.” Then we did go over it again. She knew how to reach each one of us.

(Cited in Curriculum Inquiry, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1994, p. 136)

As teachers, similar to the “smart teacher” in van Manen’s example, we can afford to be generous regarding our relationships with our students. This can occur because we can stand back as it were and judge situations from the outside. Our students are not like our offspring where the interaction is much closer. We can still be fond of them, or moved, or impressed, but maintain a professional distance. A confident teacher, and confidence comes with experience, does not have to engage in power play. We can probably remember in the past, a teacher we were afraid of. I doubt if we did well in that class. Fear as a means of controlling students is not grounded in ethics. A fearful child is not likely to be creative, or worse, may not attend. It is easy to give orders, it is easy to dishearten and humiliate students, because many of them are vulnerable, but that is not what teaching is about. Biesta expresses it aptly, “To suggest that teaching can and should be reduced to matters of control, ends up in an uneducational extreme” (2012, p. 36).

I conclude that, in order to liberate education, it seems that a virtuous teacher may do well to embrace technology, recognise different learning styles, and commit to truthfulness, all of which many teachers already do in their day-to-day routine.

Both teacher and student can be mutually responsible for a situation in which the student learns and the teacher learns how better to teach students of the future.

## Chapter 6

### Ennobling Moral Attitudes

How much responsibility for their students' behaviour must virtuous teachers accept? Good behaviour is easy to acknowledge but seemingly blameworthy behaviour poses a difficult problem. In order to respond to such a question we would need to consider the variables which could affect our obligations. It is often hard to see past the behaviour. Why is this student acting or reacting in this way? As I contemplate an old-fashioned clothesline, a wire strung between two posts, I should be able to see everything I have hung out, but like unacceptable behaviour, it is not always obvious what is occurring. Sometimes the wind flaps my garments about and wraps them around the wire and it is not clear at all what is hanging there. My conscious experience of seeing the garments will be different. Sometimes the wind even blows them off and they are absent, like the students who wag school.



**Illustration 4 An old fashioned clothesline**

I struggle with the awareness that teachers need at times, to take action against objectionable behaviour and instinctively I sense that doing so can be unpleasant for them. Freire writes of having or gaining indispensable knowledge “to enable us to handle the relationship between authority and freedom which is an area of permanent tension between discipline and undiscipline”. He goes on to say that discipline resulting from harmony between authority and freedom “necessarily implies respect of the one for the other” (1998, p. 83). Freedom is not absolute. Freedom with no limits is as bad as authoritarianism as far as Freire is concerned. I

concern myself with questioning how an ethical teacher might ethically approach a time when she has to take a moral stance and mete out some form of punishment. In an ideal school there would be no behavioural problems but unacceptable behaviour does occur and teachers have to deal with it. I am conscious that punishment seems to have little to do with assessment. In its broadest sense it has to do with ethics, and I propose that there is an ethical link with assessment.

To show this link I start with some examples of punishment from literature which depict the sometimes harsh, unethical treatment meted out in the past. I look at the reasons for punishing students and how teachers might manage behavioural problems in modern teaching. Going beyond this somewhat unsavoury topic, I describe a field study relating to humour in the classroom, the use of props in teaching, and my experience of the actual external assessment procedure, to infer what it means to be ethical.

If teaching is reduced to matters of control, and is uneducational, are there valid reasons for punishment? Punishment is a controversial subject and has been questioned by many philosophers from Locke to Foucault. Consider a student who is deemed to be 'naughty'. The label then influences, either consciously or subconsciously, the way a teacher evaluates work from such a student. It is relevant to know why the label was applied. A label is not neutral as Howard Becker in his classic work *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (1963, pp 7–9) points out — it carries with it a moral judgement. Teachers in a new class usually learn the names of the 'naughty' students first because they are often disruptive. Then the names of the 'good' students come to mind, while it takes longer to learn 'middling' students' names. Labels can become self-fulfilling prophecies. In Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory where years 11 and 12 in government schools are separate institutions, students are able to leave 'bad' reputations behind and start afresh, and a moral benefit can be achieved from this practice.

In the past, some students have been unfairly treated and as an opposing view to my "star teachers" in chapter three, I provide some literary examples of teachers who have no moral authority, administering punishment. An extract from Kate Grenville's *The Lieutenant* depicts unwarranted punishment meted out to five year

old student Daniel Rooke, later a soldier and astronomer, who arrived in New South Wales on the first fleet in 1788.

Mrs Bartholomew showed him a badly executed engraving with the word “cat” underneath. His mother had taught him his letters and he had been reading for a year. He could not work out what Mrs Bartholomew wanted.

That was the first time he was paddled with Mrs Bartholomew’s old hairbrush for failing to respond to a question so simple he had not thought to answer it. (2008, pp. 3–4)

Daniel apparently thought a more complicated answer was required and hesitated, which caused the teacher’s displeasure. It was the first paddling of many.

In a different era, in a village in Yugoslavia, Raimond Gaita’s father, Romulus who was born in 1922, suffered a similar punishment in *Romulus, My Father*.

He enjoyed school, finishing his set work quickly and then reading storybooks which he held under his desk. When he was caught doing this, he was often beaten with a stick over his body, head and face – wherever it landed. (1998, p. 3)

Is such appalling treatment warranted just for reading storybooks? The bruising was remembered, and considered worthy of noting in Gaita’s account of his father’s life. Poor Daniel Rooke’s treatment, while fictitious, illustrates the need for teachers to be very clear with their instructions and to articulate expectations. A colleague who attended school in Tasmania in the 1950s can relate some “Mrs Bartholomew moments”. It is apposite that unfair treatment is still remembered after all this time.

### *Assessment and punishment*

Is there a place for punishment when assessing in contemporary Australian education? If punishment is defined not as some sort of physical thrashing, but rather an admonishment or reprimand, or simply a warning, it could be considered admissible. At first, notions of punishment seem to have little to do with assessment. Yet when teachers assess, they regularly reward students for “good work”. It can be in the form of positive remarks, a stamp or a sticker. The alternative of a reward is a punishment, or a negative sanction. It could merely mean a lower mark is awarded if an assignment is handed in late, because it is unfair to students who do meet

deadlines not to penalise those who do not submit work on time. That is not to say extensions cannot be granted if deemed necessary.

Administration of an educational institution must operate effectively, and this entails having rules. Laws or rules in schools are referred to as the Student Behaviour Management Policy. If students break the code of behaviour, strategies are put into place and some type of sanction is applied. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines punishment as “that which is inflicted as a penalty”, and “a penalty imposed to ensure the application and enforcement of a law”. Locke in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* reasons, “We must, wherever we suppose a Law, suppose also some reward or punishment annexed to that Law” (1975, p. 351). What type of reward or punishment does that mean? John Hospers reminds us that the “relation of a word to its meaning is in some ways like that of a label to a bottle” (1987, p. 5). He maintains that there is no natural correlation of the label with the contents. The analogy here is with the label ‘punishment’.

### *Reformatory*

Looking again at texts, I see that labels can be misleading. Punishment, as portrayed by Franz Kafka’s *In the Penal Colony*, where a soldier is condemned to death for disobedience and insulting behaviour to a superior, is in reality, torture. The condemned man does not know his sentence. “He will learn it corporally on his person” (1992, p. 498). Punishment is inflicted with a ghastly piece of apparatus which inscribes with a long needle on the back of the prisoner whatever commandment he disobeyed. In this case — ‘Honour thy superiors’. The explorer/observer in the story finds the injustice and inhumanity undeniable, but thought it a ticklish matter to intervene in other peoples affairs. “In our country we have a different way of carrying out justice,” he might say, or “We haven’t used torture since the Middle Ages” (1992, p. 504). At the same time he is touched by the officer’s sincere conviction that the method of punishment is humane and in consonance with human dignity. Thankfully, such tortures were abolished, penalties were regulated and proportioned to offences. The punishment label does not always determine the corresponding contents of Hospers’ bottle. It all depends on the time-frame.

Foucault (1977) draws a comparison between prisons and schools. They both usually have a “uniform” and both control the use of an individual’s time and space. Punishment in schools could mean time out, detentions, contacting parents, or suspension. Corporal punishment is inappropriate and, in Australia, banned by law. Although not banned in private schools, I would be very surprised to learn of a child being caned or paddled. Teachers now are armed with modern behavioural management methods and the old ‘naughty corner’ where a child was sent to stare at the wall, has been replaced with a much more humane ‘reflection area’.

How then is punishment determined? As well as an abolitionist viewpoint, there are two main theories which are thought to justify punishment, retributivism and utilitarianism. Returning to Locke’s idea that wherever there are rules, we must suppose some reward or punishment annexed to them, we arrive at the retributive view of punishment. This view is better suited to the classroom than the legal arena, where there is civil law and criminal law, which are dealt with differently. Unlike in a court of law, a classroom situation can be dealt with immediately. It is more personal. The teacher can be fair, the student remorseful, and forgiveness can occur.

If students contravene the code of behaviour, is it not reasonable that they be disciplined in some way? Since justice is an appeal to desert, it cannot be an appeal to future consequences. Therefore retributive views may well be preferred because the utilitarian view does not appeal to fairness. The utilitarian view is future-looking. That is, one should punish in-order-to, not because-of. Utilitarians would aim to reform the wrongdoer and use punishment as a deterrent. The retributive view is that positive effects such as improving the offender, deterring other would-be offenders, and protecting potential victims, are by-products and do not constitute reason for punishment. It should not be thought of as revenge.

The punishment should always fit the crime. A teacher would need to take into account factors which could influence student behaviour. The retributivist says you must not punish innocent students for the simple reason they have not committed offences. For example, if a student is not interested in the lesson despite every effort on the part of the teacher, then it is unreasonable to expect other interested students to suffer because of this. Further, how fair is it to keep the whole class in after school because a few students misbehaved? Yet, in my lived experience, this form

of discipline is frequently used. At times my sociological imagination encourages me to see things I would rather not see.

To suggest that if students are morally educated, they will avoid what is wrong, probably holds true for the majority, but I think now of the backgrounds of some of my students. They act in a manner which is perfectly acceptable in their home surroundings, but unacceptable at school. Some behaviour may be interpreted as high spirited, but some can be defined as delinquent, which cannot be overlooked or ignored. Punishment does not need to be manipulative. It could be an emergency measure, to protect the rights of other students. When rules are clear, it becomes evident that actions have consequences.

There is a problem with defining the concepts of praise and criticism. What one teacher sees as a neutral comment may be seen as inflammatory by a different teacher. “That’s pretty good” may be high praise to a particular student, but not another.

### *Punish or penalise*

Patrick S. Wilson makes a distinction between punishing and penalising. A penalty is something that is paid, like a parking fine. A motorist may decide it is worth the risk if he is not caught too often. Penalising someone is a method of social control. If, on the other hand, a motorist feels that he has done something “wrong”, then paying for it will be interpreted as punishment. Wilson considers punishment will not be seen as revenge if the person on the receiving end regards his actions as morally wrong. “Punishment involves one’s own willingness and concern to see faults and suffer their correction” (1971, p. 98).

This is all very well for adults, but how does it translate into an educational context? Wilson quotes McPherson,

Punishment can turn up in any human relationship. Lovers punish each other, parents punish their children; the State punishes criminals. (1971, p. 101)

Is this enough justification? As mentioned, Foucault compares schools with prisons. Wilson goes a step further and maintains that punishment in some schools is a mode of social control which brings the unique into conformity with the norms.

This gives retributivism a bad name when in fact it is treating students as autonomous moral agents. In other words, they are not irresponsible. They can learn the difference between right and wrong, without the need for conditioning or ‘treatment’, which the abolitionist viewpoint would advocate. According to abolitionists, an offender is regarded as a patient needing treatment. Punishment should not be meted out because it is not the offender’s fault. Rather, society is to blame.

Therapeutic treatment in some situations can be considered as negative as punishment. In school, a child would have to be removed from the classroom in order to be treated. It could alienate and stigmatise the student. Given a choice, I feel most students would opt for punishment rather than therapy. The Anthony Burgess novel *A Clockwork Orange* (1972), and later film, portrays fifteen year-old Alex undergoing a terrifying treatment called ‘Ludovico’s Technique’. The technique, which is fictional, is an aversion therapy. It forces the patient to watch violent images with the eyes held open, or listen to music, while feeling a drug induced nausea. The idea is to make Alex incapable of violence even in self-defence. It supposedly would solve societal crime. The actions of Dr Brodsky in the novel serve to illustrate the lack of interest in moral values for the individual, with the utilitarian justification of a possible benefit to society. Sokolowski could be referring to Burgess when he writes that the novelist “articulates an imagined life as he expresses his words” in a combination of intelligibility and imagery he has worked out on his own (p. 147), but that the insight achieved becomes available for others through the author’s words. The words revert to the ‘public space’.

### *Moral beings*

It might be argued that students have a right to be treated as autonomous moral beings. To act otherwise towards them might be seen as demeaning. An aim of teaching is to engender in students the capacity to make independent judgments. Of course it depends on the age and maturity of students. Students learn that actions are related to outcomes or consequences, and therefore they learn about answerability, responsibility and trustworthiness. It goes without saying that students should be warned so that they realise possible consequences of misbehaviour. That is not to say that a teacher should be intransigent. If a satisfactory reason is given for

lateness, or work not handed in, then no action needs to be taken. A teacher has a responsibility to model expected behaviour.

I come back to the analogy of the bottle and the label where Wilson argues that punishment is something educative. He claims there is a moral reason why we should give and receive punishment and reward.

Without these, a whole range of human experience, implied in terms such as ‘forgiveness’, ‘remorse’ and retribution, would remain meaningless or unintelligible. (p. 112)

All teachers and parents will have experienced a young person pushing boundaries. A teacher need not feel guilt-ridden about suitable admonishment, but see it as a morally appropriate response to a student breaking the behaviour code, not as Paul Hirst and Richard Peters (1979, p. 129) claim “a necessary mischief”. To neglect punishment might indicate to a child that she is not worth worrying about.

I reiterate Gilbert and Sullivan’s words in *The Mikado*, “the punishment must fit the crime” and imagine that an ethical teacher may be called upon to determine if there is indeed a ‘crime’. I know of a year 1 student who was kept in after school because she had drawn on her desk. It was most unlike this particular student who usually followed instructions and worked conscientiously. The full story was that she was told to colour in “right up to the edges” and in doing so the pencil had gone onto the desk. My anecdote tells of a misunderstanding, of a student too shy to speak up. It underlines how a seemingly insignificant occurrence can cause resentment on the part of a student and labelling on the part of a teacher. The moral of the anecdote is to be informed as much as possible and then draw conclusions. A possible solution would have been for the student and teacher to clean the desk together.

### *Assessment and Humour*

By now I have gathered up my garments that blew off the invisible clothesline and folded them away with the hope of not having to resort to punishment. The idea of humour as an antidote to punishment occurs to me now. Empathy is vital for teachers, but a busy classroom is not always conducive to understanding how a student feels, let alone allowing time to share feelings, even if a student would want

to. The exception is when a student has a happy occurrence to communicate, which can be a brief retelling of the event, and then on with the lesson. At other times, a student is feeling negative about something or is unhappy in general on a particular day. Let us picture thirty students trooping into a classroom. Look, there is someone who does not seem happy at all. There is no point in drawing attention to that student. While younger children can be easily distracted, senior secondary students are a different kettle of fish. Unhappiness or dissatisfaction can manifest itself in anti-school behaviour.

When teaching senior secondary students, I have found that if behavioural problems occur, they can often be dealt with by using humour to divert potentially confrontational situations. 'The funny side' can diffuse a tense situation, either between students, or between student and teacher. McCourt (2005, pp. 204-220) demonstrates this with many examples in *Teacher Man*. One in particular brings a smile to my face when I imagine it. McCourt's creative writing class is being rowdy and there are complaints of pushing and being pushed. He objects to the time-wasting, the routine, the discipline and dealing with the students' complaints. The fun starts when a student brings marzipan to school. Eating in the classroom is against the rules. Unconventional McCourt, after asking what it is, tastes the marzipan, finds it to be delicious, and allows the student to bring thirty-six more pieces the next day. Another student brings bits and pieces from his father's restaurant and soon there are more offers of food. McCourt then conceives the cook book idea.

The class, comprising students of different ethnicities, is told to bring along cook books to the next lesson. The students think McCourt is weird but start reading recipes as if they are reading poetry. One student offers to play the flute as accompaniment. He adjusts his flute to French, English, Spanish, Jewish, Irish and Chinese recipes. They think it is such fun. Following on, the class moves to nursery rhymes, *Little Bo Peep*, and *Old Mother Hubbard*, also funny, then to longer serious poems. What a delightful way to deal with the rowdy behaviour that was experienced prior to this.

## *Benefits of laughter*

A jest often decides matters of importance more effectually and happily than seriousness. Horace, Satires (35-30 B.C.)

Philosopher André Comte-Sponville reminds us that humour is a virtue, and that “taking oneself completely seriously is always a fault”. Humour prevents this, “It is a great and precious quality” (2003, p. 211). He warns us though not to exaggerate the importance of it. As with most qualities, moderation is the key. Gilbert Ryle agrees it is a virtue and goes so far as to say that a sense of humour can be schooled.

A toddler appreciates simple practical jokes...the schoolboy already appreciates puns...What greatly amuses a young man may show the quality and the academic level of his wits. (1972, p. 53)

It is at this point I go to Annas who also alerts us that virtue can be acquired and that a sense of humour can indeed be learnt.

Mayo Clinic researchers, University of Maryland Medical Centre cardiologists, and University of California: Los Angeles researchers conclude that there are many benefits of laughter and humour (Dave Zizzo, 2010, p. 45). Positive effects include “increases personal satisfaction and makes difficult situations easier to handle or accept”. After reading their conclusions, it occurred to me that my Behavioural Science students may learn more from tasks if humour were involved. To investigate the idea, I adapted a twenty-five question multiple choice exercise to include some ‘funny’ answer choices—about three in each exercise. Two classes of between twenty-five and thirty students completed the task which was primarily for revision of sociological terms and concepts used in a unit already completed about education. Some examples of the questions are:

1. The two sociologists who put forward the labelling theory were:
  - a. Marx and Engels
  - b. Lemert and Becker
  - c. Posh and Becks
  - d. Kessler and McKenna
  
2. The main way that society exercises social control is:
  - a. Reverse psychology—tell people what you do not want them to do
  - b. Having to watch 20 Chickenfeed commercials for violating the law
  - c. Socialisation to expected behaviours
  - d. Propaganda and brainwashing

- 3 The two sociologists who studied the self-fulfilling prophecy theory were:
  - a Rosenthal and Jacobsen
  - b Marx and Durkheim
  - c Jekyll and Hyde
  - d Weber and Parsons
  
- 4 A vocational subject is:
  - a. A subject which isn't related to a specific job
  - b. A subject in which you don't have to do anything
  - c. Is where you study a subject that is related to a specific job
  - d. Maths, English or Science

One class had the multiple choice exercise without the 'funny' choices, and one class with them. While the latter exercise was underway it was interesting to see a few smiles, and then hear some chuckles. Some hands went up to ask what the idea was to put strange answers in the exercise. I replied that students were required to circle the most appropriate answer. These students did marginally better than those who undertook the straightforward or unfunny exercise. The classes agreed that I could use the information regarding the exercises, therefore participation was voluntary. The students' confidentiality is not breached because no names are mentioned.

When evaluating the results, I came to the conclusion that because some of the answers were rather obvious, it put the students at ease and gave them confidence that they would have some correct answers. I believe this then led to better recall. An unexpected consequence of the exercise was that the students did not mind swapping and marking others' papers. In the past they had vehemently objected to doing this. The marking opened up what Art Costa (1996, p. xi) calls "reciprocal learning." The students explained why they thought such and such an answer was the most appropriate, they listened to one another, and they rethought their understandings. Rather than my taking away the papers to mark in my office and then giving them back, the students had completed the task themselves. They worked together as a group, monitored and reflected on their own understanding. That they had come to some self-understanding in the context of my subject and in the educational environment of my classroom enabled me to gain enjoyment from teaching, which I feel goes towards fulfilling the moral and virtuous purposes of education.

