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## The Weaving of a Tapestry: a Metaphor for Teacher Education Curriculum Development

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## The Weaving of a Tapestry: a Metaphor for Teacher Education Curriculum Development

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*Abstract: Teacher educators rightfully dream of delivering inspiring programs to benefit future teachers and the students they will in turn inspire. However, in the current teacher education environment in Australia, the artisan's craft of weaving rich texture and producing a masterpiece is potentially over-shadowed by the educational administrator's continual focus on the mapping of professional standards to produce an accreditation-worthy product. Responding to increased accountability, teacher educators at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, embarked on re-developing programs utilising a process akin to tapestry weaving. This metaphor enriched contributors' understanding of the complex process of teacher education program re-development and it reflected qualities associated with the emergence of a tapestry, including artistic blocks and changing perspectives, agendas and anticipated outcomes.*

### Dreamers, Artisans or Administrators?

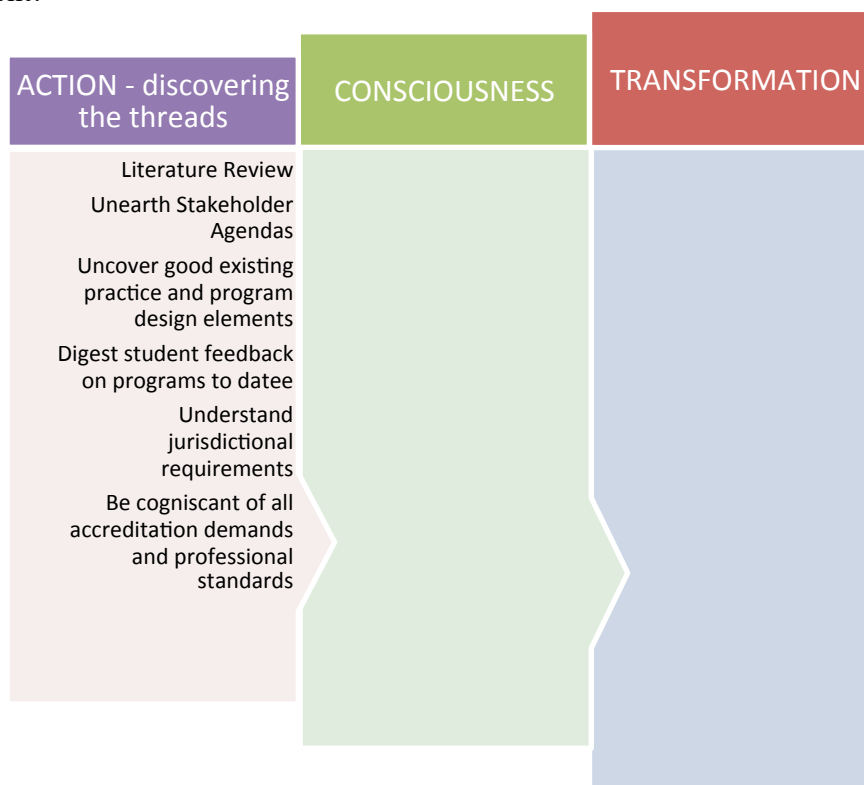
*Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths, en-wrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths of night and light and the half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet: but I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet; tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*  
(W.B. Yeats, 1899)

The world over, teacher educators are dreaming, designing and delivering what they anticipate will be the best possible teacher education programs (Stewart, 2010). I was invited to research ways of re-developing the pre-service teacher education programs at the University of the Sunshine Coast at the end of 2011, in line with emerging internal and external requirements, having been an educator in Queensland Schools for more than 20 years, with many of these as a School Principal. Bringing both objective and school-orientated approaches to the task, as well as a passion for quality teaching, were qualities which potentially could be of assistance in achieving the desired outcome of designing effective programs which would not only meet imminent deadlines but also nurture the ownership of staff involved in their delivery.

The immediate task was to research available literature on collaborative practices and the current challenges posed to tertiary providers of teacher education programs in order to be well-informed for the process of consultation and re-development. Subsequently, it was crucial to unearth the range of agendas from a plethora of stakeholders, requirements from jurisdictional bodies in the tertiary sector and the expectations of compliance from the professional accreditation bodies placing demands on new program development (Hendricks, J. et al. 2008). There was much that needed to be researched, analysed, discussed and hypothesised about. In order for this to happen, it would be imperative to garner the support

of the academic staff, many of whom had valuable expertise in the delivery of teacher education, and guidance from administrators cognisant of the protocols and processes within the University.

The aim of relating this process metaphorically to that of tapestry weaving was to aid our own understanding of the complexities and inter-relatedness of each important strand of the process, and to emphasise the dreaming and artistic aspects of the curriculum design process in combination with the necessary requirements of the administrator to get the programs to the accreditation-worthy stage. Additionally, by recording our experience with academic processes, curriculum re-design, collaboration within the tertiary sector and the essential inter-play with external accreditation bodies by means of the metaphor, we hope to share our experiences with others charged with similar curriculum design tasks. Our process has been recorded and reflected upon utilising auto-ethnography which, according to Dyson (2007), is a ‘framework for perceiving the rise in consciousness facilitated by the use of metaphor, as one moves through the ‘Landscape of Action’ and the ‘Landscape of Consciousness’, to the ‘Landscape of Transformation’ (p36). The development of the process is highlighted by means of a series of diagrams (Figures 1, 2 and 3) based on Dyson’s framework for the tapestry metaphor utilised in relating the emergence of our program redevelopment.



**Figure 1: The Tapestry metaphor’s Landscape of Action in the University of the Sunshine Coast’s teacher education program redevelopment process in 2012, based on Dyson (2007).**

### Our Tapestry Cloth

The University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia, established in 1996, has demonstrated success in organisational envisioning of innovative, sustainable and attractive education programs for contemporary tertiary students in its relatively short history (University of the Sunshine Coast, 2013). The University of the Sunshine Coast had demonstrated strength in its teaching quality with it receiving five stars for its teaching

calibre since 2010 (Good Universities Guide, 2010 onwards). Cognisant of this feature of the University's teaching performance, as well as the high level of graduate satisfaction, the priority was to preserve what was already being offered with success. Its aim for its students is that they will emerge as well-rounded, inspiring professionals in their field in this fast moving world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, displaying the University's graduate attributes of being 'empowered, engaged, ethical, knowledgeable, creative and critical thinkers who are sustainability-focused' and who possess the University's generic skills of 'communication, collaboration, problem-solving, organisation, applying technologies and information literacy' (University of the Sunshine Coast, 2013). Growing rapidly from a cohort of 524 students in its first year of operation, the University enrolled 9,300 students at the start of 2013. Of that number, 1145 (12%) were students studying teacher education programs, with the majority intent on becoming teachers in schools in Queensland, elsewhere in Australia and overseas (University of the Sunshine Coast, 2013). The significance of this cohort lies not only in numbers and the associated benefits from securing steady growth in enrolments, but in the high levels of professional aspiration within the student cohort and the motivation of academic staff in teaching the teachers of tomorrow well in order to influence positively the quality of teaching that happens in our schools (Marzano, 2010).

### **Illuminating Literature**

The nature of the challenging times in pre-service teacher education is that of competing, albeit altruistic, intentions, and this phenomenon is evident in other areas of higher education (Abbott, 2012). Best practice in the art of teaching is illuminated by Hattie (2003), Marzano(2010) and Darling-Hammond (2006) and many of these findings were considered and reflected upon by the program re-development team. Similar to current societal expectations for schools to provide instruction and guidance in a rapidly growing number of aspects of child and adolescent development in addition to their core business of teaching and learning (O'Grady, 2010), tertiary teacher education program developers are also compelled to come to terms with a formidable task of ensuring that all components expected are accommodated satisfactorily in their pre-service teacher education programs (Lloyd, M. 2012).

These teacher education providers are discovering the necessity of serving many masters and being compliant with accreditation standards which can squeeze out both creativity and motivation to remain student-focussed – the very quality espoused by the teachers of the teachers of tomorrow (Wilkinson, 2011). If done well, these re-developed teacher education programs can succeed in inspiring and serving the practical needs of future teachers (Ormond, 2012), but there is evidence in Australia and internationally that attempts to incorporate increased accountability and adherence to mandated standards does not necessarily constitute effective reform regarding the quality of learning for our children (Tuinamuana, 2011) and so, in considering the literature available on these aspects of our task, the challenge ahead presented itself as a significant one.