### *What on earth is that?*

I concluded that a reasonably jovial classroom can lend itself to meaningful learning. I have found too, that props are very useful for recall of a concept. It can be fun trying to guess what things are used for. To that end some of the props I have taken at various times include an old-fashioned iron (changes in domestic chores), a Bo-Bo doll (Bandura's theory of aggressive behaviour in children), a bird's nest (functions of the family), some red soil from the Northern Territory (the concept of belonging), and a roll of tape used in early data processing (changes in information technology). The use of props seems to eliminate the self-consciousness of those students who are somewhat reticent about volunteering answers or joining groups. It seems that having a tactile object in the classroom generates interest and curiosity. If the object is unusual it can give rise to humour when trying to guess the use or origin of it. Another example I use is an ivory handled hook that my great-grandmother used to button her boots with, which launches a sociological discussion about fashion and culture.

Most students remember a funny or unusual object when it is brought into the classroom. It follows then that they will remember the lesson if the object is connected to what is being taught. Props are usually attention-grabbing. Even the most passive student is somewhat curious — a trait I became more aware of during an outdoor education long-weekend excursion to Maria Island. On the trip the students came to life. I saw those I thought I knew very well in a different light. They displayed diverse strengths and talents. The outdoor settings and the various skills needed to set up camp, cook, and bushwalk, revealed abilities not demonstrated in the classroom. The flair to carry out certain tasks enhanced students' status with their peers, which in turn boosted self-esteem and contributed to classroom social interaction. The students responded positively to the idea of reflecting on their own endeavours. Costa (1989) reminds us that the ultimate purpose of evaluation is to enable students to evaluate themselves. They will learn from these reflections and be able to identify errors and misconceptions. Teachers can provide an environment for students to become confident with self-assessment.

### *External Assessment and Actual Markers*

Shifting from students' self-assessment, I now refer to how external assessment of students is administered by the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority (TQA). Once the props have made an impression and the humour has subsided, it is time to gear up for examinations. Examinations serve at least three purposes. These are to inform students of their mastery of the course material, to offer the teacher feedback on the effectiveness of her teaching, and to provide information needed in assigning a course grade. External assessment is a major part of senior secondary students' education, though it only takes place at the end of each school year for years 11 and 12. I believe external assessment deserves to be thoroughly examined because it is that recurring bedevilment in my wanting provide the best possible pedagogy for my students. I want to be fair, I want them to pass exams, but I do not want to 'teach to the exam'. The outcome of the external assessment process is vital for many students' future pathways. My observations during my time as an examiner and then as CME for Sociology, enable me to experience first-hand, assessment in progress and teachers' attitudes towards it. My purpose of describing the external assessment procedure in Tasmania is to demonstrate through my lived experience what I perceive as the ethical nature of the method used at the present time. The descriptions of my individual and shared life events with other teachers during the assessment period are both particular and collective.

While I am describing the marking of examination papers in a practical sense, that is, my practical purpose of carrying out the assessment, I aim to present the procedure in a reasoning sense so that knowledge rather action is portrayed. I am aware that I have a heap of papers in front of me, waiting to be awarded A, B, C, or D. The marks are translated into a numerical university entrance score. I know that the score an unidentified student receives counts towards his or her future, be it at university or employment, but that is not what I initially think about as I read through the examination paper. The purpose I have in mind, or the intention when I act, is to mark this paper. Behind that intention though is the idea that the mark I give may eventually cause self-fulfilment by translating into an acceptable tertiary entrance score or disappointment, if a pass mark is not reached. At the time I am not conscious of these 'outside' consequences. It is as if the space in which I am

carrying out the assessment is a kind of bubble, and I am not in the ‘real world’ during the assessment period.

If I do happen to worry about what is happening outside the bubble, I console myself by thinking that external marks make up 50 per cent of the total award for each subject and that the subject teacher is then responsible for the other 50 per cent of assessment. This eases my qualms. I can rationalise any reservations I might have about marking too hard by thinking of the continuous internal assessment carried out throughout the year by the subject teacher. These internal and external elements are combined to generate an award. There may be a trap in this combination though. Richard Peters in *Ethics and Education*. warns us that if the main function of an examination is a selective one, say, for university places, then the teacher may find herself caught in a situation where she has to use her expertise in order to get students through the exam, rather than in the cause of education (1966, p. 86).

#### *How ethical is the marking procedure?*

Since I want to try and determine what best constitutes ethical assessment I look to my association with TQA and my time spent in the external marking process. I spent some sixteen years as marker and the past ten years as CME of Sociology. My position with the TQA has provided an opportunity for my primary research into machinations of assessment and the ethics involved. Even with the best intentions, can fifteen disparate markers be consistently fair and ethical over the week long marking period? Does the TQA have sufficient safeguards in place to protect the rights of the students? The TQA calls for expressions of interest from applicants for “external marking of level 3 senior secondary subjects (written, oral, practical and folio) from suitably qualified and experienced people” The Authority points out that external marking is a valuable professional development activity and urges all current and future teachers to be involved (Marker EoI, 2010).

There is greater emphasis on academic integrity now because so much information is available on the internet. Chief Marking Examiners attended workshops relating to this. Points of discussion were referencing rules and what a breach of the rules might encompass, what constitutes poor referencing, challenging

issues of third party assistance, and what is 'common knowledge'. The TQA in consultation with CMEs needed to decide what penalties should be applied. The TQA has a process for markers to report suspected breaches of the referencing rules, in other words, the authenticity of the material submitted for assessment. These suspicions are followed up by TQA, not the marker. Such checks are fair to all candidates because if one has an advantage by plagiarising information, then others are by definition, disadvantaged. An example of clear efficiency gain is the way a recent query regarding plagiarism from a marker 320 kilometres away could be handled electronically. I received a folio attached to an email. I could peruse it, look up the references on the internet, and email my comments back to the marker in little over half an hour.

The marking week starts after the exams, when markers from all over the State, government and private schools, meet with me. I chair the moderation process of four or five papers and clarify the nature of the information to be looked for in relation to the criteria. Markers award a grade for each of the papers. I compare the marks and the reasons given why such marks are awarded. Perhaps there is one step difference, say B+ instead of B. Discussions take place and I give, with general agreement, the benefit of any doubt to the candidate, while at the same time aiming to keep the integrity of the subject. Sometimes handwriting is hard to decipher and both integrity and fairness apply here. It would be easy to dismiss or gloss over a badly written paper, and while I do not endorse untidy handwriting, sometimes these are the best papers. I always remind markers of doctors' handwriting.

At the end of the marking week TQA feeds the results data into a computer and combines the marks with the internal assessment. TQA calculates an average and awards an end result. If the computer flags an inconsistency of marks, the papers are examined by a 'discrepancy panel'. Two other members and I scrutinise the documents, resolve any discrepancies, and decide on a final mark. We examine borderline cases. If a candidate is one rating away from a higher award, say a pass or an excellent achievement, we consider whether to raise the award. We do not lower it. Fairness is confirmed.

## *Summing up*

After the marking, and anomalous and borderline cases resolution, I write an Examiner's Report which TQA posts on its website for circulation to schools and colleges. TQA expects that the report may help future students of the subject, as well as new teachers. An example is below:

### **Written Examination Paper**

#### **Section A – Socialisation Conformity and Deviance**

##### **Question 1**

This question was answered by 77 per cent of the candidates.

There were some very strong responses to this question which demonstrated that candidates knew the explanations very well, could link to the given stimulus, and evaluate theories of deviance relating to the stimulus material.

In many ways this was an easy choice, but the candidates who reeled off the prepared 4 theories and left it at that, were not responding to the given material and the actual question, which was about youth. There was a tendency to state... "The last theory is ..."

Some obvious prepared introductions did not note the change in the wording of the question. Candidates need to address the set question, not one they have rehearsed during the year. There were many instances of "dump" responses that only included tenuous paraphrasing of the stimulus.

The best responses developed argument regarding the interrelationship between institutions through a theoretical lens, in which they outlined and evaluated a range of sociological theories and perspectives in their answer. (Assessment Report, 2012)

Dr Roya Pugh has drawn my attention to passive voice as it occurs in so much documentation in regard to assessment. She notes "it seems to entrap the minds of assessors". Straightaway I can see I have fallen into the 'trap'. I have used passive voice at the start of my report, "This question was answered by 77 per cent of the candidates". Why did I not report "77 per cent of the candidates answered this question"? Pugh goes on,

It is another ethical event. The passive voice makes assessment passive, deadens it, takes the personhood out of the process. The quest for fairness becomes rather the voice of authority. (Note, November 2013)

The 'voice of authority' is a major point. We markers are anonymous, as are the students whose work we assess. We are faceless decision-makers in our marking 'bubble', unseen behind an authority. Maybe that is why we use passive voice. It separates us from being personally accountable. We must confirm a confidentiality agreement not to discuss or divulge any information about particular students or schools, or methods used to arrive at results. The student is a number, not a name. In defence of the arrangement, I find it difficult to see it operating any other way. If a marker were to be identified and a student felt that he or she had been unfairly assessed, particularly if a scholarship was foregone, then that marker could be pressured, or worse. I have experienced behind the scenes pressure from a teacher and parents to award a higher grade when a student could not enrol in his chosen university.

From my research into external assessment, it appears a reasonable way of impartially assessing student achievement. I assume that all markers feel obliged to be as fair and as consistent as possible, but might less rigorous markers be tempted to rush the evaluation? Indeed, one marker admitted that she had graded papers in the car when she was driven from Launceston to Hobart, about a two and a half hour journey. For that matter, do I always use the same yardstick? Sometimes I have a glass of wine in the evening when I am marking. I sense I may feel more generous towards the student. At other times I may be irritable, out of sorts, and notice little slip-ups. I discussed my disquiet with an experienced colleague who reassured me that she awards marks according to her 'gut feeling'. She pointed out that after much agonising and rereading, her first mark is usually right.

I now have to ask myself, am I passively taking on the TQA's understanding of ways of assessing? It seems we are coming from two different standpoints. I come from a pedagogical one, and they from an administrative one, that of awarding qualifications. These standpoints are parallel but somehow need to converge. Annas sees no threat in such a dilemma. We need to look for generous people doing generous actions.

When a truly generous person acts generously, this is on the basis of a far fuller and deeper understanding of generosity, and her actions will exhibit what the beginners may lack: awareness of the way generosity

requires tact, awareness of others' dignity and a host of other considerations. (2011, p. 40)

A truly generous person is analogous to being an expert in a practical skill, that is, having expertise. I concede that external assessment is not a comprehensive solution but if the external markers have expertise, I am able to suppress my concerns as I envisage Annas' account of solving the dilemma

## Chapter 7

### Characterisation of Students Emerging in Assessment

Further to the previously mentioned educational reforms, I focus again on the theme of change to describe how innovation affects the curriculum, and the students, including students with disabilities, and thus has an impact on teaching and assessing ethically. Education has changed from being a privilege, to being collaboration between teachers and learners who must work co-operatively to attain the desired educational outcomes. I document how outcomes can be greatly affected by students' home circumstances where parents may be struggling to provide for their children, or where values may be at odds with the culture of the school, and I describe the ways present day students are different to those of yesteryear. Major changes have occurred in the delivery of Languages Other Than English (LOTE). I document teaching and assessing changes in LOTE and review different approaches with reference to the work of Jack Richards and Theodore Rodgers. In spite of more enlightened teaching methods, fewer students are enrolling to learn a foreign language. Why might this be? In this chapter I ponder other ethical questions such as, do today's students have equal rights or do gender and class differences still exist?

I draw on my own experience, having spent the last sixteen years in a government senior secondary college. Prior to that, I was employed in a government district high school, a private catholic school for girls and a prestigious private school for boys. I have encountered, and continue to encounter many diverse students at the senior secondary college where my subjects include pre-tertiary Sociology, pre-tertiary English, Introduction to Sociology and Psychology, Human Interaction, German and Business Computing.

The subjects I teach are varied and relate to different faculties, mostly the humanities. I report to the English, Behavioural Science, Language and Technology Departments. It is unusual at a college to be in several different camps. I have to 'change my cap' often and become the teacher of whatever subject it is at the time. I look at the clothesline (Illustration 4) with its many garments hanging there. There are different shapes and sizes and colours which seem at first glance like a



### *Emotional change*

Knowledge is always accompanied with accessories of emotion and purpose. Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933, p. 4)

Not only are students' personal reflections in subjects significant, but the role of emotions is important for teachers as well as students. I am unable to detach myself from feelings of exasperation or disgust if for example, a student lies to me or cheats. It affects me because I am putting time and effort into helping my students. I am delighted when students pass an exam with flying colours or gain a scholarship. Fullan, linking energy with emotional intelligence, places importance on the responsive side of change. Christopher Day (1997, pp. 44-61) sees the need to know how students respond emotionally. He discusses how today's students, termed "Generation Y", born since 1982, are unlike those of yesterday. In an era of globalisation, Generation Y has a different approach to life in general, and is markedly dissimilar to Generation X who were born between 1965 and 1981. Obsolete knowledge is irrelevant to today's students who are being taught mostly by the baby boomers generation. We are an aging, mainly female teaching cohort, and teaching, learning and assessment are far removed from that which most teachers themselves experienced. This has an impact on acceptance or rejection of innovation on the part of the educator. There is a strong case for meaningful professional development in order to heighten teachers' awareness and understanding in an age of rapid change.

One might argue that middle class values are taught and therefore inequality is perpetuated, but that is another debate. Day's censure of the assumption that better education leads to better jobs can be refuted. Statistics show that the higher an individual's qualifications, the better the chance she has of being employed. Nationally, graduates have almost 20 per cent more participation rate in the labour force than those without post-school qualifications (ABS, 2012). The proportion of students attending universities has increased, and retention rates are improving. However, individuals with a lower socio-economic status tend not to continue on to tertiary studies, despite the advantages when it comes to gaining employment.

Social, and as well as economic factors, have determined changes in contemporary schooling. Family structure has changed. With 48.9 per cent of marriages ending in divorce (ABS, 2011) the nuclear family of the past - mum, dad, and two and a half children is declining. There are now more blended or stepfamilies. There are more single or lone parent families, which are usually headed by women. The area of a feeder school to the college where I teach has 39 per cent single parent families (ABS, 27/05/2011 4442.0 - *Family Characteristics, Australia, 2009-10*). These families tend to be poorer; and many students come from homes relying on social welfare, which impacts on the provision of basic essentials such as food, clothing, housing and healthcare. Some schools provide breakfast for their students. “Stress, debts, poor housing, isolation in communities, lack of accessible social amenities – all combine to make supportive parenting extremely difficult” (Day, 1997, p. 46). I would add that it can make teaching extremely difficult. Children will not learn if their stomachs are rumbling from hunger, or if they are worried about problems at home. Day points out that teachers have to perceive children within the context of the intricacies of daily life in a modern family. There is a widening gap between “haves” and “have-nots” and some sociologists argue that families which are caught in a cycle of absolute poverty are an underclass. This is contentious, but in any case children in such economic circumstances are at a disadvantage.

Poverty reduces children’s social or cultural capital. Cultural capital means having access to educational toys, books, and computers; attending concerts, museums, and art galleries; going to the “right” school; travelling; and dressing and speaking in a particular manner. All of these have an impact on children’s life chances. An address outlining how social change in Australia affects the nurturing tasks of family life, and suggesting a rethink of how the community as a whole might assist the child development process, was presented as far back as 1982. Don Edgar and Gay Ochiltree assert that educators of Australia’s children, knowing how unequal families are in the economic and cultural resources they provide,

...should build on each family context and assist parents in their efforts to develop children with a sense of their own self-worth. This goal can only be reached with concerted effort in a time of rapid social change. (1982, p. 6)

Statistics show that unemployment is presently higher in Tasmania than nationally and higher still in disadvantaged areas (ABS, 4221.0 - Schools, Australia, 26 June, 2012). Some students will come from backgrounds where parents have no paid employment. Youth unemployment specifically, is a critical issue. Higher retention rates for year 12 are partly caused by lack of employment opportunities, which in turn creates a challenge for teachers who have to deal with students who would rather be working than at college.

The traditional family, where the husband goes out to work and the mother stays at home with the dependent children, is no longer the norm. In 1911 a little over 6 per cent of married women were in the workforce. The figure in 2011 was 62.6 per cent (ABS cat. no. 4102.0 - *Australian Social Trends*, Data Cube - Family and community, 11 December 2012). Many women now choose to enter the paid work force. More working-mothers means that children are going into day-care or school earlier, therefore diminishing parents' control over these children. Teachers become the other authority figure.

### *Present day students*

Modern families when given a choice of increased consumerism or increased procreation opt for consumption (Graeme Snooks, 1994, p. 145). Increased orientation towards consumption turns children into different sorts of students occasioning different relationships with their parents. Schooling is an investment in their futures, not a resource that can be drawn on in the present, as used to be the case. Students have the potential for income but they cost families more because they stay longer at school and do not contribute to the family income. This creates a dilemma for many families who want the best for their children but find it difficult to balance the family budget. I recall trying to persuade a bright student who wanted to leave college a couple of weeks before final exams in order to take up a job, to stay and sit the external assessment exams. Unfortunately, the lure of a mediocre job that lacked advancement prospects was too strong. It offered immediate wages. The student left because he found it too challenging to defer the gratification of instant money.

The mass media is seen as having brought about change in today's students. It is of concern that television is the main source of information for many of them. Their values and social attitudes are affected by what is often a distorted worldview. Teachers fear that reality television programs such as *The Weakest Link* and *Survivor*, as their names suggest, promote selfishness and putting down others. Studies suggest that children are generally more sedentary because of amounts of time spent watching television. There may be less opportunity for outdoor activities. Sedentary lifestyle, lack of physical fitness, smoking, drugs and alcohol are of concern to the pastoral care teacher.

With all the social and economic changes that have occurred, some of the socialisation which used to take place in the home within the family now takes place at school. Students may be receiving conflicting messages from separated parents, from carers, and from the media. Biesta thinks that "the shift towards socialisation, towards the 'production' of a particular kind of individual, is worrying" because it gets teachers too far away from "the individuation or subjectification function of education" (2009, p.9). I take this to mean that he is worried about an output of similar students analogous to a production line process where there is little or no room for the individual to be different. I think that this can be avoided by not specifying an intended outcome. It can be seen that innovation is driven by the need for schools to represent a stable place for students to identify with. Before learning can be effective, teachers have to gain the trust of students in order to motivate them and engender commitment. Ideally assessment becomes a learning device, and, as Day contends, it is useful to recognise the kinds of experiences that students are likely to bring with them into school.

Teachers are deemed responsible for meeting the spiritual, cultural, moral, mental and physical development of children, and for preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (Day, 1997, p. 47). It is vital to know where the children are coming from. Presently I have a student in my class who was home-schooled. She is extremely bright and well-informed. She has however, unlike most other students, no experience with information technology. There is no doubt that the student will soon catch up, but it highlights the need to understand students within the context of their family backgrounds.

Two other factors which affect teaching are gender and sexuality. The lack of a male role model in single parent families may be used to argue the need for attracting male teachers into the profession. Certainly there are more female teachers - 71.6 per cent of all teachers in 2011 (ABS cat. no. 4102.0, Australian Social Trends, Data Cube – Education and Training 26 June 2012) - especially in primary schools, probably because the job has changed from being somewhat authoritarian to be seen as having more of a nurturing, caring role and is therefore in the feminine domain. Although, back in the 1880s a text by W.H. Davenport Adams about higher education and employment of women pronounces that

Women seem endowed with a natural capacity for teaching. Their quick sympathy, their patience, and their facility of expression, are gifts which bring them readily into accord with their pupils. (p. 485)

This is high praise, but it was of no benefit for prospective students. He goes on,

Yet the opportunities afforded them, in England, at least, were very limited. The education of their own sex has, until recently, been to a large extent in the hands of men...there were no competent female teachers because there was no adequate female education. (pp. 485–486)

Ann Daniel in *Power, Privilege and Prestige* writes that the status of teaching as an occupation in Australia is still perceived as quite low by the general public, yet above that of police or used-car salesperson. Medical practitioners are the most prestigious (1983, pp. 196-206).

Sexuality, especially in senior secondary schools, is significant. Students at college are on the verge of adulthood. They have greater personal freedom, and form relationships with the opposite or same sex. In some cases they are responsible for their own accommodation. Year 11 and 12 are challenging and expanding years for the majority of students.

In a professional development presentation to Hakea teachers 8 February 2001, entitled 'Understanding the New Generation, Mark McCrindle, an advocate for changes in approach to college teaching, explained the characteristics, values and attitudes of today's secondary students. His paper described the teenagers born since 1982, dubbed Generation Y. There are about 4.5 million of them, and slightly more male than female.