### **Consciousness of the Threads**

The consideration of the advice of many contributors, sets of guidelines, agendas and policies was essential. Effectively empowering the education team involved at the University of the Sunshine Coast, to be involved in a collaborative process was equally important to the emergence of an effective theoretical methodology and finding the perfect balance between theory, accountability and creativity. Once collaboration was planned for

and implemented, this methodology emerged as the process by which a unique outcome could be realised, successfully addressing mandatory obligations at the same time. For this to be effective in the long term, there had to continue to be a collective approach to weaving in the numerous threads by all involved in this process, and not a hierarchical one, or one that was based on a single person holding the decision-making power (Jones et al, 2012). As expounded by Jones et al, the best professional and academic practice is considered to result from collective collaboration, as was demonstrated through their research within four Australian Universities ‘that used a distributed leadership approach to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching’. Thus, the process involved in teacher education program re-development at the University of the Sunshine Coast, began by unravelling what amounted to a knotted bundle of threads, including opinions and researched information, through a collaborative process involving a variety of stake-holders.

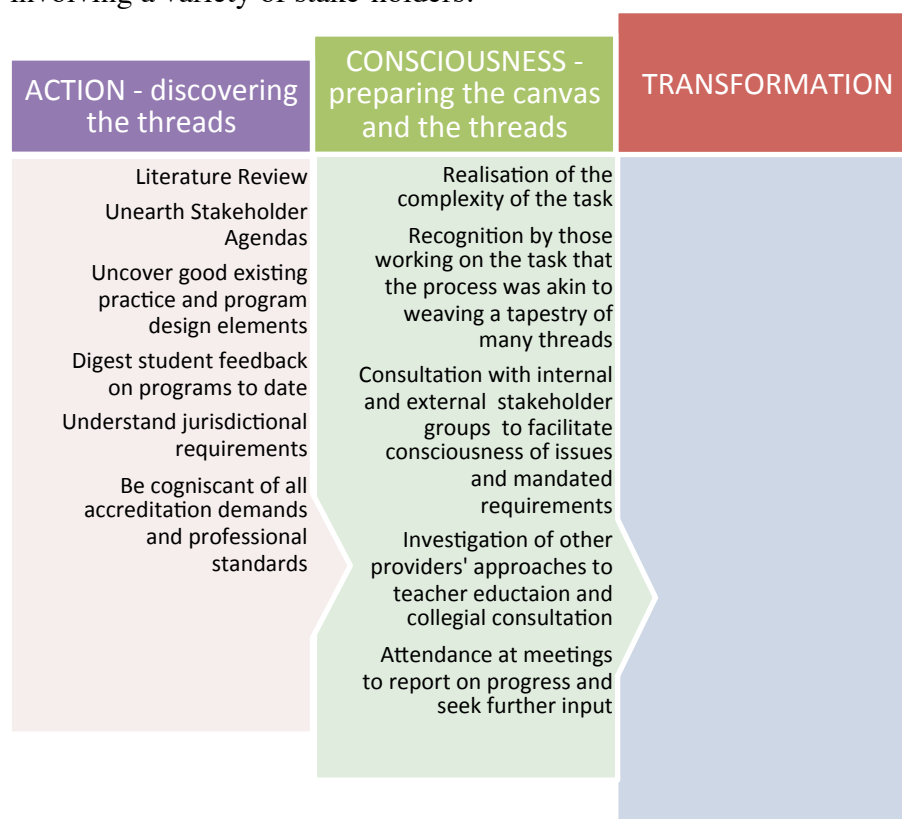


Figure 2: The Tapestry metaphor’s Landscape of Consciousness in the University of the Sunshine Coast’s teacher education program redevelopment process in 2012, based on Dyson (2007).