“They grew up with mobile phones, the internet, pay TV, bottled water, laptops and Eminem in a world of AIDS, terrorism and addiction to crack and ice” writes Bryan Patterson in the *Sunday Herald Sun* (July 8, 2007). They are quite different to Generation X, who were born between 1965 and 1981, and decidedly different to the ‘baby-boomers’.

Generation Y appears to have a different approach to life in general. Obviously they live in different times, a factor which is frequently overlooked. We tend to judge by our own standards, but the terrain is different. Many students are supported by their parents, but want to be independent. Others drive their own cars and live independently, as mentioned. They are streetwise, yet idealistic, and they challenge traditions. Some take part in political demonstrations. They like to be individualistic, but friends are of utmost importance. The most popular and frequently watched television show for this age group is *Friends*, says McCrindle (Paper, 2001). *Friends* is a sitcom revolving around a circle of young people who live unconventional domestic lives. It presents the idea that ‘all you need is good friends’ and you can construct ‘families’ through choice. The audience is able to identify with the program through the troubles seen on weekly episodes. A critic favorite, commercial success, and cultural phenomenon, the series made a large cultural impact on hairstyles and catchphrases ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friends#Cultural\\_impact](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friends#Cultural_impact). Retrieved 23 November 2013). Neilson Research (2001, p. 4) also ranked the program as number one in the ratings. In my teaching practice I observe that peers often have greater influence than teachers or parents.

The most rapid change is technological. Generation Y is sophisticated in relation to technology. Mobile phones are common, they communicate via SMS and e-mail. They tell the time by mobile phone instead of wristwatch. My German class corresponded by e-mail with a class in Bavaria. Many German students listed phoning among their hobbies. Computer programs with “virtual reality” are popular.

McCrindle used a surfing analogy and likened today’s students to the waves on a beach (Paper 2001). Teachers cannot change the water. He advises them to “surf the wave”. His notion ties in with Senge’s earlier reminder that we must not screen new ideas as being irrelevant—we have to productively examine and change the way

we think. He tells us to look inward and become aware of “truths” we take for granted,

Once we start to become conscious of how we think and interact, and begin developing capacities to think and interact differently, we will already have begun to change our organisations for the better. (1994, p. 48)

As far back as 1962, Thomas Kuhn voiced a similar opinion. His view that scientists are not entirely objective can be applied to teachers. Kuhn argued that science is characterised by a commitment to a paradigm. That is, a set of beliefs about what counts as true and valid knowledge. He believes people see the world in a way that fits the framework consistent with their paradigm and ignore evidence which does not fit (pp. 148 – 149). I understand this to be a warning to teachers to beware of making decisions based on their past experience of teenage years, or trying to teach to their own particular view of the world which is vastly different to Generation Y”s.

The change in student expectations can sometimes be at odds with what the prospective employers want, and what parents can afford. As far as curriculum change goes, there are many more subjects to choose from in colleges. Some more unusual ones are card and board games, jewellery making, and kayaking. Along with this comes an expanded range of equipment needed to study subjects such as music, photography, and sewing. Masses of enticing subjects may be good for students and arouse interest, but employers want reading, writing and especially mathematical skills, as well as behavioural skills. A huge load is placed on teachers and their methods of assessment. It will not be enough to be a multi-skilled teacher, there will have to be more specialist teachers.

### *Foreign language acquisition*

Can virtuous teachers cope with those students who in the past could undertake unskilled jobs? I am concerned that there will be little or no employment for untrained and unqualified individuals. Annas tells us “a virtue requires a commitment to value” (2011, p. 6). A virtuous teacher as well as having her own values, would consider it important for students to reflect on values in their own lives. A conceptual framework for this is to study foreign languages and gain

insights into other cultures. Present day students can gain from the changes which have occurred in teaching and learning in Languages other than English (LOTE), in my case German. There is a lean towards making purposeful and active use of the target language. In order to appreciate new approaches, I describe some of the past methods which were used. These examples are out of range of my personal experience, but have captured my interest and give shape to my lived experience. One example, the classical Grammar Translation Method, dominated foreign language teaching from the 1840's to the 1940's (Douglas H. Brown, 1980). The focus was on written language and learning through reading and writing, with little active use of the target language. Assessment consisted of learning and being tested on lists of vocabulary and grammar rules. The grammar was in or out of context, and little or no attention was given to pronunciation. It is extraordinary that the method lasted as long as it did. It does not improve the student's ability to communicate in a foreign language.

Richards and Rodgers in *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching: A description and Analysis* write of another approach called *The Silent Way*. It was devised and introduced in 1963 by Caleb Gattegno who is well known for his revival of interest in Cuisenaire rods. The method involves the teacher as facilitator, showing physical objects, and students using trial and error problem-solving. Any learning is through discovery when the learner makes an association with the object. Grammar is taught later.

The teacher silently monitors learners' interactions with each other and may even leave the room while learners struggle with their new linguistic tools...The teacher's role is one of neutral observer, neither elated by correct performance nor discouraged by error. In fact, observers have noted that Silent Way teachers often appear aloof or even gruff with their students. (1986, p. 107)

I find it difficult to contemplate teaching or learning in this fashion where the students pronounce the name of the objects by sound/colour association. It seems Gattegno considers the approach applicable to any subject, whatever age, or social background. He believes in the subordination of teaching to learning, that is, we must concentrate on how students learn not how to teach them. In Gattegno's world, it must be trial and error and the teacher must not interfere.

The impression that individuals should be able to teach themselves whatever they want to know, brings to mind Jacques Rancière's story of Joseph Jacotot, a 19<sup>th</sup> century schoolmaster. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (1991 orig 1981), Jacotot's idea was that an ignorant person can teach another ignorant person — in his case, French, which he did not speak, to Flemish students who knew no French. To further complicate matters, Jacotot knew no Flemish. However, he did not employ *The Silent Way*. Instead he got them to read and recite a book in French until they could comprehend and discuss it. By so doing, Jacotot turned the dichotomy of superiority and inferiority on its head. Rancière argues that equality is a basis for educating and that everyone is equally intelligent. Individuals have the capacity for intellectual freedom: “any individual can always, at any moment, be emancipated and emancipate” (p. 98).

I suggest that using rods or sounds and colours and so on is unnecessarily complicating teaching practice. Returning to Drucker (2006), it serves no purpose to do “things right” if you are not doing the “right thing”. Whether a teacher believes in explication or not, and while many are unwilling to accept equality of intelligence, to strive for what Annas presents as a balance between being virtuous and doing the right thing seems applicable when teaching LOTE, or other subjects.

What happens when a virtuous teacher moves outside the usual classroom situation and teaches students with special needs? Doing the right thing is not as clear cut as dealing with predictable students. One aspect of my lived experience involves inclusion of students with disabilities who are now included in mainstream local schools, as opposed to past segregated ‘special schools’. The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) provides protection for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability. One specific area refers to Education. Students who learn differently from others are defined in the Act. Inclusion means to support them to enjoy the same rights and opportunities as all other students and allows other students to behave appropriately towards those with disabilities. DDA means that students who were previously unable to attend because of lack of access and facilities are now able to do so. Removing barriers to enable this poses a quandary. There are diverse forms of disability. Some are physical, some psychological, some more serious than others. I have encountered visually impaired,

hearing impaired, and several wheelchair-bound students. There are students with dyslexia, autism, epilepsy or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), to name some. Students with disabilities, when educated in a local school, rather than a special school some distance away, are part of the local community.

Roger Slee (1988, p. 31) maintains that an equity policy cannot be established in terms of its intent. It is the outcome that must be seen. He reminds us that curriculum has many dimensions and that effective inclusion, or integration demands solutions in each dimension. He is optimistic that relative autonomy of teaching practices means they are open-ended, and that appropriate strategies for effective inclusion will be found. The dilemma then is for the teacher to assess in a fair manner in such situations.

### *Unusual classroom situations*

Lived experiences bring forth the ethical dilemmas that the virtuous teacher must confront during the task of assessing. I describe the following experiences which may help in exploring and understanding policies, codes of practice and behaviour, teaching practices and ethics in relation to including students with particular difficulties, obvious or not, without discrimination in school activities, learning and assessment.

A wheelchair-bound student with cystic fibrosis was in my Support Group and one of my classes. His condition is quite severe. He cannot speak, although he can make noises, and frequently does, rather loudly, when he feels strongly about an issue. My student can nod or blink to indicate affirmative, or move his head to the side for negative. He also communicates through a computer activated voice device which relies on tapping a pad with his head in order to type in messages. He has a dictionary of frequently used phrases, and a speaker attached to his computer. Because he dribbles and cannot coordinate his hand movements, others are misled about his intelligence. He is a bright student, with a good sense of humour. My classroom had to be altered in order to accommodate his large wheelchair (near a power point). I wanted to make the student feel part of the class, not someone who is external to the group, or on the fringe.

I modified my delivery of lessons somewhat and learnt some new skills in order to communicate with the student who relies on augmentative or alternative communication (AAC). There is a tendency for a natural speaker to feel uncomfortable interacting with an AAC user. Some find it extremely difficult. Janice Light, John Dattilo, Jane English, Lisa Gutierrez, and Jane Hartz (1992, pp. 865-875) have come up with a range of solutions to deal with some of the frequently encountered problems. Of course there is backup provided by the aide. But for many teachers, who are neither specialist teachers nor familiar with 'special needs' students, it is a new arena. Teachers trained when special education units were not included in the course may lack confidence, or do not expect to teach special needs students. Some teachers think it is not fair and that it disadvantages other students.

For me it was an uplifting experience to see the expression on the student's face and in his eyes when he was in class enjoying the lesson. He completed exams which I had specially devised, and which upon reflection were not as arduous as the other students' exams because he tired easily. Imagine having to bang your head every time you wanted to express yourself. The question remains though, did the aide pass the exam or did the student? My speculation in no way casts doubt on the integrity of the aide. For the most part, aides are dedicated to their charges and obviously want the best for them. Assessment of 'included' students remains problematic.

The Community and Public Sector Union Journal features a front page article about a student who is affected by cerebral palsy. According to the article, the Federal Disability Discrimination Act does not regard an inability to speak (or any communication disorder) as a disability. While teachers would occasionally welcome some students having a temporary inability to speak, one must question the intention of policy makers.

Teachers are sympathetic towards a student with a disability, but grapple with assessment. Impartiality is very difficult in many cases. My own experiences of teaching a profoundly deaf student underlined this. I was unprepared in spite of a Departmental strategic plan to:

Provide school staff with opportunities to increase their understanding of  
Department of Education obligations under the Disability Discrimination

Act (1992) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005).  
(Department of Education, September 2008, p. 13)

The small print advises: “All actions are within existing budget allocations unless otherwise specified” (2008, p. 8). This puts a different complexion on the matter. Without any formal training, other than a quick briefing at the start of term, it is very easy for teachers to let certain behaviour, which other students would be pulled up on, slip past. There is always a feeling, however irrational, that the student has been punished enough by being stone deaf.

I report these instances in depth to show how different the classroom may actually be in contrast to what I imagined a teaching career would entail. On two separate occasions, two students with Tourette’s Syndrome were enrolled in my classes. Tourette’s is a neurological disorder which manifests itself in behavioural problems of varying degrees. The boy was defiant, sometimes aggressive and generally uncooperative. He was obsessed with cleanliness. The girl had very poor self-esteem and had difficulty paying attention, which led to poor performance in class. She began to scratch and cut her arms. I had not been informed about these students because of information privacy principles. *The Privacy Act* was first introduced in 1988 and a privacy law reform process began in 2006. While I appreciate a need for such laws and reforms, I could have been saved much consternation had I been fully aware of the students’ disorders. Thankfully, the boy’s mother contacted me because she wanted me to know, and the girl wrote me a letter explaining her situation. Armed with that knowledge, I could address problems and make any adjustments, within reason, to my lesson delivery and types of assessment.

### *Philosophy of inclusion*

I was not advised beforehand and had no time to prepare myself or arm myself with information about deafness before a profoundly deaf student entered my class. After consulting with the Australian Sign Language (Auslan) signing teachers, I learnt that most deaf people acquire their deafness after learning spoken language. Children, who are deaf from birth, learn language in an entirely different way to children with hearing. A student who uses Auslan as a first language of communication may experience difficulty with grammar and syntax. Some may speak differently and

have a restricted vocabulary. Auslan has its own grammar and sentence structure, and is not based on English. It delivers meaning through hand shapes and movements, facial expressions and body orientation.

Luckily my student was extremely self-confident. After finding out how he wanted to communicate, I could take steps to accommodate him in the classroom. He could lip read, but he preferred written instructions or Auslan. I learnt some basic signing and he responded positively to that, and I became aware of my body language and my facial expressions, since these impact deaf students more so than others. Because of the disability and its resulting difficulties, the deaf have their own culture. While being sympathetic, some teachers are uncomfortable about having a student with a disability in their classroom. They have had no training in dealing with such situations and are worried about the assessment of these students. Others find the presence of teacher aides disconcerting, especially if those aides are signing.

A hurdle I overcame in my early years of teaching concerned a student who has Down Syndrome. I had no prior experience with children with intellectual disabilities. The student liked to kick me in the shins whenever he was frustrated. After I told him that it was inappropriate, he kicked me, ran away and climbed to the top of a very tall pine tree. I was beside myself fearing that he would fall down and hurt himself, or worse, kill himself. After many anxious moments and much cajoling, much to my relief, the student descended. As a beginning teacher, I felt ill-equipped to handle such circumstances, though I had learnt about duty of care.

More recently I supervised a colleague's English class where I met a year 12 student who has to write with the pen clenched in her mouth. Despite her disability she is amazingly cheerful. She produced a four page neatly written essay. I found it a truly humbling experience.

The Tasmanian Department of Education in "Curriculum Procedure in Tasmanian Schools" (2012) states:

Schools must comply with all legislative requirements of the Disability Standards for Education, 2005. The Standards require a student with disability to be treated on the same basis as a student without a disability in the areas of: enrolment, participation, curriculum development,

accreditation and delivery, access to student support services and elimination of harassment and victimisation.

While teachers would agree that students should all be treated fairly with dignity, respect and empathy, it is by no means easy. Queensland University of Technology's Elizabeth Dickson pinpoints problems of inclusion. She writes of the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee, Parliament of Australia policy,

While education policy documents trumpet the idealistic policy of the "inclusion" of students with disabilities at mainstream schools actually effecting inclusion places individual school communities under sometimes enormous financial and social and educational pressures. The problems created by including a disruptive and uncooperative student with disability in a mainstream class room may be mitigated by proper resourcing in terms of staffing and expert support. Such accommodations are, however, expensive. (2008, p. 49)

My own above-mentioned examples of unusual classroom situations illustrate the additional responsibilities teachers may have to contend with. As well, they themselves are changing in terms of outlook and progress. As they move from beginners to experienced in their positions, teachers can look forward to challenging and rewarding careers. Dinham (2000, p. 22) found that teachers and school executives find the intrinsic aspects of teaching most rewarding. Helping students achieve, relationships with students and peers, and increasing professional expertise, are all extremely satisfying and will benefit students and society at large. The media often negatively portrays teachers being discontented by lack of support and recognition, as well as being unhappy about the fast pace of change. Fullan writes that it is easy to be pessimistic about educational reform, because "the pressure of the job has taken the joy out of teaching" (1997, pp. 216-233).

The teaching profession has been increasingly feminised, and it has been argued that because of this, conditions of educators have been eroded compared with more masculine and perhaps more militant occupations (Dinham, 2000, pp. 18-34). In any case in Tasmania, there has been negotiation between the Teachers Union and the Government, and teachers have been granted an increase in salary. There is currently a campaign to raise the status of teachers. A recruitment strategy has been

based on national research which examined the nature of teaching and what made it attractive. “Teachers make a difference” is the Department’s slogan. The quality and contribution of teachers was highlighted in the 2000-2005 campaign. There will be scholarship programs for undergraduates, improved liaison with the University of Tasmania, and a more substantial induction program, among other things (Department of Education, 2001, p. 1).

The above discussions demonstrate that change in teaching, learning and assessment is a complicated issue. It appears to be driven by different factors, and factions, in society. Public perception is fed by the mass media, and modern society generally wants to exercise greater influence on the education of its youth. There are different views depending whether it is employers, educators or parents. Middle class parents have different views to working class parents. Educators themselves have differing views. Age can be a barrier to change as older teachers may be more set in their ways and reluctant to embrace new techniques which they regard as fads.

### *Contemporary teaching*

The pace of technological change has been so rapid that many teachers have experienced difficulties to keep apace. Most teachers in Tasmania have not grown up with the new technology, so they struggle somewhat to become computer literate. Peter Spencer (2000, pp. 5-6) thinks you can teach an old dog new tricks. He sees a need for more opportunities for professional development, but observes that we need to realise that skills needed to incorporate computers into classroom techniques are more important and complex than skills needed to simply operate the machines. My principal has made resources and tutors available for teachers to undertake training in this area. As Day advises, if teachers are to be experts in effective learning, there must be opportunities for continuing professional development and full resources available, because “...for teachers as for students and other adults of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, learning is a lifelong business” (1997, p. 53).

21<sup>st</sup> students need to be motivated and inspired, and they need problem-solving skills. I believe Generation Y students want a positive experience in education, and have explanations, rather than instructions from teachers. McCrindle (Paper, 2001) looked at the top five requests of college students, and says they want teachers to

appreciate them, develop them, involve them, create a team, and lighten up. According to McCrindle, rather than trying to change students, teachers should change the method of delivery, and use all the modern technology to get lessons across. Further, today's teenagers are not so materialistic — they want life balance, so there is a need for leisure education programs, and because we are a multicultural society, social flexibility and tolerance are desirable. As a sociologist, I find it difficult to ascertain whether education is delivering what society wants, or whether it is an agent of change in its own right.

The responsibilities and intrinsic rewards of educators are significant. They are of interest to me and are relevant to my teaching. I try to instil in my students the idea of questioning the status quo, of trying to discover. I dislike teaching to the exam and assessing regurgitated information. I like assessment tasks that call on students to analyse and to reflect. Day's prediction that teachers will become "knowledge brokers, skilled in and stewards of learning processes" (1997, p. 56) is appealing.

### *Equal rights for students*

While the ethics of justice are to be applauded, there is another aspect to contemplate. Pierre Bourdieu in *Reproduction In education, Society and Culture* maintains that by treating all students equal in rights and duties, teachers sanction inequality by failing to take into account cultural inequalities between students of different social classes. Linguistic capital, in particular influences teachers' assessments (Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, 1977, pp. 71–74). This then introduces a notion of positive discrimination, sometimes called 'affirmative action'. We as teachers need to know something of the background of our students. In the past, notes regarding students' histories were forwarded to senior secondary colleges. It no longer occurs because of privacy laws.

There are two ways of looking at it. Yes, it was helpful to find out about prospective students. However, if individuals come with a blank sheet so to speak, they are able to start afresh with new teachers, except it does not take into account their linguistic capital that Bourdieu refers to. Bernstein (1970, pp. 195-204) looked at class difference in speech patterns. He coined the terms "elaborated language"

and “restricted language” codes. To demonstrate the differences, Bernstein told how two five year old boys, one with a working class background and the other a middle class, were given four pictures on which to base a story. The middle class child used an elaborated code to describe differences and analyse relationships between objects, events and characters. The working class child used a restricted code leaving many of his meanings unspoken.

Learning is developed sequentially and it requires a certain amount of maturity. For instance, children do not like to be told there is no right or wrong answer. It makes them uncomfortable. They ask: “What do you want me to say?”

Coming from divergent backgrounds, children’s experiences differ. Malcolm Waters and Rodney Crook illustrate two types of home environments:

Father: Julian, would you please pick up your toys before dinner.  
Julian: Why do I have to do that?  
Father: Because Mummy is coming home soon and if we are not careful we’ll be tripping over them.  
Julian: Oh! What time is it then?  
Father: After four o’clock.

A parallel conversation in a working class home might proceed differently:

Mother: Pick up your toys  
Kylie: Why should I?  
Mother: Because I bloody well say so! (1996, p. 329)

Kylie does not have the cultural capital that Julian has. When she comes to school she probably will not have the manners or politeness to conduct herself in a way that could be expected. A virtuous teacher has to look beyond a lack of social competence and see the potential instead.

Since formal education is conducted in terms of an elaborated code, lower socio-economic status students are at a disadvantage. Therefore it would be unjust to treat students equally when they are not starting from a “level playing field”. An observant teacher will empathise with a student limited to a restricted language code

and value the simplicity and bluntness of that student's speech. While this can be taken into account when assessing younger learners, senior secondary learners must be able to articulate at an elaborated language level. It is especially the case regarding external assessment, where terms and concepts need to be defined or explained and arguments provided in order to pass the subject. Extra help with literacy can be offered at the school — free in government schools and charged for in non-government ones, although some students do not like it to be known that they are being tutored.

### *Certification for all*

The TQA makes provisions for special assessment measures for students which allow them to demonstrate evidence of their learning. They are still expected to show the same standard of achievement as other students, but they may be given extra time, permission to use a computer instead of handwriting, alternative format papers, or a smaller examination room with fewer candidates. Markers can be advised to disregard grammar, spelling and poor handwriting (<http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/1470>).

These measures still leave the cultural inequalities affecting those from different social background, which cannot be remedied. No matter how hard a teacher tries to follow a code of ethics, it is unlikely to change the parents' attitude towards education, and it unlikely to provide a home environment conducive to scholarly learning. The best a teacher can do is to be a positive role model, modelling behaviour that is not only acceptable, but preferable in the class room.

A new completion certificate, the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE), was developed to recognise a range of learning achievements when the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority replaced the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board (TASSAB) on 1 January 2004. These achievements included Vocational Education and Training (VET) and work-related skills. While a completion certificate documented a range of accomplishments, it was argued at the time that the TCE was a statement of results rather than a true certificate. It was thought that the award was devalued because any student, who achieved an award of "Satisfactory

Achievement” or better, qualified regardless of the number of hours of the subject. There appeared to be a lack of minimum attainment standard.

There still is a minimum prerequisite to enter university. Students studying pre-tertiary subjects receive a tertiary entrance score, which in turn determines which faculty, or indeed which university offers them a place. Students who do not choose a university pathway can still be recognised and awarded a certificate under the new system. Syllabuses are rewritten and updated at regular intervals. There is some controversy about participation-based and achievement-based standards. Participation-based means that a student merely has to attend classes, and take part in the lesson, whereas achievement-based means as the name suggests, that students have to actually show evidence of achievement. That is, they are measured against standards.

This leads me back to assessment. A student may *participate* in a learning environment, but not necessarily *achieve* a measurable outcome. If a teacher is ethical and sets benchmarks of participation, there is no problem. Different teachers may have different benchmarks, but if a student turns up for the prescribed lesson time, but does not do any work, should that student receive a completion certificate? Most, if not every student would have a completion certificate, regardless of outcome. Some measure of progress, however small, is desirable—otherwise students are denied any sense of achievement. I am reminded of the annual Hobart Regatta, where in sideshow alley spruikers call out to passers-by encouraging them to play a game of chance, “roll up, roll up, every player wins a prize.”

In years 11 and 12, there are students who clearly do not want to be at college. However, now that the leaving age has been raised, they must undertake study or training if they are to collect a Youth Allowance which provides financial help for young people who are between 16 and 21 years. The Department of Human Services informs young people:

If you do not have a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent qualification (Certificate Level II or above), you will have to undertake study or training in order to qualify for Youth Allowance. (Youth Allowance, n.d.)

They have to either 'earn or learn'. A sceptical person might suggest that this is a good way for the federal government to fudge unemployment figures. If individuals are ineligible to receive unemployment benefits, it masks the rate of jobless. While it is creditable to want learning to take place, is it appropriate to force individuals into classrooms if that is anathema to them?

### *Possibilities*

A possible remedy for students who dislike attending classes is the School-Based Trainees (SBT) program, which is a vocational program where students spend part time at college and engage in part time paid work. I was SBT co-ordinator for two years and my involvement entailed liaison with parents, training organisations and the training providers, that is, other assessment stakeholders within the wider community, as well as the students themselves. The position provided me with much anecdotal information from the wider community. The main thrust of which was the need for communication with interested parties so that students could actually engage in meaningful activities while learning about their chosen work pathway. Or equally, finding out that it was not for them after all. I feel that it would lead to more job satisfaction. One such student found his niche. He was extremely happy when offered an apprenticeship in commercial cookery. He knew it would be hard work, but it was what he wanted. He was not interested in an academic pathway. To demonstrate his skills and to show his appreciation of my efforts to place him, he presented me with a cake beautifully decorated with strawberries.

Of course not all students can be placed because there is a finite number of traineeships. It can be argued that there will always be a certain percentage of jobless people in society but we owe it to the youth to help them achieve their potential. The pastoral care teacher, that is, the teacher who has one group of students throughout the year, is able to empathise with the students in that group and assess the most likely areas of interest for their future pathway. They may be suited to outdoor pursuits, activities involving performing or creative arts, or have an interest in tools or machines. An empathetic pastoral care teacher will know the strengths of his or her students. A student who is disorganised would not be suited to a systematic office type job. Likewise, a student who is not particularly concerned

with the welfare of others should steer clear of a job that requires them to care for others. Websites such as <http://www.skillsroad.com.au> and <http://www.Createyourfuture.org.au>, with questionnaires aimed at generating vocational options are available. Students can find out what they are best suited to. If teachers can channel students in a suitable direction so that they become meaningfully employed, it reflects well on all parties.

Public perception of teachers has changed. The mass media, especially television and the Internet has opened up access to knowledge. Teachers are no longer the gatekeepers of knowledge in spite of many being specialists in their field. Frequently misinformation is spread when sensational stories are presented rather than 'good news' stories. The media are very powerful. We read of teachers going on strike, teachers who are paedophiles, and teachers wanting more pay. It is then difficult for the wider public to have respect for teachers. Alexander McCall Smith's Mma Ramotswe in *The Full Cupboard of Life* believed very strongly that teachers should be treated with respect: "A society that undermines its teachers and their authority only dug away at its own sure foundations" (2003, p. 133). We need to hear about the many teachers who have inspired students. We need to know about the teachers who raise the awareness and status of other teachers. An "ideal" teacher then might be truthful, open-minded, have a sense of humour, can distinguish between fad and good practice, and does not engage in rigid assessment.

### *Ethical Responses*

I have been accentuating the importance in education of moral values, ethics and principles which are all-pervasive. They underpin all other aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. Students internalise values and they are reflected in the intellectual and moral development that takes place in the classroom.

Values have to do with worth or worthiness, fairness and esteem. They are a measure of personal qualities, and therefore of status and importance. I now observe values in the sense of moral and ethical codes of conduct. Children's codes of conduct are shaped by various cultural and religious institutional frameworks. The main institutions which affect a child's conduct are family, school, peers and mass media. Religion can have an effect as well. The process of socialisation occurs

when values are internalised. General or shared values act as a standard by which the ends justify the means, and any behaviour which is outside the standard, is seen as deviant.

### *Personal qualities*

My sociological gaze informs me that values are internalised outside the classroom too. When children are very young their values are learnt in the family. Then they go to school and are influenced there by teachers and by peers, who can replace parents as significant others. Peer influence is particularly strong in adolescent years, and there will be role conflict about what students are “supposed to do”.

The mass media have a huge influence on children. By year 10 a student will have watched about 15000 hours TV and had 11000 hours of schooling. Students will have watched countless murders and assaults — all sorts of violence. School, as an agent of socialisation has to compete with these other influences, especially those of the mass media.

Because of the diversity and changing nature of values in Australia, teachers have to adapt in order to keep pace. Children may arrive at school without having eaten breakfast. It could be that the parents, or parent, had to rush off to work and the children were left to their own devices. It could be that the food at home is not popular, or the children want a “M<sup>c</sup>Breakfast”, as advertised on television. It is difficult to believe that a hungry child would forgo any sort of breakfast, but anecdotal evidence suggests it is the case. While on duty at lunchtime in the college, I see beautifully packed sandwiches discarded in the rubbish bins, in favour of highly processed food from the canteen. There is no point instructing the canteen to sell only ‘healthy’ food when there is a large shopping centre on the doorstep where students can purchase any amount of ‘junk’ food.

Today’s values are different and many changes have been for the better. For example, married women can be permanent employees, with superannuation and entitlement to maternity leave. Cohabiting, or de facto relationships are no longer socially unacceptable, and ex-nuptial children are not stigmatised. Even though we may be a more tolerant society, when we step into the classroom we are not value neutral. Teachers have cultural baggage too, and the older we are the more cultural

baggage we tend to have, but it need not be a disadvantage. As Daniel Pratt reminds us,

...perspectives on teaching are cultural views of teaching, powerful but largely invisible frames of reference through which all of us make meanings of our worlds. They limit our perceptions...It isn't possible to forget our perspective, any more than it's possible to forget our cultural upbringing; but still, it is possible to engage meaningfully with new perspectives. (1998, p. 37)

Teachers do not have to adopt commitments and beliefs of other perspectives, suggests Pratt, but they need to learn about them. He likens it to the distinction between becoming enculturated and learning a culture. We can learn about other values but we do not have to internalise them. What we learn can be turned to our benefit by clarifying which values we hold dear. These values are then reflected in the curriculum, both formal and informal. In primary school the formal curriculum can teach values across all areas. In secondary and senior secondary school, values can be taught generally and specifically. For instance in Philosophy or SOSE, the students could learn about the democratic process, about democracy and freedom and the rights and responsibilities that go with it. They could learn about respect for different viewpoints and ways of life, and about social justice for all people. Another important value is respect for the environment. Awareness of ecological sustainability and the importance of safeguarding our and their future can be incorporated in the formal curriculum.

As discussed in Chapter 3 of my thesis, 'Intended or Unintended Pedagogy', teachers need to be mindful of the informal or "hidden curriculum", a term coined by Philip W. Jackson (1968). It is the unintended curriculum, the types of things that students learn from the school's culture, which include allocation of time, space, funding, and disciplinary policies and practices related to that culture. If a college allocates twice as much time to academic subjects than vocational subjects, the message is that the latter do not matter much. Some subjects or aspects of a subject are left out altogether, either intentionally or unintentionally.

## *Gender*

Traditionally the school curriculum has been used to socialise boys and girls differently through subject selection. That is, boys are directed towards ‘male’ subjects such as Maths and Science, and girls towards Social Science, Arts and Humanities. Social patterning also occurred, with the boys tending to be aggressive and competitive. Nowadays it is changing, with more girls participating in Maths and Science, and doing better. For example, at one time, a girl interested in Medicine would have been steered towards becoming a nurse. Now she can become a doctor. In the past, Myra P. Sadker and David Miller Sadker (1985, 1994) found that in American schools, boys demanded and usually got more attention in class, whereas girls were more docile and reticent to call attention to themselves. A similar situation existed in Australia in many schools. Although Myra Sadker died in 1995, another book, attributed to her, by her husband and Karen Zittleman, followed in 2009. Titled *Still failing at fairness: how gender bias cheats girls and boys in school and what we can do about it*, it contains suggestions such as asking a girl to set up the audio-visual equipment or asking a boy to take attendance (p.134). This sounds straightforward but many teachers do ask a boy about anything technical, and a girl to mark the attendance book, probably because girls’ handwriting is generally neater. In Australia, girls’ participation and retention rates are higher than boys in senior secondary schools and in higher education (ABS, 2000). The question I ask now is — what about the boys?

Sexism is a difficult topic, and much has been written. For example, Carr-Gregg in his video, believes that in a class room with fluorescent lights, boys do not learn as well as girls. Similarly in a classroom with hard seats, boys do not learn as well as girls (Amy Lawson, Education Reporter, *The Sun-Herald*. July 11, 2004). Lights and seats are usually outside the class teacher’s influence.

75 per cent of primary school teachers, and a little over 50 per cent of secondary school teachers, are middle class and female. Their behavioural standards are alien to some students. Discipline problems can occur for students who find it difficult to follow and internalise classroom rules and daily routines (Jackson, 1968). Teachers need to be wary of responding to stereotypes of what constitutes manners or ability. So that students do not feel alienated, teachers and the whole school in general need

to involve all students so that they achieve some enjoyment from their schoolwork. But this easier said than done. Fostering and developing ‘reflective judgment’, a model of cognitive development, is one way to engender a love of learning which can extend beyond the classroom, across the life span.

The literature of Patricia M. King and Karen Strohm Kitchener shows a definite link between reflective judgement and moral judgement. Sets of assumptions are said to develop sequentially, and experiences that affect the progression along each pathway may differ. I accept that schools have an advantage compared with other institutions that address moral issues, such as families, religious or civic groups. The seven stages of King and Kitchener’s Reflective Judgement Model shows the

...internal logic – in particular, how the way a person reasons to and defends a conclusion is intrinsically related to other assumptions the person holds about the process of knowing. (1994, p. 44)

In other words, values and opinions come into play. Each stage builds on the prior one. Major concepts within stages and relationships between stages are shown. King and Kitchener see similarities between the development of students’ conceptions of moral rights and responsibility, and conceptions of knowledge and justification.

The authors maintain that the belief about the nature of a problem affects the approach to that problem. Moral problems can be ill-structured problems. An ill-structured problem is one which cannot be described completely, “cannot be resolved with a high degree of certainty”, and one where “experts often disagree about the best solution, even when the problem can be considered solved” (p. 11). There are many aspects to a moral question. How we think affects how we construct a judgment. Young children will think in terms of black and white. They have yet to learn about the shades of grey in between.

### *Class differences*

Freire (1998, pp. 122-123) writes of diminishing the distance that separates him from the adverse conditions of his students’ lives to the degree that he helps them to learn. He contends that the knowledge required to diminish the distance is not enough. There must be an enthusiasm — a kind of passion. Of course there are

longer and shorter distances to take into account and Tasmanian teachers are unlikely to be confronted with such extreme challenges that Freire was. Many, if not most of his students lived in squalid conditions, were depressed, fearful and anxious, or had common illnesses.

The advantage of education as an institution, which I referred to earlier lies in the fact that almost every public servant, executive, lawyer, doctor, that is, all leaders in every walk of life, enter schools and remain there for several formative years. “Teaching ushers a person into a world of one of humanity’s oldest and most vital practices” (David Hansen, 2001, p. 40). Most of us have a favourite teacher, one who stood out as being understanding and considerate. A kind teacher can provide feedback on assessment tasks, highlighting strengths and suggesting ways to address weaknesses. Robert Coles (1997, pp. 188-191) in *The Moral Intelligence of Children* tells of his father describing a revered teacher, and sharing that memory. He recalls the ethical principles that informed his father’s choices and his decisions. His father had a moral passion that enlightened his thinking. Coles writes of his parents being great storytellers, able to inspire and excite, and more importantly to get across ideas and ideals. Storytelling is a powerful medium, which can be used to great effect in the classroom. McCourt certainly proved it to be the case in his New York City high school where he captured and held his students’ attention by identifying with them and telling them memorable stories.

High school students and senior secondary students are enrolled at school in times of life transitions when they are actively experimenting with and consolidating a sense of identity. Hansen illustrates with vignettes drawn from an extended classroom-based research project that “children and adolescents can be equally responsive to a teacher’s moral sensibility” (p. 35). He uses the term “moral sensibility” to incorporate reason and emotion together. It is not sentimental, nor aloof. It presupposes engagement and involvement, and it includes reflective capacity.

Teaching students to think and judge reflectively is frequently identified as desired outcomes of teaching. What type of assessment tasks encourage these outcomes? King and Kitchener observe that, when students ponder and reflect, it enables them to make wise and ethical moral choices by evaluating and questioning,

by taking responsibility for their own learning, and by adapting to change. Students eventually become citizens. Good citizens abide by legal and moral obligations, are environmentally aware and responsible, are patriotic, strive to achieve, and have knowledge and awareness. They are aware of Australia's place globally, and know that it is compatible with democracy to have minority views.

### *List of values*

I have adapted a generally agreed upon list of values, not in a hierarchy, from the Center for Civic Education (1996) These values combine well with the code of ethics for Tasmanian teachers.

- Respect for others - every individual is inherently worthy of consideration regardless of their status.
- Respect for one's self - taking care of one's personal responsibilities, supporting family, friends, and community.
- Open-mindedness - being receptive to new/different ideas.
- Toleration of diversity - regarding beliefs, race, ethnicity.
- Patience and persistence - don't give up.
- Compassion - empathise with others, demonstrate concern for their welfare.
- Generosity - be willing to spend time, effort and resources for the benefit of others and the community at large.
- Loyalty - to principles and ideals (as well as to family and friends).

While most would more or less agree with the above list, Coles reminds us that studying values "doesn't by any means necessarily prompt in either the teacher or the student a daily enacted goodness" (1997, pp. 182-184). He asks, how do we take the big step from moral analysis to fulfilled moral commitments? How do we connect intellect to character? I agree with Coles in that we should not push children straight into doing community service. We need to model good behaviour. We need to start on a small scale, with 'please' and 'thank-you' (and mean it), in line with the level of development in King and Kitchener's model. We must aim for Stage 2 or Stage 3 of the model where there are several interrelated concrete categories of morality — good is being considerate, nice and kind. Bad is being mean. Stage 7 would apply to serving others, and contributing to the common good (1994, pp. 208-209). Some senior secondary schools encourage students to visit aged care homes,

or to mentor younger students in reading programs. If a student is a newcomer to the school, a ‘buddy’ is assigned to help and guide that student.

As well as modelling good deeds, there are many ways we can model reflective judgment in our day-to-day classrooms. We can present both sides of the argument, because there is always another side to every argument. As Roland S. Barth writes in *Learning by Heart*,

Children are not dumb...If they see about them adults who ask questions, read, write, pose and solve problems, work together, and struggle with important learning, *they* want to ask questions, read, write, pose and solve problems and engage in and struggle with important learning.  
(2001, p. 24)

Although it might sound counter-intuitive, we should avoid using too much direct instruction. King and Kitchener maintain that if used too often, it can lead students to believe it is the teacher’s job to tell them all they know. It lessens their willingness to take responsibility for their own learning. Kathleen Vail in a journal article titled “Nurturing the Life of the Mind: If schools don’t value intellect who will?” echoes the sentiment,

...the emphasis on enjoyment as a facile substitute for engagement creates a culture in which students are not likely to challenge themselves or stretch their abilities. (2001, p. 1)

Some teachers seem to have a pact with students — I won’t work too hard, you won’t work too hard.

Teachers need to be careful asking questions. We should query our own questions as well as teach students to question. I once asked a student: Is that ladylike behaviour, Kellie? “Doesn’t matter, I’m not a lady!” came the quick reply. What I really meant was that her behaviour and language was not acceptable in my class, but I did not articulate that clearly.

Teachers need to know how to explain and instruct, as well as knowing how to model desired behaviour. They must acknowledge that decisions are harder to make when there is no right or wrong answer. Students’ feelings of confusion or anxiety need to be legitimised. King and Kitchener’s approach is to provide clear, unambiguous directions to students. I remember at the start of one year, instructing

year seven English students to write a letter to me about themselves. I thought it would be a way to get to know the children and get some idea about their level of literacy skills. What I failed to take into account was that they had no idea how to write a letter. I grew up writing letters, they did not. Once we had sorted out the format of a personal letter, there were no problems.

Hansen (2001) points out that as well as providing the instructions, moral sensibility underlines the importance of the way it is done. One teacher might be abrupt and impatient, which gives the message that she does not trust her students. She might be indifferent or blasé, which signals she does not care about the outcome. The teacher who offers the same remarks enthusiastically and in a supportive manner, expresses involvement and confidence in her students.

Making wise moral and ethical choices means there not always right and wrong answers. There are legitimate differences of opinion, and reflective judgement allows for different interpretations. Following this, students need to evaluate arguments, and to understand the difference between interpretation and opinion. For example, there could be several opinions, and none correct. Students need to know that some authorities are better qualified to make judgments than themselves. King and Kitchener determine that values must be general, not too closely focussed. I imagine they would be too prescriptive otherwise. Students struggle with ill-structured problems. It is advisable, if teachers want to be more successful in promoting development in the intellectual domain that they acknowledge that similar struggles may be going on in students' personal lives. These personal struggles in turn affect the student's reflective thinking.

Palmer's (1998, p. 19) criticism that teachers are trained "to master techniques but not to engage their students' souls", is relevant. He maintains that teaching cannot be reduced to technique, and that good teachers need a capacity for connectedness. One can agree with much of what Palmer writes, but a beginning teacher is rarely endowed with connectedness at the outset. I recall going into a large class of about thirty year 8 students in the middle of the year. It was daunting. I firmly clutched my lesson plan, which had every single minute detailed, throughout the entire lesson. I did not deviate from my plan. Ten children might have had their hands up, but I ploughed on to the next item on my lesson plan. The voice of the

teacher within takes some time to be heard. Nowadays I still have my lesson plans, but they are made up of the concepts that I want the students to learn. I will happily let the class run with an idea if they are engrossed in something, or if there is an animated discussion, tenuously relevant to the topic. The confidence to do so comes with experience. In the meantime, techniques and approaches can be lifesavers.