### Tapestry Features and Fibres

Many tapestry analogies have been successfully expounded across myriad fields of expertise and disciplines, highlighting the unique nature of complex concepts and situations, along with the inter-weaving of stake-holder influences, agendas and information. Such scenarios, contexts and issues relate to organisational change, demanding roles and responsibilities, product renewal and evolving phenomena. The tapestry metaphor provides a creative structure on which to build understanding and from which to observe the benefits of applying methodology to concepts, scenarios or tasks which appear initially to be chaotic, or even random. Researchers making reference to the nature of tapestry weaving as a metaphor include Zeveloff et al. (1992), Robbins (1996), Blakemore-Brown (2002), Kalitzhus and Twohig (2009), Ball (1999), Lowenstein (2000), Deegan (1998) and Head and Clausen (1999)

and similarities of aspects of the process were noted: complexity of the task, the aesthetic nature of the whole, the integration of crucial threads and the increased understanding of the phenomenon on the part of those involved. Queensland's *Learning Guidelines for Kindergarten Teachers* (Queensland Studies Authority, 2010) illustrates the complexity of the teacher's decision making process as 'like weaving a piece of fabric... over time the fabric takes shape. Each piece of fabric is different. Sometimes it is smooth; other times it is a bit uneven' (p8).

The creative elements of the tapestry metaphor symbolise the highly-revered, altruistic and important nature of learning and teaching which will enhance its stature and invaluable contribution to the world. Hattie's research (2003) underlines the high importance and effectiveness of 'deep representations' in the teaching and learning process. If the aim of teacher education programs is to educate potential teachers to facilitate the best possible learning in the students of their future classrooms, there is an imperative to role-model this capacity in University teacher education programs and to demonstrate the impact that such approaches as 'deep representations' can have on the learner. Through the design and delivery of well-woven teacher education programs, students will be able to observe 'expert' teacher educators delivering 'knowledge that is more integrated', relating current lesson content to other subjects in the curriculum and making 'lessons uniquely their own by changing, combining, and adding to them according to their students' needs and their own goals' (Hattie, 2003, p5). Another aspect of teacher behaviour which increases effectiveness for the learner, according to Hattie's research, is for them to adopt a 'problem-solving approach to their work. The successful inter-weaving of academic requirements, professional standards and internal accountabilities culminate in a product (the teacher education program) which demonstrates this same capacity to solve myriad requirements simultaneously, and this is role-modelled to pre-service teachers undertaking the program.

### **Weaving the Tapestry at the University of the Sunshine Coast**

Fundamental to the re-development of the teacher education programs was the analysis of what was currently offered at the University of the Sunshine Coast and elsewhere, and what was stipulated in terms of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) regarding the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) levels for each of our programs. Understanding the Threshold Learning Outcomes relevant to each of the levels was of paramount importance in order for the University to achieve accreditation with the tertiary accreditation authority. It was observed that across all the teacher education programs offered at the University of the Sunshine Coast - the three Combined Degrees (of Bachelor of Education with Bachelor of Business, Arts or Science) and the Graduate Diplomas in Education (Primary and Secondary) - a large number of required and elective courses had been written and were available. Having an understanding of the depth and breadth of the content and learning outcomes for each of these could only be achieved with the input from staff currently involved in these programs and courses. Frequent individual conversations and a series of consultative sessions provided essential illumination to current practice and to what staff felt were vital ingredients of best practice, as well as ensuring that a student-centred lens was adopted. Burton and Steane (2004), in utilising the tapestry metaphor in relation to the process of synthesising in research, believe that there should be a weaving together and integration of the threads or arguments that are contained in previous writings on the topic. Within our context it would also be important to preserve and include those policy documents, program outlines and course details which were valued and deemed beneficial to the integrity of the programs.