### *Identity and integrity*

I believe what Palmer is really getting at is that teachers should be true to themselves. He claims that good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. His idea of “identity” is the inner and outer forces that combine to make us what we are. It is genetic make-up, culture, and experiences. “Integrity” is more difficult to define. Palmer calls it acknowledging the whole of who we are. By wholeness he does not mean perfection. To model one’s teaching on a mentor’s approach is not necessarily the way to proceed. It is no good to persevere with a method that does not work for you. Experienced teachers recognise this and pick and choose from various approaches and resources. A ‘good’ teacher has an eclectic approach. Palmer submits that our culture “sometimes equates work with suffering, and that it is revolutionary to suggest that the best inward sign of vocation is deep gladness” (1998, p. 30). It is not such a revolutionary idea. Most teachers gain satisfaction from teacher-student achievement, that is, the intrinsic rewards of teaching. I get a buzz when I know a lesson has gone well, when students comprehend a difficult concept, or come up with some innovative answers.

There are times however, when responses are not forthcoming, when nothing seems to motivate students. I teach the same syllabus to two different classes. One class is bubbly and noisy and we enjoy heated discussions. Often the lesson has ended and we are still continuing the discussion. In contrast, the other class is quiet and serious. I try to play devil’s advocate by introducing highly controversial topics, but the discussions are only lukewarm. Yet both these classes do the required work, pass tests and produce assignments. I am the same teacher within, but I have to employ quite different approaches to these classes. It is difficult to pinpoint where the differences lie. It is not the timing of classes, or the numbers. I am sure it is not the ability of the students. I just accept it as one of the unexpected aspects of teaching.

Palmer's proposal that we talk to ourselves is worthy of consideration. To use positive self-talk is preferable. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Palmer distinguishes between authority and power. It is far better for students to learn because they want to, not because they are coerced or are afraid of some punishment a teacher will mete out. He is quick to point out that his is not a dewy-eyed romantic view of the world. On the other hand he does not propose a flinty-eyed realistic view. What he suggests is a creative synthesis of the two. He wants us to move away from the "either-ors" and move instead to the "both-and" (p. 65). In other words, stances are not necessarily mutually exclusive. With this in mind he lists paradoxes of the world of education. For example, we separate head from heart, facts from feelings, and teaching from learning. We need to combine these. He concludes that his gift as a teacher is his ability to dance with his students (p. 74). I would add to the analogy by observing that some days we just have to do a slow waltz, around in circles.

Hansen looks at the role of ideals and values in teaching. He cites two opposing views. First, that teachers are "public servants beholden to the public to get a particular job done" (2001, p. 157). The only ideal, from his point of view, would be to fulfil publicly defined obligations. The other view is opposite. Teachers must have ideals and these must reach beyond social expectations. They have to help equip students to think for themselves, to conceive their own ideals, and to prepare themselves to make tomorrow's world better than today's. The latter view aligns with King and Kitchener's developing reflective judgment argument. Hansen insists that teaching is too complicated and too important to be purely a job. He urges teachers to see it as a vocation. That it is an opportunity, rather than an intimidating burden, to have moral sensibility.

Barth too, sees schools as places of opportunity for teachers. He maintains that all educators can learn. Schools can become cultures where youngsters are discovering the fun of learning and where adults, that is, the teachers, are rediscovering the joy and excitement of learning. He calls it "learning by heart", (p. 29) and argues that it is crucial for teachers to become leading learners, because of the power of modelling. He argues further that we can teach and lead better if we constantly learn how to. Our ethics surface again here and it fits well with Annas' skill analogy that the attainment of virtue is akin to the development of a skill. Barth

introduces the idea not of at-risk students, but of at-risk educators. He means teachers, librarians, and principals who follow the same old routine, and trot out the same old lessons, “Once routinization and repetition replace invention, learning curves plummet” (p. 22). He recognises that we all have our comfort zones, but argues that it has a devastating effect, that we will be settling for less than we should. I recall a teacher’s vehement opposition to teaching a new subject, Issues in Society, to years 11 and 12. His resistance was based on having to come to grips with the syllabus and provide new learning tasks for students, instead of keeping his usual subject. In the past decade, or perhaps longer, he had recycled the same lessons plans over and over. He wanted to stay in his comfort zone.

For Barth, a precondition for generating knowledge is through reflection (pp. 65-74). As I write this, it occurs to me that we have come full circle back to King and Kitchener. Barth is advocating reflective thinking/judgment for teachers, and he offers a number of ways to go about practising it. First, to observe, but with new eyes. Second, to write and disclose one’s thoughts to others. He recommends writing anecdotes. He maintains that when we become responsible for our words, we become more thoughtful. Recognising that time is a barrier (pp. 91-92), he suggests e-mail. One might say that the electronic “pen” is still mighty.

Another way to promote reflection is through conversations. Teachers can create and exchange knowledge with trusted colleagues, who Barth terms “critical friends” (p. 69). I think teachers do it anyway because reproach is frequently levelled by non-teaching partners, that when a bunch of ‘chalkies’ get together they always talk shop. A very successful exchange of knowledge occurred during a two night, three day conference on Diamond Island, Tasmania in 2009 which I organised for Behavioural Science teachers. University of Tasmania representatives, including Head of Department and lecturers attended, as well as teachers from all over Tasmania, government and non-government schools. We were a diverse gathering who discussed the syllabus and ways of assessing, amongst other things pedagogical. Barth urges us to embrace differences, especially differences in learning and teaching styles. He wants teachers not only to recognise differences, but celebrate them (p. 73). After all differences do exist, so it is authentic and interesting to be

diverse. Homogeneity is a dirty word for Barth, he wants “pluralism rather than uniformity, [and] eclecticism rather than orthodoxy” (p.74).

### *Re-immersion in learning*

Barth’s idea of embracing differences appeals to me because I feel that to re-immense oneself in learning is exciting. New ways of looking at teaching practice are opened up. Even for those teachers who think they know all about a subject, there is always something new to be gleaned. Researching texts, journals and databases for information is time-consuming but fascinating. There is a tremendous feeling of satisfaction when a new approach to instruction is successful. There are opportunities to discuss different approaches when undertaking professional learning. Teachers can meet a range of educators from different parts of the State, from interstate and overseas. Above all, it makes us question and reflect on our roles as teachers.

My aim in this chapter has been to show that the role of values in teaching, learning and assessment is crucial and far-reaching. If we as teachers choose to embrace the King and Kitchener model, we need to heed Barth’s call to be learners ourselves, to be caring and passionate about our vocation so that we can remain committed to making a difference in the lives of our students. The culture, that is the values and beliefs of the school must promote reflection of different kinds on a regular basis. Hansen also calls for the adoption of an ethics-sensitive language of teaching, guided by an interest in the child’s experience. He wants us to escape from rationalistic, managerial practices. He would agree with Palmer’s notions of identity and integrity, and finding the voice of the teacher within. As well as teachers’ voices, there are other voices to be heard. Parents, prospective employers and the community all have something to say.

## Chapter 8

### Who has the Conch?

As I continue to pursue my theme of ethical assessment, I find myself at times being transported away from the main thrust of my thesis by the myriad of information available to me. The assessment pebble I threw into the water has made so many ever widening ripples that I struggle to keep within a reasonable distance to the heart of my inquiry, just as the virtuous teacher might struggle to keep her head above water. My head tells me to keep to a narrow perspective, that it will be easier to discuss, but my research leads me to wide-ranging observations which seem to add to the discussion. Are some aspects more relevant than others? Do some stakeholders have more of a voice than others? Who takes the conch, the emblem of power? William Golding in *Lord of the Flies* uses the metaphor as a symbol of authorisation. “Let him [Ralph] be the chief with the trumpet-thing” (1962, p. 30). Only the person holding the conch may speak. The speaker with the conch is supposed to be respected and heard. Others struggle to obtain the conch in order to gain power.

In this chapter I introduce other parties to explore how they might influence ethical assessment. I am interested in these other experiences because they allow me to become more experienced, to be mindful, or as van Manen expresses it, “be informed” (1990, p. 62). He asserts that we can be shaped or enriched by knowing about other viewpoints. I extend the boundaries to include some pertinent influences and discover some absorbing approaches in education. Are they fads or innovation? I find myself reluctant to omit information about these and some of the peripheral stakeholders who deserve to be mentioned.

#### *Expectations of Employers, Standardisation Authorities and Parents*

Just as I have been pegging down ideas and ethical principles only temporarily in order to view them clearly and allow them to release understandings to me, I make myself alert to other nuances of responsibility that affect teachers. There are other stakeholders involved in the assessment procedure. Besides students and teachers, there are parents, carers, schools, colleges, the Education Department, the Tasmanian

Qualifications Authority, prospective employers, and the wider community. The TRBT's five guiding ethical principles of dignity, respect, integrity, empathy, and justice are equally relevant to each of these entities as they are subjected to change, driven by desirable reform or undesirable fads, by political pressure, both Federal and State, and by community pressure from parents and employers.

Teaching, learning and assessment may change with the need to acquire generic knowledge and skills, but ethics must remain constant. It is generally accepted that we are presently experiencing rapid change in the period known as Postmodernism. Postmodernism can be regarded as a sequel to Modernism. It is no longer accepted to mean the replacement of Capitalism with Socialism, claims Giddens. He refers to post-modernity as "the general sense of living through a period of disparity from the past,"

We have discovered that nothing can be known with any certainty, since all pre-existing "foundations" of epistemology have been shown to be unreliable; that "history" is devoid of teleology and consequently no version of "progress" can plausibly be defended; and that a new social and political agenda has come into being with the increasing prominence of ecological concerns. (1990, p. 46)

I examine factors relating to change in contemporary schooling, and try to determine what drives innovation. Is education delivering what society wants? Is it an instrument of change, or is it an agent of change in its own right? It can be argued that education is another business in the service industry and parents are the clients, and therefore education is swayed by economic factors.

Most members of contemporary Australian society have definite opinions on how schools should operate. Progressive education is either welcomed, or the loss of the good old days is lamented. It is unusual for the public to be indifferent. Fullan writes of complex times regarding educational change, and refers to a "growing and deepening malaise among educators" (1997, p. 217). He questions whether the public or the government care about teachers.

Whether cared about or not, teachers have a reputation to uphold within a school or college, not only with parents, but with the wider community. For example,

private school students are readily identifiable by their uniforms, and such identification ensures that the wearer conveys a certain positive reputation. Government senior secondary college students are not easily identified. Colleges rely on the behaviour of young people in the area, and publicised achievements or results, to enhance their reputation or indeed detract from it.

Technology offers the opportunity to link the community with schools and colleges. The aim is to link classrooms to the Internet so that parents can access a secure webpage for desired information. I am not referring to websites which compare schools and rank them — I discuss these later in this chapter. Schools and colleges have their own websites which inform interested parties about their location, facilities and enrolment. They have newsletters with pictures, and most have their own intranet.

### *Fads are powerful*

Is change desirable or undesirable? Change is sometimes proposed with the best intentions. Various whims and trends which can be risky occur from time to time in education. How can we identify and be protected from undesirable practices? Are fads reasonable? Again referring to literature, I discover a variety of fads, and ask, is a highly controversial learning to read method really a fad? The very notion that fashion might affect teaching and assessment seems implausible, but some innovations which seem promising ideas at the time, fail to live up to their promises.

In *Organizations in Action: Social Science Bases of Administrative Theory* (2003), James D. Thompson's theory states that because certain organisations such as schools have indefinite outputs, they are subject to fads. He maintains that uncertainty is a major aspect that determines decision-making and outcomes are uncertain, and largely unmeasurable, due to complex and variable cause and effect relations. My own daughter was taught three different styles of writing. She mastered Cord Cursive, and then it became outmoded. A counsellor told me she recalls the days of the battle between exponents of Italic and Cord Cursive handwriting. Tasmania finally opted for Cord Cursive as the form to be taught in all primary schools when the strongest protagonist for Italics died (Patrick Mansbridge

(Ed), 1990, p. 22). Cord Cursive, or running writing has also been jettisoned and a type of printing adopted.

Thea Astley draws attention to running writing in her novel *Drylands a book for the world's last reader*. The main character, Mrs D has an exchange with a 14 year old lad in her newsagency. He stares as she suggests a title to buy, so she writes it down for him.

He examined the piece of paper as if it were Sanskrit.

“Geez, Mrs D, what’s that funny stuff you got there?”

“Writing”. She should have been amused. “I think I write a pretty fair hand.”

“Can’t read running writing”

“What can you read, Toff?”

He gave her a crooked smile. “I guess things have changed since your day.”

“You still haven’t answered me.”

“Printing, man. Like type. Got my own PC and we use them all the time at school.”

Mrs D goes on to enquire about answering exam questions. Can he type out his essays in the examination room? Toff’s answer gives ammunition to the detractors of modern teaching methods.

“No exams for a while. Not public. Anyway we don’t have essays or stuff like that. Just tick boxes.”

(2000, p. 7)

Admittedly, the exchange occurs in a novel, but as van Manen reminds us “what is revealed in the experience of fictional literature is not fact or incidence, news or controversy, but the reality of possibility: the reality of imaginable human experience” (1983, p. 1). Indeed some of my students complain that they cannot read my running writing so I now resort to printing. Astley’s novel also indicates the trend towards eliminating exams. The year 10 external exams in Tasmania were discontinued about 1968.

I worry, perhaps needlessly, that essay writing skills are in danger of being lost. Without such skills students may be deprived of exploring a valuable way to express themselves. Their vocabulary is already pruned back to accommodate SMS and

'tweets'. As teachers, using the conch shell as an instrument of call, we rally for better use of our own language. It is difficult to listen to radio and television announcers, politicians and even some English teachers make grammatical errors. It is hard to properly assess English if proficiency is lacking. Learning grammar which is imperative in say, French or German, is a reason to study a foreign language. Sokolowski writes that grammatical terms accomplish something other than organising words into sentences. "They also signal the listener that the speaker is performing an intellectual act" (2008, p. 82). If the speaker lacks grammar can she intellectually process concepts? According to Sokolowski, the grammar of our speech shows rationality only if it is thoughtful. Often we do not really think what we are saying and that is appropriate, but other times we should be thinking, so that our listeners take us seriously. "Grammar as such does signal rational actions" (2008, p. 85).

Teachers may disagree about the whole word or sometimes called the 'whole language' method of learning to read. Can it be described as a fad? It is an on-going contentious issue. Supporters of the method think that language should not be broken down into letters of the alphabet or combinations of sounds. Instead, flashcards are typically used and the students are taught to recognise the whole word which is associated with an object. Students seem to learn to read more rapidly and they can understand what they read, and this is more impressive than struggling with sounds. The down side is they cannot read words they have never seen. Although some maintain that if a child knows enough words she will be able to deduce new words, is it perhaps better to use the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and some basic rules, rather than trying to learn hundreds of whole words? I conversed with a worried mother whose seven year old daughter is adept at remembering words and guessing from pictures, which the teacher encourages her to do. The mother remarked that although her daughter was able to quickly learn a few hundred words in a short time, once her memory bank was full so to say, she got stuck. The mother considered that though the 'phonics' method takes longer to teach, it is a sound basis on which to proceed with learning to read.

The 'phonics' method of teaching to read involves sounding out the words. The Spalding Method is really a return to the 'old ways' before whole word teaching. It

is a total language arts approach which provides instruction in spelling (including phonics and handwriting), writing, listening/reading and comprehension. It may be argued that instead of either/or, combinations of both these methods be used. Doctor Sally Shaywitz, a professor of Pediatric Neurology at Yale University and a member of the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences and the National Reading Panel (NRP) notes,

The NRP found that children who are taught phonics systematically and explicitly make greater progress in reading than those taught with any other type of instruction. (2005, p. 203)

Among all the books on ‘how to teach a child to read’, and there are many, there is a book available with the title: *Einstein Never Used Flashcards* by Roberta Michnick Golinkoff (2004). Golinkoff is against memorising words, and is for letting children learn by playing. I assume Einstein learnt to read as a child. An Adult Literacy teacher makes the case that teaching adults to read is different to teaching children. She tells me that adults often already have some knowledge of written whole words which gives them and the teacher a starting point to build on. The quick results give them confidence.

While some trends are very easy to spot like diets, fashion items, and pet rocks because they quickly rise, lose popularity before they drop, others, especially institutional fads, can have real consequences. Crazes are nothing new. In the past, many inventors were wrong. Thomas Edison, for example, considered the radio to be a ‘craze’ and he “rejected the most important potential innovation being adopted by his competitors, combined radio-phonograph sets” (Paul Israel, 1998, p. 456). Wristwatches were considered a fad which was not expected to last. In 1915, the *New York Times* reported a jeweller convention as declaring “the wristwatch will never be a common timepiece...a man...has plenty of pockets (in which to put a fob watch)” (Joel Best, 2006, p. 6). Nowadays, wristwatches are passé—students refer to their iPhones or iPads for the time.

The difference between fads and worthwhile innovation is not always obvious. Looking back, Best gives examples of anticipated progress in education. From 1922

The motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational system and ... in a few years it will supplant largely, if not entirely, the use of textbooks.

And from 1930

The possibilities of the radio in the educational field make every far-seeing, wide-awake school administrator from time to time indulge in fascinating dreams as to what may be done with this newest giant among modern inventions. (p. 30)

We may smile at these examples now, but they were quite serious at the time. Adoption of a fad is easy if everybody else is joining in. They will be 'with it' and if an individual does not conform, she will be considered old-fashioned, and perhaps will be ostracised. Leaders like to be seen as progressive and tend to adopt management practices which may, or may not have been, thoroughly considered. It can become like the Emperor's new clothes where nobody dares to speak up and declare the Emperor naked.

When my daughter was young the 'open classroom' with various learning centres was in vogue. While open plan may work well in the younger years, such a setup can easily be reduced to a *mêlée* in high school. The senior secondary college where I am presently employed was erected as an 'open plan' structure in 1973. There, vast open areas on each floor have since been walled in and converted to classrooms, because specific subjects are taught and do not lend themselves to the open plan model.

It may seem brave to take a stand and speak up about how teachers feel regarding any innovation. However respect for oneself is very important and it is not so easy to spot a fad. Some 'experts' advise to discontinue correcting students' work with a red pen because red is an 'unsettling colour'. I always correct and write comments in pencil, with an eraser in the other hand. Not because I think it is a fad or that red unsettles the learner, but because I want to read through at least six essays say before I finalise the marks. I start off with a base award, put an upward or downward arrow next to it, continue marking, then go back and review the mark. Sometimes the comments I write on page one are no longer appropriate as the student has dealt with whatever the difficulty was, on the next page — hence the

eraser. For me it is a matter of being fair. A virtuous teacher can take the conch in such a circumstance and decide how corrections are made. How to write corrections is a minor decision compared with other decisions which may be more difficult. A virtuous teacher may be bombarded with ideas and requests from other stakeholders and has to decide who to heed. The bottom line for the virtuous teacher is the teacher-student relationship even amidst all the fads.

Student-centered learning is considered a fad by those who see it as a way of putting the onus on students to educate themselves through researching a topic. As mentioned earlier, the Essential Learnings (ELs) were deemed to be such an example. Semantics can blur concepts. Logically students should be at the centre of learning, but a student is basically that, a learner. The teacher is the expert who can answer questions, convey knowledge, inform and instruct. In contemporary Australian society most teachers have degrees in education, and in secondary schools, degrees in their field of study. In other words they have a knowledge base and can assess the students' progress within their special subject.

Fads or necessary reforms, to keep pace in these days of rapid societal change, teachers deem educational change necessary, but it is difficult to bring about. Methods of assessment have changed, for example. Students have the right to question internal as well as external assessments. The TQA sees quality assurance and accountability as paramount. Should a school have autonomy? I refer to Whitehead's thoughts on reform in 1929, which indicate that change was a topic under discussion back then. Whitehead advocated that

The first requisite for educational reform is the school as a unit, with its approved curriculum based on its own needs, and evolved by its own staff. If we fail to secure that, we simply fall from one formalism into another, from one dung hill of inert ideas into another. (1929, p. 9)

Whitehead's ideas were rather risky at the time and if implemented would have had political repercussions I imagine.