However, the need for economic rationalism as well as creativity and inspiration was emerging as an essential criterion in higher education during this time of expansion, and it had direct impact on the ways in which the teacher education programs were to be re-developed. It is a time when 'government policy increasingly directs universities to act as corporations, informed by economic rationalism as much as a pursuit of knowledge' (Kent, 2006, p4). Some aspects of economic rationalism and its impact on teacher education programs are expounded by Ling (2012, p213), in which she discusses 'increased staff/student ratios, reduction of hours for teaching in university courses, obsession with profit margins and cost-driven budget models'. She maintains that there are indications that policies which emanate from 'New Right ideologies' and 'neo-conservative and neo-liberal policies' in both Australia and globally have led to a situation in which 'successive governments have underfunded higher education'. Rooney and Hearn's (2000) portrayal of the tensions within higher education of the concerns of 'mind, markets and machines' continues to be a real challenge for many universities and their various faculties as the ability to focus on ideology has the potential to diminish when achieving increased economic efficiency in a competitive tertiary environment. Their analysis provides a provocative image of the challenges of ideology and functionality with a university - an example of this being the opportunity to combine cohorts of teacher education students into the same courses when it is more ideologically sound to separate them into year of study, level of expertise or stage or subject of teaching. For these reasons, the University of the Sunshine Coast was experiencing the same demands to balance ideology and economic efficiencies, and this requirement had a direct impact on our program re-development work. It is appropriate also to reflect on current potential funding implications for all universities in Australia, as these will add to the influences on the rationalisation of courses offered across all programs, teacher education ones included. The recommendations of the Gonski 'Review of Funding for Schooling – Final Report' (Australian Government, DEEWR, 2011), negotiations with State Governments and the ensuing highly-charged public debate will potentially result in significant changes in tertiary funding. This, in turn, will have further impact on staff/student ratios, numbers of courses and programs being offered and the need for other strategies to improve financial viability of higher education provision generally and teacher education courses offered in particular.

Additionally, with the changing and ever-more demanding landscape of jurisdictional bodies relating to teacher education, there was little alternative but to re-visit the depth and breadth of courses, to establish a balance between the mandated components (in order to comply with all that was required for the foreseeable future) and to ensure the viability of the programs as a whole. There were increased numbers of enrolled students in teacher education at the University of the Sunshine Coast but also a growing number of programs and courses to cater to the different phases of schooling. Discovering ways to streamline the delivery of mandated components across all phases would be welcomed as part of this push for increased viability and economic rationalism.

Internally, the Academic Board of the University of the Sunshine Coast had made changes to academic policy which had, as a consequence, impacted on the current teacher education programs. Firstly, there was the need to re-develop the existing Combined Degree programs as Double Degree programs, with the inherent implications for combinations of teaching areas which this would lead to. The secondary pre-service teacher education programs at the University of the Sunshine Coast up until this point have been based on two year full-time equivalent study in a discipline area, majoring in one subject. This course of study can lead to satisfying the requirements for a major teaching area, in combination with studying courses leading to satisfying the requirements for a minor teaching area. This program of study in the discipline areas (plus a number of core courses), is combined with

two year full-time equivalent mandated education courses. The balance between the discipline area study and that of education courses remains unchanged in the proposed transference to Double Degree programs, but the changes to academic policy at the University of the Sunshine Coast had made mandatory other key aspects including the need for accreditation of the two teaching areas within the same discipline area. Secondly, the need to ensure that the University's graduate attributes and generic skills (University of the Sunshine Coast, 2013) were mapped across all undergraduate programs and linked to the Threshold Learning Outcomes of Level 7 of the Australian Qualifications Framework (Australian Government, 2012) was another high priority. Administratively, implications of changes to the existing programs, the numbers of courses offered, the transitional arrangements to existing teacher education students that would be needed and future marketing, enrolment and timetabling concerns, all had to be discussed and woven into the emerging tapestry.

Consultation within the University involved gauging the opinions of staff and students through their participation in collaborative workshop sessions and through written feedback. The external education community was consulted through the Education Advisory Committee meetings during 2012 regarding what were the important characteristics of teacher education programs from the local schools' perspective. Of special interest were any changes to the professional learning components, and what would be beneficial to include in the revised programs. For example, through the deliberations of the Education Advisory Committee, confusion regarding whether the intention of the AITSL (2011) English Language requirements being applied to entry or exit levels of teacher education programs was debated, and from the Committee's proposals which ensued, clarification was sought (and received) from the Queensland College of Teachers. This clarification ensures that the mandated English Language proficiency level is demonstrated on entrance to teacher education programs at the University of the Sunshine Coast, and not at exit, thus reassuring local schools supervising our pre-service teachers on practicums that appropriate levels of comprehension and communication can be expected from those who have English as a second language. The topic of the effective supervision of teachers on practicum and the 'triadic relationship of classroom teacher, student teacher and university supervisor' (Atputhasamy, 2005, p2) was also debated at these Education Advisory Committee meetings during 2012, in order to satisfy both school and student perspectives.

In addition, tapping into the collective wisdom of academic staff which included significant teaching experience in schools as well as at tertiary level, was fundamental to ensuring that proposals were academically rigorous, relevant and practical at the same time. The research conducted into teacher quality and the ways in which this influences school culture (Simon, 2007) and my own practical experience of teaching and administering in schools was a lens through which much of the gathered information could be viewed during consultation sessions. Finally, and most importantly, full consideration of the Core Values of the Education Team's workshopped outcomes from collaborative sessions held during 2012 would be crucial to our program re-development process.

## **External Threads**

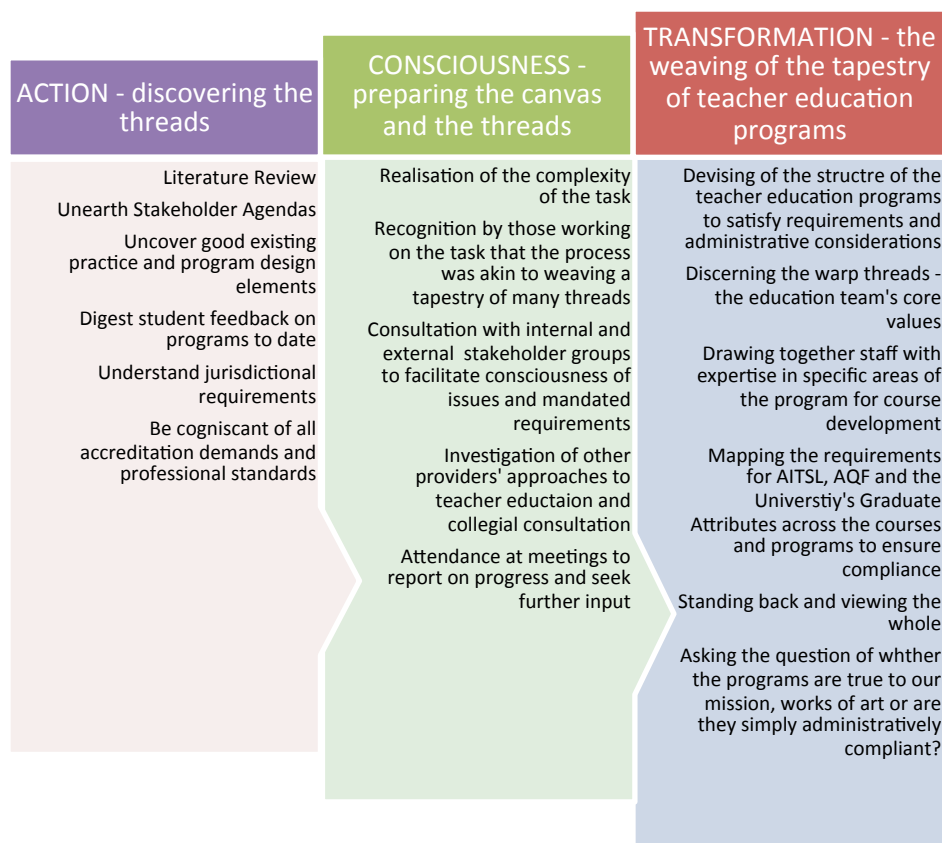
An important step early on in the program re-design process was to undertake a bench-marking comparison of the University of the Sunshine Coast's teacher education programs with those offered elsewhere in Australia and internationally, noting similarities, strengths and differences. The University of Melbourne's Master of Education was a striking example of the development of a significantly different program from the majority analysed –