### *Politics are powerful*

My inquiry now leads to my thinking in political terms. Lived experience can address in an indirect way, modern political issues, such as employment and

standardisation authorities. Sokolowski writes that “there is an interplay of presence and absence in all our experiences” and that our “perception should not be understood as a barrier between ourselves and things” (2000, p. 203). Things such as educational expectations can be seen in different perspectives and still retain their identity. One such perspective is economical.

Ernest House writes of the influence of economics, and contends that

...National leaders formulate education policies primarily in response to national economic concerns – without sufficient understanding or appreciation of educational institutions. (2000, p. 14)

He lists four main ways in which educational policies are influenced. First, that economic environment has a strong influence on them. Second, educational policies are often designed to cut costs and increase productivity. House likens this pressure to the economic rationalisation, that is, a philosophy based on market driven policies. Third, he criticises the assumption that better education leads to better jobs, and suggests that education and economic development are too closely linked. He thinks that education is led by jobs rather than the other way around. House’s fourth contention is that economic concepts and metaphors permeate educational thinking — the imagery of markets and productivity has been applied to schools (2000, pp. 13-19). Should economists have the conch?

Different governments see fit to prioritise differently and tertiary education is returning to its elitist status, with first the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) where students incur debts to be repaid when they become employed, and of late many courses being available only to paying students. Because of the longitudinal nature of educational outcomes, the nexus between spending money on education and the outcome of that expense is not tangible until many years later, a leader will most probably complete a term of office before any correlation can be made. Thus, accountability is difficult in the short term. The other problem with trying to quantify teaching outcomes is that the product will differ depending on the ‘raw material’. There are too many variables to start making comparisons with outcomes. At the same time, prospective employers do need some kind of indication of the abilities of those seeking employment, a certificate of attainment, for example. It appears to be an intractable predicament.

This highlights the notion of economic rationalisation which as House asserts has already occurred in agriculture and car manufacture. If a government is budget driven, then cuts will be made to education if considered necessary. The topic is too immense to be discussed in this paper. It is fair to say that government policies affect schools. A local example is the mooted closing down by the State Government of about forty small Tasmanian schools.

The Fairbrother school viability reference group report...produced by a committee headed by businessman Royce Fairbrother was commissioned after the Government was last year forced by a massive community outcry to reverse its Budget plan to save \$24 million by closing 20 schools...The report also recommended ongoing year-by-year assessments of every school's viability. (Killick, 2012)

The Education Minister announced in April that while recommendations of the report had been adopted, no schools would be forced to close before the next election. Instead "The Government would develop a package of incentives for schools to consider voluntary closure or mergers in this year's state budget" (Killick, 2012). Should politicians have the conch?

Perhaps education and economic development are too closely linked as House states, but as education was born out of a need in the rise of industrialism, it is not surprising that societies deliberately organise education to cater for their needs. It was necessary back then for workers in the factory to be able to read the "oil here" sign, as it is necessary for employees to be technologically literate now. Australians have a record of embracing new technology, and now there is an awareness of issues such as pollution and environmental considerations.

As well as being a 'political football', it can be argued that education is another business in the service industry and parents are the clients. Certainly many private schools have development officers which use the mass media to drive the school business. Advertisements abound in newspapers, flyers are letterboxed, and signs go up around school premises, particularly at enrolment times, as schools vie for students. In the end it rests on which school parents decide is best for their child, how much they can afford, or are willing to spend. In *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation*: "Accountability, competition and privatization have been

touted as solutions” for educational improvement in the 1990s and 2000s (Charles Bingham, Biesta with Rancière, 2010, p. 19). I ponder if there is such a thing as a ‘best school’ and will I find it on a website? The *My School* website is touted as having greater transparency and accountability for the performance of schools.

### *Is there a better or best school?*

Part of feedback to students and parents is a written report usually issued twice a year. Parents, principals and the broader Australian community can now access comprehensive information by viewing the *My School* website (<http://www.myschool.com.au/>). On 28 January 2010 the Federal Government launched *My School* to enable interested parties to search the profiles of almost 10,000 Australian schools and compare them statistically.

The national education authority, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) developed the webpages. The Federal Government’s commitment to transparent school reporting is articulated as follows,

Each school has its own profile which presents an easy to understand, detailed picture using a wide range of balanced information about the students, the resourcing of the school and student outcomes in key areas such as literacy and numeracy and senior secondary achievements.

To identify best practice, the website compares the performance of statistically similar schools. (Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011)

The idea of the website is not to shame the schools but to “identify those in need of extra assistance” according to the then Education Minister, Julia Gillard (Justine Ferrari, 2008, p. 3). Gillard goes on to say that “those performing above expectations...can share their expertise.” While this is meant to help weaker students, it is doubtful whether in practice it would be the case. Though it might work in primary schools, I have observed that, in secondary colleges, not all students are keen to help others. Most students I have worked with over the years see it as a hindrance to their getting on and achieving the scores for tertiary entrance.

Some senior secondary college students performing above expectations are commonly headhunted and offered scholarships by private schools. I personally

know of one government college's top year 11 student who was approached and offered a non-fee-paying place at one of Tasmania's prestigious non-government schools. The student declined the offer, mainly because of friendships, familiarity of the college environment, and associations with her teachers. Might such headhunting, if successful, add to heightening the general public's perception of the superiority of private schools. When year 12 results appear in newspapers the names of top students are listed alongside the names of the schools they attend. Prestigious private schools conduct interviews with prospective parents to identify and sift students who may be accepted into the school. Many private schools have waiting lists. Consequently, they can be selective regarding who can and cannot attend the school. When I worked at Acacia, there were waiting lists for Kindergarten and Preparatory school, as well as for years 6 and 7. I recall it bemused me that some parents enrolled their children very soon after their sons or daughters were born.

Clearly, parents want the best schools for their children and a school's reputation helps with selection. Parents may look to league tables or school performance rankings to compare performance of individual schools. *Better Education School Rankings* (2011) provides tables which they describe as "a series of school rankings or ratings based on the school results for parents to compare schools (by state, region, city or suburb; by school category; by year." *Better Education School Rankings* claim to "provide unbiased education information." They employ three methods of rankings. The first is based on "the number of their alumni who received the top order of Australia honours - Companion of the Order (AC) between 1975 and 2010." The second method is based on "the number of their alumni mentioned in Who's Who in Australia (a listing of notable Australians)." The third ranking method is "Three series of Australian school results, rankings or ratings, sorted by state and school sector: 1) high school rankings according to Year 12 results; 2) primary school ratings; 3) secondary / high school ratings." These are claimed to be "up to date" and "very different from my school rankings." Table 4 is an example of a *Better Education* website for Tasmania. The first four places are occupied by Tasmanian non-government schools.

The following table ranks Tasmanian schools based on the number of the State's top 2% of all students (ATAR of 98.0 or more) in 2011. Find best high schools in Hobart or top schools in Tasmania here. There are a large range of factors that impact on academic results in addition to the role played by the school itself. These include the SES (Socio Economic Status) background of students, whether the school is selective in its student intake, etc. It is for the reader to do his own research and draw his or her own conclusions.

Note: 1. All the columns are sort-able. To sort in ascending or descending order, click on the corresponding column headings.  
 2. See School Rankings Based on Academic Results for more information.  
 3. Aim for top results? Find a tutor or a music teacher.  
 4. Find IB schools.

Previous year: 2010 | [Previous year](#)

Ads by Google School Education Study HSC NSW TAFE

Better Education Rank	School	Qty
1	Friends' School	22
2	Launceston College	12
3	Scotch Oakburn College	11
4	St Michael's Collegiate School	11
5	Tasmanian Academy - Hobart College	11
6	Tasmanian Academy - Elizabeth College	9
7	Guilford Young College	7
8	Rosny College	6
9	Tasmanian Academy - Newstead College	5
10	The Hutchins School	5
11	Launceston Church Grammar School	4
12	Manat Regional College	4
13	Tasmanian Academy - Hellyer College	4
14	St Brendan-Shaw College	3

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**Table 4** *Better Education School Rankings website*

Such rankings do little to raise standards. Educational performance cannot be measured reliably while the playing field is not level. There is much debate about league tables. Those which purport to indicate the best schools have a complicated rationale which, according to Biesta combines accountability and choice elements with a social justice argument that everyone should have the same access to quality education. He adds that accountability is often restricted to options from a set menu and therefore lacks a democratic element. The equality of opportunity hardly ever converts into equality of outcomes because of the role of structural factors that are beyond schools' and teachers' control (2004, pp. 233-250).

Sokolowski maintains that “politics has to be subordinated to the truth of things, that is, political rule has to be exercised in accord with human nature” (2000, pp. 203-204). Impersonal systems such as finding a school on a website cannot replace responsible human interaction. “An understanding of human responsibility, based on an understanding of reason as ordered towards truth is needed” (2000, p. 204) so that students can be educated as future citizens not as some sort of slaves of a State, according to Sokolowski.

The *My School* website enables parents to search the profiles of almost 10,000 Australian schools. It was developed in 2008 when

Australian education ministers agreed that greater transparency and accountability for the performance of schools was essential to ensure that every Australian child receives the highest-quality education and opportunities to participate in employment and in society. (*My School*, 2010)

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for administration of the website. Statistical and contextual information about schools is located and compared with similar schools across the country. Results of national numeracy and literacy tests are provided, along with information about the student population, for example, indigenous or language background, and attendance rates.

If a school population is made up of socially disadvantaged or indigenous students, then reporting on that school's performance could arguably have the effect of an exodus away from it. Lower performing schools can do without being labelled as such. It can be demoralising for the students and become a downward spiral. The fewer students there are, the fewer subjects will be offered, especially at high school level. If students cannot study their chosen subjects, they will attend an institution which provides these particular subjects. It implies that teachers will only teach the skills to be tested, and as a result, an interesting varied environment is lacking. Following on from this, subject choice determines or restricts pathways to jobs, or to university. Instead of having options open to them, students just learn how to pass tests.

Parents are entitled to feedback regarding their children's progress and teachers are held accountable to provide this. After teachers voiced concerns about assessing ELs, the local media reported Parents and Friends groups and individuals voicing strong objections to changes in the reporting of ELs. It was perceived that the "bubble on a line" was not enough information for parents. A representative from the Education Union, in an ABC Stateline Tasmania interview says,

I've just recently read the Tomlinson Report on secondary education in the UK and also the new report on secondary education in Scotland and I do have to say that they seem to have managed to express very similar

concepts in a rather more simple language and I'm afraid I think ours is a bit jargonistic. I think that's a pity.

In the same interview a high school principal explains,

Any new system has with it some new language and I think it would be unreasonable and unfair of people to expect that they should have instant recognition of anything that's new.

He continues,

We didn't explain clearly enough what you call "the jargon" about reporting and we've learnt that lesson very well now. (Airlie Ward, 2004)

The vagaries of assessment need to be demystified by widening parents' understanding of the assessment process. If assessment is consistent and transparent, and the process is seen to be equitable, then stakeholders are not left wondering or feeling aggrieved about the process. The status of teachers is enhanced in the community, because justice is seen to be done. A correlation is that the professional morale of teachers would be boosted because something very worthwhile is happening, that is, students are gaining meaningful qualifications. If it is well known that a certain award requires effort to achieve, then such an award cannot be bought or charmed out of the TQA. It has worth.

Prospective employers request evidence of competence. The Tasmanian Certificate of Education provides this, but is still somewhat of a mystery to the uninitiated. I ask the reader to consider the following. An employer sees an 'A' course result 'Excellent Achievement' and assumes it to be a very good mark. But an 'A' course takes only 50 hours to complete and is therefore not as demanding as a 'B' course (100 hours) or a 'C' course which takes 150 hours. Therefore a solid result in a 'C' course is arguably better. The other pitfall is that an 'Excellent Achievement' in a lower syllabus is not as good as 'Satisfactory Achievement' in a higher syllabus. The Qualifications Certificate makes it clearer (see Appendix I).

The Education Department, the State Education Minister and the Federal Education Minister all have a stake in the evaluation of educational outcomes. The ex-Federal Minister for Education, Dr Brendan Nelson, for example, wanted the "Nelson plain-English reports", so that parents could easily see how their children were progressing at school. To compel States to adopt his back-to-basics changes,

he used the threat of withdrawal of federal funding. As well, Nelson wanted a national curriculum, greater autonomy for school principals, and a commitment by schools to physical activity (Nelson Budget, 2005). The State Minister for Education introduced Essential Learnings reports. As a result, at one stage, many Tasmanian students received two reports. Are these proposed changes in assessment and reporting motivated by political aspirations or by a desire to benefit students?

Teaching and learning standards are being defined, there are assessment reforms, and new technologies are being implemented, but teaching cannot be reduced to technical competence or clinical standards. What happens when a stakeholder, someone other than a virtuous teacher has the conch? When teachers' work is being restructured, emotions cannot be ignored. There is another significant dimension and that is emotional practice. van Manen writes that "emotion, morality and reason cannot be disentangled" (1991, preface xii). He draws attention to the tactful dimension of teaching. Tactful teachers know when to engage with students and when to draw back. They know how much to expect of particular students and what is appropriate for them at any given time (1991, pp 44-45). I consider the sentiments of teachers and ask, Why should a teacher be tactful and virtuous? What do the students do to warrant her caring about them? What is in it for her? I suggest the answers may be found in the intrinsic satisfaction gained from teaching. Sokolowski writes,

When a name is used, the first step in the disclosure of intelligibility has taken place, to name a thing is to bring it and it as intelligibility to mind; it is not just to bump into the thing. (2008, p.148)

He goes on "if we have the word of the thing, but not the intelligibility, our speech about [it]...is unstable" (p. 149). I use the term 'intrinsic' which can relate to motivation as well as satisfaction, and understand it to denote motivation or satisfaction that comes from inside a teacher rather than from any external rewards, such as money. External rewards alone are not enough to satisfy a virtuous teacher, but interest and a sense of pleasure in the teaching profession will encourage her to maintain the effort, or the 'drive to aspire'.

## Chapter 9

### Making Assumptions

It is now time to bring my washing in from my invisible clothesline. My mental garments have been spread out and given a good airing. My clothesline, on which I pegged my string of ideas, about my own lived experiences and those of teachers and students, is still there waiting for more events to be arranged on it. Central to my inquiry is teaching practice and how virtuous teachers might be viewed from inside a school and outside. I have described teaching backgrounds in Tasmania based on tradition, and teaching practice based on my own knowledge and lived experience, as well as observations of colleagues' practice. The preparation of teachers as role-players in education interests me now. I want to use my sociological imagination to explore how teachers' lives regarding moral and ethical assessment could be in the future, and how an ideal school may come about. I do not claim an all-encompassing solution which will overcome the many obstacles in the way of equality in education. As Annas writes,

Surely we have to realize that there are many occasions when even the most virtuous person will find acting virtuously difficult or stressful...because of the circumstances. (2011, p. 77)

While difficulties cannot be trivialised, with goodwill and application, certain procedures could be put in place in order to begin the process of skilled and virtuous teaching in order to gain intrinsic satisfaction. A virtuous teacher, with thoughtful reflection, can cultivate a disposition to do the morally right thing. She must have a firm understanding of morality and be willing to act on it in the long term.

### *Raising the Bar*

In Tasmania there is a hoary saying that often 'does the rounds' — 'Those who can, do, those who can't, teach.' This hoary saying must be abolished. First, teaching standards can be raised by raising the status of teachers. Entry to teacher education courses at university could have a prerequisite to attend an interview in order that prospective teachers can be deemed suitable to enter the profession. Before throwing up our hands at such an idea, think of those who admit they just want the

holidays, or it is easy to get into the Education Faculty, or some other equally unsound reason. A survey of 900 teachers in New South Wales by Dinham and Scott in 1996 revealed that only 10 per cent of respondents were attracted to teaching because of the salary, although 34 per cent did say the “hours and holidays” were an attraction. Dinham and Scott conclude that becoming a teacher for the wrong reasons only applies to a minority and that “altruism and intrinsic fulfilment, along with desire for professional growth, predominate” (200, p. 17). Many teachers work long hours preparing lessons and marking assignments. The “hours and the holidays” make it easier for working mothers of school age children to take up teaching, which could be a valid reason.

Unfortunately all teachers are affected by ‘rotten apples’ in the system. Of course some student-teachers with questionable motives may evolve into excellent teachers. Consider too, that university faculties of Medicine and Law do not accept all-comers into their courses. They are selective. They have quotas. The tertiary entrance score for a teaching degree could be raised so that only optimally suitable students enter the Education faculty, which would be starting on the right footing. Putting our foot in our mouth is a problem too.

### *How important is language?*

There are too many teachers of English for example, who cannot spell, and whose grammar is atrocious. Peter Ruehl writes in the *Financial Review*, of a Queensland University of Technology study which revealed that more than half the 370 teachers and final-year trainees did not know what a syllable was. He likens it to “having your plumber help you with your tax return” (2004, p. 67).

Many of my own students, who are bright and eager to learn, have not been taught when to use “I” (subject) or ‘me’ (object). Their high school teacher did not know. How many times have I corrected ‘alot’ as one word instead of two? ‘Except’ instead of ‘accept’, ‘your’ when they mean ‘you’re’? The list could be much longer and boring. The point is that these students are eager to learn and when it is explained to them, they pick up grammar quite easily. One can argue that language is living and that it changes as society requires, but I am reluctant to accept change occurring because of grammatical errors.

A consequence of lack of grammar is the subsequent difficulty of learning a foreign language. Ernst Hans Gombrich maintains “you cannot possibly know how your own language works if you have never had to grapple with another.” He goes on, “Learning a language is a paradigm, a model for any effort at understanding what is meant by a text, a poem...” (1984, p. 22). Knowing only one language he terms as “monoglot illiteracy” and argues it can have no place at all in the humanities. I have found my knowledge of the German language helpful with interpretation because there is not always a direct translation. Gadamer is translated differently in later editions of *Truth and Method*. Two descriptions can be correct, but elements differ because there is no precisely equivalent term. Reginald Snell who translated Friedrich Schiller’s 1795 *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters (Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen)* in his introduction, writes that earlier translations are unreliable and “contain serious distortions-even direct negations of Schiller’s meaning, sometimes of his actual words” (2004, p. 19). Gombrich tells us “the term self-expression” cannot be exchanged on the Common Market, for there is no term in either German, French or Italian which corresponds exactly (1984, pp. 188-189). Umberto Eco (2003) gives a humorous example in *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*. “It is not necessary to think of complex hermeneutic examples” he writes. Suppose an English speaking character says “You’re pulling my leg”. A literal translation into Italian would be misleading, but a faithful translation would choose “nose” instead of “leg” and it would make sense (p. 5).

Teachers who have mastered their own language can model mannerisms of speech and style in the classroom. As teachers, we are entrusted with teaching the citizens and leaders of tomorrow. This is no lightweight responsibility, and all the more reason for addressing teachers’ qualifications or lack thereof. Minimum levels need to apply and applications scrutinised because the TRBT’s checking revealed cases of unqualified individuals claiming to be teachers.

### *One or two jobs?*

I draw attention to another area of concern which is the prevalence of teachers who conduct their own businesses or hold down other employment while teaching. Strictly speaking, permission must be sought from the Education Department to do

this. However, in many cases business activity can be attributed to the spouse, and therefore goes unchallenged. There are many anecdotal examples such as a teacher running a carpet cleaning business and accepting mobile phone calls in the classroom. I heard of a Flexible Learning teacher who organised his wife's political campaign from school. I am told another teacher ran a tourism agency, and yet another was a building contractor. It could be argued that additional outside employment of teachers is not detrimental to students, but seen by the general community, second jobs detract from teaching status. It would appear that teachers who have other businesses cannot fully contribute to their profession. The best teachers, it seems, are those who consider teaching a vocation or a calling. Jaspers writes that a school's value is unequivocally tied to the quality of its teachers who can carry out educating students through being

...permanently engaged in a process of self-education through communication. Education can only be correct if its addressees acquire the ability to educate themselves through stringent and tenacious learning. (1958, p. 445)

This brings me to professional learning. In *Researching the Cultural Politics of Teachers' Learning*, John Smyth recognises that teachers worldwide are now in the difficult position of being scrutinised and appraised, to supposedly improve productivity and accountability. Despite this, there are "discourses of resistance as teachers find ways of keeping alive dialogue about what works in classrooms and schools" (1999, p. 67). He writes about the engagement of teachers with young people, and how teachers try to better the life chances of their students. Teachers engage in lifelong learning as they make sense of the complexity of teaching.