a program which had already accommodated the mandated requirement of two year full-time equivalent post graduate study in teacher education (AITSL, 2011). This program is unique in some aspects of teacher education in that it offers what it describes as a ‘clinical approach’, rather like what would be experienced by trainee nurses and doctors, by providing continuous connections between what is studied at university with what is experienced in schools through practical involvement in the classroom for two days a week from very early on in the program of study (University of Melbourne, 2013). Increased practical experience and the associated improvements in confidence and expertise on the part of the pre-service teacher were evaluated by our team at the University of the Sunshine Coast to be very important considerations, and the way that the University of Melbourne was accommodating this need into the design of their programs was one that we would learn from. In addition, the pros and cons of offering a Level 8 (Australian Qualifications Framework, 2012) teaching qualification such as the one offered at the University of Melbourne was discussed, and further investigations about this would be made at a later date. Further research would continue to be done in the following months to ascertain what level of post-graduate teacher education programs would be planned to be offered by other Queensland universities as the two year requirement for post-graduate students came into force, as well as discerning what potential consumers – and future teachers - would want to be able to undertake.

In addition to researching what the current offerings from each tertiary provider were at the beginning of 2012, it was important to develop partnerships with other Universities to share what was planned for the future. The work undertaken by Margaret Lloyd through an OLT Fellowship towards the end of 2012, and the subsequent knowledge and understanding she shared at workshop sessions at the University of the Sunshine Coast and through electronic access to program development materials devised for the purpose of collegial sharing across a number of Universities, provided further opportunities for reflection and for the effective progression of the University of the Sunshine Coast’s teacher education program development (Lloyd, 2013).

Externally, the ‘many threads’ alluded to in the tapestry metaphor included the full range of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011), the Queensland Government’s response to the National requirements (Queensland Government, 2011), the Threshold Learning Outcomes of the Australian Qualifications Framework (Australian Government, 2012), the stringent accreditation guidelines of TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2013) and the additional requirements from the Queensland College of Teachers for the accreditation of Queensland Teacher education programs (Queensland College of Teachers, 2011).



**Figure 3: The Tapestry metaphor's Landscape of Transformation in the University of the Sunshine Coast's teacher education program redevelopment process in 2012, based on Dyson (2007).**

### Artistic Blocks

Burton and Steane (2004) maintain that 'just as a tapestry can show a picture from a particular long-range perspective, a closer scrutiny reveals knots, threads and colours not apparent from a long-distance perspective' (p131). It has become most apparent to educators working on pre-service teacher education program re-development in the current complex accreditation-oriented environment, that each jurisdictional body and stakeholder group can clearly see the whole tapestry from their particular long-range perspective, but they may be unaware of the 'knots, threads and colours' which have to be intricately woven to satisfy other stakeholders along with their own requirements. Based on the experience of teacher education program re-development to date at the University of the Sunshine Coast, a sustainable solution to this complexity would be for there to be increased communication and integration of mandated requirements between all accreditation bodies, governments making educational policy and professional associations. The creation of a template for teacher education programs to which all interested parties could contribute, could potentially provide benefits to both tertiary providers and accreditation bodies, and diminish the inefficiencies, blocks and frustrations associated with the current challenging mission. This could be the subject of further research and proposal, building on initial discussions with the (QCT) Queensland College of Teachers at a meeting at the University of the Sunshine Coast in early 2013. Subsequent to this discussion, QCT has announced professional development for program developers accommodating the AITSL and the specific Queensland requirements. It is hoped that there can be some liaison between other jurisdictional bodies in order to enhance understanding of other requirements. Federal Education Minister of the time, Peter Garrett (2012), highlighted the features and complexities of the accreditation process along









with its perceived benefits. The difficulties experienced by our team at the University of the Sunshine Coast in satisfying all the stipulated requirements from myriad jurisdictional bodies whilst trying to be true to the mission of the education team is echoed by Ormond (2012), who claims that 'the chief difficulty in writing a new teacher education course lies in just where one should begin'. She explains that another challenge is the 'necessary amalgamation of appropriate models and mandated standards, all of which must be mapped and explored. It would seem that duplicate tasks of accommodating myriad requirements into teacher education programs are being performed around Australia in 2013 and that it is timely to underline the need to review what teacher educators must do to comply with accreditation requirements and to ask the question of whether some liaisons between relevant bodies can be realised in the near future.