There are more young people at risk in contemporary society. Retention rates of students, especially boys, are a matter of concern in Tasmanian colleges. Suffice it to say that the unemployment rate among graduates is much less than the average unemployment rate. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to develop relationships and as Smyth puts it "to understand how the culture of the school works to assist types of identity formation that are empowering or disabling" (1999, p. 68). The ideals that Smyth sets out appear to be common sense and not unusual. That is, that democratic practices and policies underpin the work of teaching, there is support for teachers, and there is shared public discourse between the school and wider community about

teaching and learning. In reality these ideals are not endorsed or practised, maintains Smyth (p. 70).

### *The Ideal School*

Smyth uses the term “dialogic schools” for those where teachers are able to work for students in democratic and inclusive ways. He then sketches the features of such schools, and it is a joy to read. For example, the school should actively promote the importance of questions over answers. The status quo should be questioned. Discussion and debate are preferable to compliance or decree according to Smyth. Having praised these ideas, I realise it is another matter to implement them. The school would appear to avoid providing quantifiable results. Specific forward planning could be difficult. To an outsider it could sound like ‘anarchy rules’. On the other hand, compromises could be reached.

### *The Stable State*

Apart from convincing the wider community, teachers themselves would have to be converted. As Schon reminds us, “talk about change is as often as not a substitute for engaging in it” (1971, p. 3). His ‘stable state’ means belief in the stability of our identities as teachers, in the stability of our schools and colleges, and in the stability of certain values that we hold. We feel threatened by change, especially unexpected change. There is a feeling of uncertainty. There might be too many signals, information overload, notes Schon. He suggests there are tactics we use to maintain our stable state. We are selectively inattentive to anything which would upset the status quo. As my old grandmother said, “why didn’t they wait until I’m dead before they brought in decimal currency?” There is sometimes overt or covert resistance. At the same time there is some dissatisfaction because the functions of education are being continually challenged by the community and the status of teachers waxes and wanes. Everyone seems to be an expert on how schools should be run.

Schon offers “constructive responses to the loss of the stable state” (1971, pp. 23-24). I think these still hold true, and are a springboard to Smyth’s ideas. First, to expect continuing change, and I would add, more rapid change. Second, we must “learn to understand, guide, influence and manage these transformations” (p.30). Smyth’s idea is that a dialogic school would view change opportunistically, as a

means of benefiting from situations. Peter G. Cole and Lorna K.S. Chan write about the idea of “withitness” (1994, p. 334). The term was first coined by Jacob S. Kounin, in his 1977 book *Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms*. It refers to heightened awareness of classroom events, not only the teacher being aware, but students knowing that the teacher is aware. Withitness could be extended to take in the whole school. Third, writes Schon, we have to develop institutions which are capable of bringing about their own change. Finally, learning must be at a personal, institutional and societal level.

Knowledge is shared in a dialogic school. There is swapping of ideas and having discussions so that teaching is not a solo activity. Smyth calls it “communicative competence” (1999, p. 73). It makes sense. Time and again, in the telling or explaining, things become clearer to us, and other ideas come through. Smyth points out that “teaching is an oral and storied culture” (p. 73), and that this is not properly acknowledged. He believes teachers have important stories to tell. It is certainly borne out in anecdotes we hear, which then open up many possibilities for discussion and research. Alan November, who calls himself an educational renaissance planner, criticises the teaching profession for not telling our stories well. “If *we* educators don’t tell our stories, there are lots of other people who think *they* have the story and they will tell it for us” (1998, p. 4).

The final feature of Smyth’s archetypal school is “the issue of space, in the sense of room to manoeuvre with ideas” (p. 73). Teachers should feel entitled to have a voice, to be able to challenge issues relating to social justice. Generally minority voices get drowned out by more dominant ones, so whoever has power gets listened to. This situation can be changed, depending on the type of leadership within the school, but that is another topic.

Smyth acknowledges the drawbacks of such a project himself, some of which did occur to me. For example, voiced research, though it has a high level of credibility, is often too complex and not detached enough to be respectable in academia. He mentions that researchers can get either too caught up in the lives of teachers, or they categorise and theorise and override the voices. Trying to maintain a balance is not easy. “It has to be construed in such a way that it provides a genuine

space within which teachers as educational practitioners can reveal what is real for them” (p. 75). In other words, “purposeful conversation” must emerge.

It is imperative “to share ideas and ideals” concludes Smyth (p. 79). Jamie McKenzie (2000, p. 33) agrees that the best learning strategies require a change in how teachers spend their time and ways they work together. He likens the cultivation of professional development to gardening. The soil has to be cultivated and fertilised before planting. Cross-fertilisation can produce better results than individual effort. He supports collaborative structures, both formal and informal, partnerships and teams. Smyth advocates “conversation time” in schools. Democratic decision-making and sharing of power, with leadership depending on what expertise is needed at the time, is an attractive idea.

### *Reflective practice*

Christopher Day in “Researching Teaching through Reflective Practice” (1999, p. 216) discusses different modes of reflective practice, and along with reflection, the need to address emotion as well as cognition. Day looks to preventing teacher burnout and suggests a model of reflective practice in which learning partnerships between teachers within the school, and others from outside the school, can be forged and cultivated over time. Some of Smyth’s ideas resonate here. There is common ground shared by both researchers.

Day notes that the effects of home, peer and school environments on students’ achievement levels have been well documented, but that less attention has been given to student-teacher relationships (p. 215). Studies of student-teacher relationships might well enhance understanding regarding students’ achievement. Children are in our care during their formative years in kindergarten and primary school, and in times of life transitions in high school and college. That is, when they are actively experimenting with and consolidating a sense of identity.

I question Day’s idea of likening teaching to social work and nursing. While there are some similarities, both these professions deal with individuals who are either sick or having problems when they present. It is seldom the case with children. They are usually eager to attend school and learn, and it is a long-term

arrangement compared with nursing. The other main difference is that parents do not usually question the practitioner's judgements when they have a sick child or need a social worker. Teachers' motives, on the other hand, are questioned and there is a general belief that when the school day ends for students, it ends for teachers. Day writes of a perceived lack of understanding of teaching and learning by the governments and quotes an Australian teacher as saying "I'm not convinced that the government has the best interests of the kids at heart" (1999, p. 217).

There is now more support for beginning teachers, including 2 hours a week release time for them to work with experienced teachers and undertake planning. There is support for a range of professional learning opportunities for teachers at all levels. Other goals are to actively encourage lifelong learning, and to motivate young Tasmanians to engage in post-compulsory learning, which ties in with Smyth's emphasis on retention.

### *The parent factor*

One factor of keeping students in the system is the expectations of their family. Hence it is important to nurture the link between teachers, schools and family, and wider community as well. A strategy is essential to engage parents. Dr. Dean Shirley (2001, p. 9), principal of a Victorian secondary college writes, "If you wanted to design a parent-free zone, a secondary college would probably be a good model." He goes on to ask what parent would want to enter a "city of teenagers?" Shirley sees the way to build the confidence of parents is to improve the engagement of the students. He suggests placing less emphasis on specialisation because it sacrifices the student-teacher relationship. Think of the poor student who may have up to ten specialist teachers. This is where Smyth's communicative competence comes in. We need to be mindful that other teachers are making demands on the student. Many college students are juggling study with part-time jobs.

### *The Moral High Ground*

Day makes the salient point that if teachers are not allowed time to examine their own practices, they will not be able to connect with the changing needs of students (1999, p. 229). This is precisely what Smyth is advocating. The difference between appraisal and reflective practice is that the first is driven from the top down and is

bureaucratic, and the second is voluntary. Reflective or democratic practice, or what van Manen calls “pedagogical tact”, is vitally important if we want our students to reach their full potential.

Freire declares that “Teachers who do not take their own education seriously, who do not study...have no moral authority to coordinate the activities of the class room” (1998, p. 85). He maintains that a suitably qualified teacher, who has self-confidence which is grounded in professional competence, has authority and legitimacy. Conversely, professional ineptitude destroys the legitimate power of the teacher. McCourt expresses the same sentiments in his own colourful way,

There are teachers who teach and don't give a fiddler's fart what their students think of them. Subject matter is king. Such teachers are powerful. Their message to their students is, I am your teacher, not your counselor, not your confidant, not your parent. I teach a subject: take it or leave it. (2005, p. 147)

Unfortunately, such attitudes do still exist in isolation. I remember being aghast when a teacher informed me that she did not know her students' names. There were too many, apparently. Such an attitude smacks of professional incompetence.

It is especially important for teachers of young adults to respect their students' independence. As McCourt kept telling his students they had a right to think for themselves. McCourt's ideas are not new. Back in 1951, Bertrand Russell in *New Hopes for a Changing World* offers a guide for the responsibilities of teachers. The following principles which originally appeared in the December 16, 1951, issue of *The New York Times Magazine* are:

1. Do not feel absolutely certain of anything.
2. Do not think it worthwhile to proceed by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light.
3. Never try to discourage thinking, for you are sure to succeed.
4. When you meet with opposition, even if it should be from your husband or your children, endeavour to overcome it by argument and not by authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory.
5. Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always other contrary authorities to be found.
6. Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do, the opinions will suppress you.

7. Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
8. Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
9. Be scrupulously truthful, even if the truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
10. Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool's paradise, for only a fool will think that is happiness. (p.409)

Russell sees value in critical thinking and intelligent criticism— even a value in uncertainty and eccentricity of opinion. Certainly to be open-minded to intelligent dissent is to be recommended. It is intrinsically rewarding when students are engaged and take responsibility for their learning.

Jaspers in *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy* gives philosophers some advice which can be adapted to apply to researchers, teachers and their code of ethics. He lists pledges and prefaces them with “I should like to give some intimation of how a measure of independence can be achieved in philosophical thought today” (1951, p. 118). I have tried to abide by the following pledges of Jaspers:

Let us not pledge ourselves to any philosophical school or take formulable truth as such for the one and exclusive truth; let us be master of our thoughts;

let us not heap up philosophical possessions, but apprehend philosophical thought as movement and seek to deepen it;

let us battle for truth and humanity in unconditional communication;

let us acquire the power to learn from all the past by making it our own;

let us listen to our contemporaries and remain open to all possibilities;

let each of us as an individual immerse himself in his own historicity, in his origin, in what he has done;

let him possess himself of what he was, of what he has become, and of what has been given to him;

let us not cease to grow through our own historicity into the historicity of man as a whole and thus make ourselves into citizens of the world. (p. 118)

I take “formulable truth” to be a disparaging term meaning prescribed, or capable of being formulated. There are many ways to interpret “facts” as Gadamer explains when writing of historical consciousness. What Jaspers suggests, in simplified terms, is that we should embrace independent thought, be open to new ideas and be lifelong learners.

A couple of years ago I was given a thank you card which I kept because it is different to the usual thank you cards I receive. It reads,

Thank you so much for being such a committed teacher and putting in the extra mile when necessary. Your unconditional faith in us is liberating.

I do not refer to this in order to ‘blow my own trumpet’, but to illustrate the power of authentic pedagogical experience. Up until then I had not envisaged myself as a ‘liberator’, but I really liked the idea that students felt confident to open up, explore ideas, and question the status quo. It links with Freire’s idea that a self-confident teacher will not feel threatened — will have no need to be authoritarian. Jaspers reminds us that “Education is accomplished when contents are freely acquired; but it fails when it is authoritarian.” He defines the pivotal role of education as “helping the individual to come into his own in a spirit of freedom and not like a trained animal” (Horn, 1993, p. 5). That is not to say a teacher must be weak or impose no rules or standards. I will still correct grammatical or spelling errors in essays, and award marks. However, these marks and corrections are always accompanied by constructive remarks and suggestions.

The effects of leadership and subsequent culture of an institution, trickle right down through the teachers to the students. While teachers do have a certain amount of autonomy, they are nevertheless answerable to their immediate head of faculty, the principal and ultimately the Department. As well as this, students are chasing reports or tertiary entrance scores because they want to enrol in a certain university. Unemployment is a threat, especially in Tasmania, employers are choosy, and parents want the best for their children. How to keep every stakeholder satisfied is the teacher’s task.

### *A common ground*

My portable clothesline with its teaching, learning and assessment garments from other countries as well as here in Tasmania, displays a commonality. That is, that most teachers regard their profession as a calling. There is an X factor. It could be likened to a doctor's bedside manner. Some doctors have a way with patients, other lack it. Many teachers have told me that it is not the holidays, definitely not the pay, or any other reason, but a genuine liking of people, especially young ones. Teachers want to make a difference. A colleague once told me she has the urge to speak to strange children and correct their behaviour. When she uses her teacher's voice, they take notice. She checks for spelling and grammatical errors in everything she reads. I am sure other teachers do too. It is interesting and it has happened several times—on board ship, at a party, that in a gathering of unfamiliar people, a cluster will form which turns out to be teachers. They seem to gravitate towards one another for no apparent reason. Conversations strike up and before long it is revealed. There seems to be an invisible badge which announces 'I am a teacher'.

### *What makes an ethical teacher?*

An ethical teacher is a committed teacher. A committed teacher is a virtuous one. Annas in *Intelligent Virtue* describes virtue as an "admirable and inspiring" ideal committed to goodness. "Goodness attracts them (the brave and the generous) in a way that the vicious are not attracted, and the mediocre are attracted only weakly" (2011a, p. 105). I describe the students' perceptions of mediocre teachers in 'Student Stories' and I describe many brave and generous teachers in the section 'Star Teachers'. George Boas recalls both types. As a seventy year old, he recalls his first school day and remembers "the warm smile of the teacher against the mocking leer of the older boys". He goes on, "Not all teachers smile" (1961, p. 58).

A thesis is a journey of learning. On my journey I have travelled many paths and changed my mind about issues. Perhaps not so much changed as wavered. I can see one side of an argument and then I see another side to it. Whoever said the more you learn the more there is to learn was certainly right.

Riccardo Dottori, a student at Heidelberg University, attended Gadamer's lectures and seminars. Dottori is impressed by Gadamer's "friendliness and

attentiveness in the discussions, by the seriousness with which he entertained every opinion that was expressed” (2004, p. 3). In the Introduction to *A Century of Philosophy*, Dottori writes,

Of course, the important thing is not to be convinced of one’s own ideas and defend them to the death, but, instead one has to keep on questioning them without insisting on having the last word. “It is a poor hermeneut who needs to have the last word,” Gadamer resolutely asserts in his demanding autobiography. Gadamer held himself to this self-interpretation by always giving the other a chance to have his say. (2004, pp. 3, 4)

At the outset I was quite sure that assessment needed to be carried out at senior secondary level in order to give prospective employers or universities a base line with which to judge students. I am still convinced, but with certain conditions. For example, I know of a private schoolteacher who makes her students practise and practise essays. She freely admits this. These students then go on to do well, usually, in the external exams, but unfortunately develop a dislike for the subject because of the association with churning out essays. On the other hand, a teacher who tries to make the subject stimulating, follows areas of interest, and encourages students to be enquiring, may not be perceived to have taught as well because the students have lower points in the exam. Parents indicate that these students enjoy and relish the subject. Such students are likely to go on and study the subject at university. Which can be deemed the ‘better’ teacher? Certainly a principal would find it difficult to distinguish only by looking at results.

In my experience, I estimate that between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of outcome in a government school is up to the teacher. Other factors include socio-economic status, parents’ level of education, and the student’s own expectations. Private schools are a different matter as they are generally made up of students from higher socio-economic status families, with higher expectations.

The history of teaching in Tasmania points to the trend of teachers becoming more credentialled as time progresses. In the beginning, qualifications were not so important because of a great shortage of teachers. Yet paradoxically it seemed

teachers were held in higher regard. There are probably many reasons but the most obvious that comes to mind is that the general population was not well educated. Families were larger, people worked long hours. Then came a time when parents were more aware of their children's education and wanted a say in it. Consequently, teachers' abilities were questioned and many of society's problems were blamed on schools. There was 'teacher bashing' on radio talkback shows where callers gave examples of 'bad teaching'.

While I have highlighted positive teachers in fiction and nonfiction, I also give examples of not so positive ones. The difference is the authority of the teacher — whether students as in the past, were afraid of, or respected their teacher. Respect is mutual. Not all blame can be laid at the feet of teachers, however. All teachers will be familiar with what is colloquially called 'the student from hell' or 'the classroom from hell'. One student, 'the class clown', for example, can change the dynamics of the whole class. Unfortunately, many people remember the negative experiences, and these are acutely remembered.

### *Another moral tale*

My thesis starts with an anecdote which serves to illustrate a general theme relating to ethics and how memories of schooldays can linger many years after the bell has gone. I will relate a final anecdote told to me by a colleague who is now in her late fifties. She still remembers the incident vividly and it still smarts. In primary school, when she moved into a bigger classroom for year 4, she was unable to properly see the blackboard. Yes, it was a blackboard in those days. She needed glasses. After duly being tested and glasses prescribed, the family had new lens put into a frame which had belonged to her father because they could not afford new frames at the time. She went off to school wearing her 'new' glasses, whereupon her teacher remarked "Oh you're wearing new glasses. Why didn't you choose pretty ones like Betty is wearing?" My colleague never wore glasses from that day, she was so mortified. How unthinking or uncharitable was that teacher to utter such a comment? How vulnerable students can be.

The introduction of the TRBT has gone some way towards remedying dissatisfaction with educational practices. First, it ensures that practising teachers

are not only registered, but are suitably qualified for the task. Second, the Board sets out a code of professional ethics. It is in addition, or rather complementary to the *State Service Act 2000* which contains State Service Principles designed for Tasmanian employees. Within the context of the code there is a Department of Education Code of Conduct, established by the Head of Agency and authorised by the Minister. This code is more explicit regarding definitions of behaviours, and in particular, misconduct. Now that teachers are required to be suitably qualified, there should be a rise in their status

A teacher may be the tipping point, whether a student succeeds or drops out, and where the guiding principles of teacher ethics are vitally important. Payne's suggestion to be mindful of a student's attitudes, values and beliefs of the class in which he or she was raised is reminiscent of Gadamer's historical consciousness. Imagine being in a student's shoes. Thinking back to discussions about remembering a 'good' teacher; there were differing observations and one constant — fairness. The teacher cared enough to ensure that each student was treated equally. Virtuous teaching can help individuals and families to determine and achieve intellectual and social potential within the school by modelling planning, resourcefulness and independence.

Whereas an intelligent student will do well, despite the teacher, a caring teacher can make a huge difference to an average student. Biesta views teaching as a gift and the student as the one receiving the gift of teaching (2012, p. 41). He draws the distinction between "learning from" and being "taught by". The former is being a resource, the latter, being a teacher. In English the word gift usually has a positive connotation, unless it is the proverbial "poison chalice". The German word *Gift* means poison and this brings me to contemplate the negative aspects of teaching, that of indoctrination. Sokolowski's "slave" of the State can be avoided by adhering to ethical principles and resisting political demands for total control over education.

Throughout my research, time and time again, teaching is confirmed as a calling, not purely an occupation or a profession. The calling or vocation can easily equate to the drive to aspire, as Annas describes. Her "right action" or Biesta's "right balance" come to mind. Teachers who feel a passion for their work are on the moral high-ground. Ethics underpin their teaching.

## *Winding Up*

The closing stages of my writing cause me to reflect on my figurative and literal thesis journey. I have come to grips with insight gained from in-depth readings, meetings and discussions. It is quite a long way since the beginning of my relationship with a doctoral thesis. The literal journey involved travelling to other countries. I flew, drove and cruised, touring the countryside, visiting schools, and exploring the minds of other teachers, as much as they let me. I am grateful for their time and willingness to share experiences regarding teaching, assessing and ethics attached to the profession.

The journey, at times was a jaunt — happily reading novels and learning about inspirational teachers. At other times it was an expedition, surveying students to get feedback regarding teaching practice and assessment. Researching had me roaming through libraries, actual and electronic. Being a digital immigrant, I still find hard copies of texts easier to digest. There is something attractive about browsing in a real university library and holding a book. On the other hand eBooks are very convenient and there is no travel involved.

My goal, to research the ethics of assessment, reasons for assessing, and various methods of implementation, as well as considering the many stakeholders, has taken me on numerous tangents, each inviting deeper levels of enquiry. It would have been very easy to digress and though it may appear I have strayed at times, where the reader begins to wonder where it is leading, all roads lead to moral principles. The integrity of the teacher is at the forefront. My qualitative research often revealed deeply held values which quantitative scientific and rational studies often ignore.

Wandering into Tasmania's past exposed explanations for present-day ways of proceeding, and emphasises the necessity for proper planning. Circumstances often dictated the conduct of teachers and methods of teaching, and economics always has a part to play. When I started high school, the building had not been completed. So for first term, lessons took place in a corridor of the local primary school. In second term some of the classrooms were ready for occupation, and other classes were held in a nearby building across the road. We students did not care. It was all a big adventure.

## *Untangled*

There is much to be learned from past events. Even the recent past can demonstrate successful educational structures or pitfalls. Such information is of use to teacher education and beginning teachers. The standing of teachers in the wider community is significant and while parents were a little in awe of teachers fifty years ago, in Tasmania now there appears to be a two-way communication between schools and families. The Tasmanian senior secondary system, which at times seems convoluted, presently gives students a great deal of flexibility regarding subject choices in years 11 and 12. Checks and balances are maintained through continuous assessment and external examinations.

There are many differences between government and non-government schools and types of leadership in these institutions. I have compared the two and described positive and negative aspects of each. It may seem as though I was going into a cul-de-sac but it led me to believe more adamantly that ethics are much more important than pragmatism, though at times it seems to be overlooked. While some parents can select which schools their children attend, others have no choice because of financial constraints.

Whichever school is chosen, the importance of unintended consequences should not be overlooked. van Manen's idea in *Researching Lived Experience* that "anecdotes can teach us" (1990, p. 120) certainly holds true. The hidden curriculum stories I uncovered were surprising and demonstrate the importance of empathy when conducting lessons. Self-reflection can lead to positive educational practice and is preferable to self-importance. I realise now that teaching is an emotional activity for the majority of us. When researching at home and overseas, it became apparent that hardly any teacher felt indifferent about schooling. There were strongly held views and intense, passionate, feelings expressed.

Overseas and hoping for an epiphany, I sat on the very same step in the Tropical House in the Botanic Gardens, Dublin, where Ludwig Wittgenstein used to sit and write. I contemplated how I have progressed since being a beginning teacher to the present day. Being responsible for teaching all those students is a daunting thought. How do they remember me? I would be despondent if any student thought badly of

me. I would like them to have learned above all, how to question. I would like to be described as impartial and open-minded. It seems teachers must make a concerted effort to avoid favouring those students, usually boys, who make greater demands than others. Sometimes students push boundaries regarding respect. In one of my classes a hand shot up.

“You speak German don’t you, Miss?”

“Yes.”

“How do you say this word then?”

A piece of paper was produced with Kant written on it. The class waited expectantly. Ignoring the double entendre, I took the question at face value and without turning a hair, pronounced Kant in German. I continued to explain who he was and why he is considered important. All in a day’s teaching, I thought to myself. I was being a practical teacher.

Whitehead, in *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* writes,

All practical teachers know that education is a patient process of the mastery of details, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. There is no royal road to learning through an airy path of brilliant generalisations. There is a proverb about the difficulty of seeing the wood because of the trees. That difficulty is exactly the point which I am enforcing. The problem of education is to make the pupil see the wood by means of the trees. (1929, p. 4)

To enable the student to see the trees means a teacher having rapport with those students and having enthusiasm about her subject. To explain the nature of my lived experience with my students, van Manen’s *Researching Lived Experience* is my text of choice. I followed van Manen’s idea of observation of students, especially those in my pastoral care groups. We had a reasonably close relationship where I could communicate with students but at the same time reflect on the implications of situations.

Freire’s *Pedagogy of Freedom* establishes some fundamental knowledge that teachers should have, or be exposed to: “Teaching always involves ethics”, “Teaching requires humility”, and “Teaching requires critical reflection”, among others (p. xiii). I agree with Freire that “critical reflection on practice is a requirement of the relationship between theory and practice” (p. 30). Theory on its

own is of little use until it is applied, and practice on its own has no apposite foundation. For Freire, the use of common sense makes sense. He believes in “simple and disciplined rationality” (p. 61). I have repeatedly appealed to the ‘what would a reasonable person do test’ when trying to come to grips with a situation. Another important aspect of Freire’s work is the capability of self-confidence, which is grounded in professional competence (p. 85). My professional competence has increased over time as I researched my thesis topic.

In the past when teaching, at times I felt like Sisyphus “who is forced to roll a huge stone uphill, only to have it roll back again, so that he must endlessly repeat a painfully strenuous and meaningless act” (Stephen Harris and Gloria Platzner, 1998, p. 212). Nowadays the feeling happens less often. With competence I feel energised and have developed faith in students who after all, are our future.

Gadamer was for me a signpost, showing I was heading the right way. I made a pilgrimage to Heidelberg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany where Gadamer died at age 102. His last resting place is Friedhof Heidelberg-Ziegelhausen. I think of Gadamer as someone who respected and valued other points of view, and I try to emulate that. His idea that philosophy should be available to everybody and should give meaning to our everyday life is an attractive proposition. Everyone can find some kind of understanding to give deeper meaning to their lives.

Sometimes I arrived at a crossroad and was not sure which direction to take. It reminds me of a time when I was almost run over. I had been walking around in New York City, where pedestrians step out in front of cars all the time and cars give way. I did not do that. I used to always look to my right to see if the way was clear, and then cross. After flying straight to London, I continued to look right only and that is when a motor cyclist swooped around a bend from the left. It was my daughter’s quick thinking that saved me. She grabbed me and pulled me back. I relate my near miss to illustrate how easy it is to be stuck in a mindset, to follow one way of thinking — to the right or to the left. I believe I have presented different ways of looking at old problems.

At times, I have found the trek to be uphill with a headwind. Some philosophical readings are difficult to come to terms with, and, as mentioned, I have

jettisoned or changed a previously held opinion on certain aspects, Barthes' 'The Death of the Author', for example. At other times, I have coasted downhill, thoroughly enjoying the feeling of discovery. Art Costa's *Habits of Mind* conference and workshop was one such instance. Lorna Earl's "assessment as learning" opened my eyes to the way I generated assessment tasks.

van Manen writes of the value of anecdotal narratives. They are important for pedagogy. He calls it "practical theorising" (1990, p. 120). I recorded anecdotes and interviews collected while overseas in a journal. I transcribed interviews conducted at my workplace. The journal was helpful not only for understanding and reflection but also to detect if similarities or a pattern occurred.

My inquiry has been of immeasurable assistance not only for my teaching, but it has furthered mature judgment for my position as Chief Marking Examiner of Sociology. It has enabled me to write guidelines and put structures in place to extend knowledge to markers and future Chief Marking Examiners that the Tasmanian Qualification Authority may see fit to appoint. I hope that my real life examples and questioning might be a resource for professional discussion.

### *Bedevilment*

I continue to be bedevilled. I have read and read and think I have much information at hand, but Sokolowski reminds me,

Even when we think we know a lot about something, we may be missing something central: an abundance of historical data ... or a text or an event, a mass of information...does not guarantee that we can bring out the truth of the things in question. (2000, p. 166)

This is the diabolical paradox. The more I look for answers the more I seem to retreat from finding solutions to ethical questions. My exploration has been a bewildering journey at times, full of potholes, I could say.

My research identifies inequities that exist in education, but many of the obstacles in the way of equality can be overcome. It does not need to be lonely on the moral high-ground. I believe every teacher can be guided by the principles set out in the TRBT's code of ethics, and that the values articulated can be affirmed in order to uphold the integrity of the teaching profession. On the other hand, are the

principles of dignity, respect, integrity, empathy, and justice taken for granted even though they were generated to guide the teaching profession? Sokolowski would see them as “hidden originals” which may be latent or overlooked, but which effectively generate a cultural field of force that determines the scope of what we do (2000, p. 166). We might be waiting for the right moment to understand what has been hidden or as Sokolowski puts it, protected or preserved.

Implicit in my thesis is that living the TRBT’s code of ethics can accommodate both teaching and assessing practices. By living the code of ethics I mean consciously to take on the mantle of responsibility, to take it seriously and realise that our students are also our future. It is difficult to avoid clichés, but grasping the nettle comes to mind, because we often have prickly students who challenge and test us. They could easily be dismissed from our consideration, as for example, the child who sits up the back of the classroom and does not cause any disruption. Is this how students arrive at grade twelve being functionally illiterate? Where were the ethical early year school teachers?

A synthesis of ethics and assessment will involve defining what is to be measured and how to ethically go about that measuring. The goal could be students’ successful mastery of a particular body of knowledge providing the students have had ample opportunity to learn, and that different teaching methods are delivered. Assessment must be free of bias. Criteria based assessment can take into account handing work in on time, working in groups and such behaviours which although not strictly subject related, can be achieved by all students. Ethics must be embedded in assessment so that it becomes second nature to shelter under the ethics umbrella.

It will not be easy to raise the bar for quality of the teaching profession. One way of accomplishing this would be to look at nations where teaching is honoured, say, in Finland, and adopt some of their practices. According to an article in the *New York Times* (Jenny Anderson, 12 December 2011), children do not start formal education until age 7. Homework and testing is scorned until well into the teenage years. At age 16 students go on to either vocational or academic high schools. In Tasmania the entry age has been lowered and the compulsory leaving age raised. A cynical person may liken early entry as child-minding and suspect retention at school as a way to cover up unemployment figures.

In Finland, teachers are highly educated. “It’s more difficult getting into teacher education than law or medicine,” Pasi Sahlberg, a Finnish educator and author, said in an interview. In his country, teachers typically spend about four hours a day in the classroom, and are paid to spend two hours a week on professional development. Most teachers now hold master’s degrees in both their content area and in education, and they are well trained both in research methods and in pedagogical practice.

Continuous upgrading of teachers’ pedagogical professionalism has become a right rather than an obligation. ... As a consequence of strengthened professionalism in schools, it has become understood that teachers and schools are responsible for their own work and also solve most problems rather than shift them elsewhere. Today the Finnish teaching profession is on a par with other professional workers; teachers can diagnose problems in their classrooms and schools, apply evidence-based and often alternative solutions to them, and evaluate and analyze the impact of implemented procedures. (Sahlberg, 2007, p. 155)

The Finns are eschewing competition, standardisation, and test-based accountability. They have “worked systematically over 35 years to make sure that competent professionals, who can craft the best learning conditions for all students, are in all schools.” (Sahlberg, 2009, p. 22)

It can be argued that Finland is a small country with an insignificant economy, a low poverty rate, and a homogenous population but I submit that Tasmania can learn lessons from the Finns. Our idea of “throwing money” at education and thinking that is a panacea to remedy the sad state of our students is misguided. Finland started with very little. They created productive teaching by expanding access to a publicly financed education system. In Australia the government frequently seems to engage in political point scoring. The State and Federal politicians are both guilty of this. Instead of opposing for opposition’s sake, some harmonising between the major parties regarding pertinent educational issues would be welcome.

The national curriculum is not yet fully implemented and discussions are underway to review it. The Finns have moved away from centralisation while we seem to be heading towards it. Raising the bar has financial, and therefore, political implications. We often hear politicians claims “we have spent x million dollars” on

certain programs as if this then translates into student outcomes. The Gonski Review recommended that we spend at least \$6.5 billion more on education each year. The Greens say that currently, Australia is lagging far behind nations like Denmark, Norway and Finland whose students receive a world class education (Source: <http://greens.org.au/school-funding>). Blindly following Finland is not a solution, but to embark on educating our teachers to a very high standard would be an admirable start.

Make it harder for university students to get into teacher education, at least as difficult as getting into law or medicine. We may have more than enough lawyers, and while doctors are certainly necessary for our physical wellbeing, highly educated teachers are needed for our intellectual wellbeing. Let teachers continuously upgrade their pedagogical skills and by so doing, increase their competence and earn respect in their community. Professionalism among teachers would also increase their power to lobby politicians for better educational policies.

It has long been recognised that knowledge is power (Thomas Hobbes, Francis Bacon, Michel Foucault, Helen Keller and Kofi Annan, and others). If one had the powers of Ahura Mazda, the lord of light and wisdom, creator and upholder of truth, who is omniscient and omnipotent, then a way to level the playing field for students would be child's play. But then that would defeat the feeling of gratification, or what Annas calls "flourishing," gained by taking an interest in things and finding out; those aha moments when our curiosity is satisfied. Being open to practical reasoning and exercising a practical skill enables such flourishing. Annas' skill analogy helps me see that

...a truly virtuous person, whose actions are based on understanding gained through experience and reflection, self-directed and coming from a disposition which continually improves through engagement with experience. (2011a, p. 41)

Last, because assessment cannot be taken in isolation, I have sketched many other aspects of education which impinge directly or indirectly on assessment outcomes. These aspects include the culture of the school, incorporating leadership, duty of care, pastoral care, and the students' home situation, which in turn depends largely on the parents' socio-economic status. All these, together with a student's

past, with associated cultural baggage, are entangled in assessment in its broadest sense. While some problems can never be sorted out, there need not be an impasse. There can be consensus because there are many aspects to every situation and many ways to perceive things. While reflecting on the philosophical underpinnings of ethics and assessment, I believe I have strengthened my thinking and have matured considerably.

My clothesline is packed away. My milestones throughout my journey have been reached and extended at times. I have developed and expanded my capacity as a scholar and significantly advanced my scholarly understandings. Empower is an overused word these days, perhaps it is better to say my inquiry enables me to consider new philosophies.

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## Appendix I

The Tasmanian Qualifications Authority certificates which are available to students in 2013.

TQA offers the following descriptions of the certificates:

The Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) is a qualification awarded when a learner meets minimum standards. It marks the successful completion of the first phase of post-compulsory schooling. It is only awarded if a learner achieves the TCE's five standards. It tells employers and others that you have completed a substantial amount of post-compulsory education and/ or training, have a pathway plan, and that you have "everyday adult" skills in reading, writing and communication, mathematics, and use of computers and the internet. For more information see the TQA webpage: The verification number on the TCE allows employers and others to check that the document is authentic via the TQA website. (<http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/1906>).

The Qualifications Certificate (QC) lists all the qualifications you have gained to date (such as TQA accredited senior secondary courses, VET qualifications and units of competency, and TQA recognised courses). The QC is issued automatically to learners at the end of year 12. As you gain more qualifications (such as through VET or higher education studies) you can request an updated QC. The front page of the QC lists your highest qualifications – for many this will be the TCE. Subsequent pages list all the others, grouped according to their degree of complexity and type. For more information see the TQA webpage: The verification number on the QC allows employers and others to check that the document is authentic via the TQA website (<http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/2429>).

The Tasmanian Certificate of Educational Achievement (TCEA) - Some learners have personal circumstances that significantly affect their learning. For example, long periods of illness, learning disabilities or critical family issues to deal with. A result like "PA"

might not really be a fair indication of what the student achieved. The Tasmanian Certificate of Educational Achievement (TCEA) is a TQA-issued, quality assured, descriptive account of such a student's learning. It describes learning and educational achievement in words rather than results codes like "Pass". The TCEA is only issued to learners who apply for it and who meet eligibility criteria. See the TQA webpage (<http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/2218>).

As well as these three certificates, TQA issue two more documents. These are Statements of Results and Australian Tertiary Admission (ATAR) Statements. TQA describes them:

Learners are issued with a Statement of Results by the TQA at the end of the year. It contains a progress report listing all the qualifications you have gained during the year (in TQA accredited senior secondary courses, VET qualifications and units of competency, and TQA recognised courses). It also lists your progress towards meeting the requirements of the TCE. This can be used to help you plan a future course of study to gain the TCE. TCE Planner Tools are available at the TQA website page: <http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/2829>

In December each year an Australian Tertiary Admission (ATAR) Statement is issued to year 12/13 learners who have gained an "SA" or better in four or more TQA level 3 courses that contribute to its calculation. These courses must have been in any two years of post-grade 10 study, with three courses having been undertaken in either grade 12 or 13 (so you can count grade 11 & 12, 12 & 13 or 11 & 13). The Statement indicates a learner's ATAR as a number and shows how it was calculated. The ATAR is used solely to determine entrance into university faculties. If you have given the TQA permission to do so, your ATAR is automatically sent from us to the University of Tasmania (UTAS). UTAS will forward details to mainland tertiary admission agencies. See the TQA webpage: (<http://www.tqa.tas.gov.au/1278#>)

## Appendix II

Pages 17, 18 and 23 of the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority document Sociology BHS315111: TQA Level 3 Version 1. Size Value = 15

### **Assessment**

Criterion-based assessment is a form of outcomes assessment which identifies the extent of student achievement at an appropriate end-point of study. Although assessment – as part of the learning program - is continuous, much of it is formative, and is done to help students identify what they need to do to attain the maximum benefit from their study of the course. Therefore, assessment for summative reporting to the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority should focus on what both teacher and student understand to reflect end-point achievement.

The standard of achievement each student attains on each criterion is recorded as a rating “A”, “B”, or “C”, according to the outcomes specified in the standards section of the course.

A “t” notation must be used where a student demonstrates any achievement against a criterion less than the standard specified for the “C” rating. The “t” notation sits outside the continuum of ratings and is thus not described in course standards.

A “z” notation is to be used where a student provides no evidence of achievement at all.

Providers offering this course must participate in the quality assurance processes. Internal assessment of all criteria will be made by the provider. Providers will report the student’s rating for each criterion to the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority.

The Tasmanian Qualifications Authority will supervise the external assessment of designated criteria (\*). The ratings obtained from the external assessments will be used in addition to those provided from the provider to determine the final award. The ratings obtained from the external assessments will be used in addition to those provided from the provider to determine the final award.

### **Quality assurance processes**

The following processes will be facilitated by the TQA to ensure there is:

- a match between the standards for achievement specified in the course and the standards demonstrated by students
- community confidence in the integrity and meaning of the qualification.

**Processes** – the Authority gives course providers feedback about any systematic differences in the relationship of their internal and external assessments and, where appropriate, seeks further evidence through audit and requires corrective action in the future.

#### EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

The external assessment requirements for this course consist of:

- A 2 hour written examination, consisting of two essays, which assesses criteria 4, 5 and 6.
- An investigation project which assesses criteria 3 and 7.

#### CRITERIA

The assessment for Sociology TQA level 3 will be based on the degree to which the learner can:

1. communicate ideas and information
2. plan, organise and complete activities
3. \*use evidence to support a sociological view
4. \*analyse and evaluate ideas and information related to sociology
5. \*demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological terms and concepts
6. \*construct an argument that includes alternative theoretical explanations
7. \*demonstrate understanding and application of sociological research methods.

\* = externally and internally assessed criteria

#### QUALIFICATIONS AVAILABLE

Sociology (*with the award of*):

EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

HIGH ACHIEVEMENT

COMMENDABLE ACHIEVEMENT

SATISFACTORY ACHIEVEMENT

PRELIMINARY ACHIEVEMENT

#### AWARD REQUIREMENTS

The final award will be determined by the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority from the 12 ratings (7 ratings from the internal assessment and 5 ratings from the external assessment). The minimum requirements for an award in Sociology are as follows:

**EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT (EA)**

10 “A”, 2 “B” ratings (4 “A”, 1 “B” from external assessment)

**HIGH ACHIEVEMENT**

4 “A”, 5 “B”, 3 “C” ratings (2 “A”, 2 “B”, 1 “C” from external assessment)

**COMMENDABLE ACHIEVEMENT**

6 “B” ratings 5 “C” ratings (2 “B”, 2 “C” from external assessment)

**SATISFACTORY ACHIEVEMENT**

10 “C” ratings (3 “C” from external assessment)

**PRELIMINARY ACHIEVEMENT**

6 “C” ratings

A student who otherwise achieves the rating for a CA (Commendable Achievement) or SA (satisfactory Achievement) award but who fails to show any evidence of achievement in one or more criteria (“Z” notation) will be issued with a PA (Preliminary Achievement) award.

**COURSE EVALUATION**

The TQA can evaluate the need and appropriateness of an accredited course at any point throughout the period of accreditation.

Courses are accredited for a specific period of time (up to five years) and they are evaluated in the year prior to the expiry of accreditation.

As well, anyone may request a review of a particular aspect of an accredited course throughout the period of accreditation. Such requests for amendment will be considered in terms of the likely improvements to the outcomes for students and the possible consequences for delivery of the course.

The TQA can evaluate the need and appropriateness of an accredited course at any point throughout the period of accreditation.

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