From our particular perspective, some challenges to accomplishing the program redevelopment task were encountered. The very nature of the work engaged in by academic staff, with its imperatives of research outputs, as well as specific teaching commitments which can span across a long working day, meant that planning for whole team collaboration and consultation proved difficult. In a new university such as the University of the Sunshine Coast, program and course development has been a priority in the first years of the existence of the education discipline in order to establish the programs and courses other universities already have in place, leaving little time for further contemplation. The pre-dominance of early career academics in this context, with many colleagues in the process of completing the PhDs or in establishing an academic publications profile, has been another additional focus which has left less time to participate in this current program redevelopment process. Where gathering together the whole team proved impossible, individual sessions were arranged, which proved effective for specific feedback but did not provide opportunities for team ownership of the process (and end result) to the degree anticipated. Additionally, engagement must not be perceived to be more of a ritual than reality (Hendricks et al, 2008) otherwise it is unlikely for there to be the anticipated successful outcomes to the change management process. In this situation, logistical and perceptual challenges proved to be inhibitors to the process.

Another human relations aspect of this process revolved around the territorial nature of the co-ordination of programs and courses by specific academic staff which understandably caused consternation when the possibility of significant changes was highlighted. The difficulty of incorporating successful collaborative processes in the face of changes which have the potential to affect staff members' roles had to be addressed in this situation as did some of the other factors impacting successful change management processes in higher education contexts as expounded by Brown (2012). It was the case during this process at USC that the 'emphasis in the change was to focus on the high importance of positive student experiences as the core business of the University' (Brown, 2012, p139). In retrospect, it would have been beneficial to publicly address these potentially far-reaching implications of personal significance prior to undertaking the collaborative process, and have this addressed at a senior level within the university. In addition, there is a need, even in a relatively new organisation, for academic staff to re-affirm their role as partners in cultural change along with the need for flexibility and adaptation, and to come to an understanding of the notion of 'institutional churn', through which institutions regularly re-invent themselves in an attempt to better face their changing circumstances' (Tight, 2013). This kind of cultural shift takes time to achieve and, in order to pave the way for increased cooperation and ownership of our process, there was a need to make more time and opportunities available for articulating the 'churn' which would be perceived to be happening within the education discipline with regards to the program redevelopment.

There were also many practical considerations such as the on-going logistical complications of successfully aligning University and School Calendars for the purposes of industry placement and professional learning experience. In addition, education courses often have to be offered in a shorter time-frame than the length of time allocated to courses in the discipline areas, in order to create available time for the professional learning experience to be undertaken during a specific study session. This duality of length of courses poses a real challenge in that portions of the discipline course are planned to be offered during such periods when pre-service teachers are on their professional learning experience. Furthermore, significant changes were in process with regard to the number and timing of study sessions being offered by the University, and thus, the aligning of some of the planned courses in summer sessions and in the mid-year break proved to be more complex, given that census dates for all of these sessions generally dictated when a certain proportion of assessment had to have been completed by.

But, as the process began to take shape, it was the need to comply with academic time-frames for submissions and accreditation with National and State jurisdictional bodies which emerged as one of the greatest challenges to a creative and collaborative process (see Figure 4). Early on, AITSL (through the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT)) advised us that 9 months would be required for the external accreditation process, and, internally we were advised that we would need to allow ample time for the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee to understand and consider all the proposals in order to progress them to Academic Learning and Teaching Committee and finally to Academic Board for approval. Thus, we made a conservative estimate of 15 months for internal approval and external accreditation. However, there were crucial components at each end of this time frame. The consultation, collaboration and proposal-writing phase of the process, of necessity, took 9 months prior to submission to Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, and, when final accreditation for the programs is received, there would need to be a period of 6 months in which the programs can be advertised through QTAC (in order for us to secure enrolments for the following year) and an internally allocated amount of time is given for time-tabling, facilities planning and sustainable enrolments to be realised.

Phases of the Program Re-development Process	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4
Internal Consultation and Collaboration				
Program Proposals and Course Outlines written				
Re-writing, amendments, double checking documentation				
Internal Accreditation				
External Accreditation				
Advertising – QTAC – Enrolments				
Practical preparation including time-tabling				
Commencement of Programs				

**Figure 4: Time-line for Teacher Education Program Development and Accreditation at the University of the Sunshine Coast in 2013.**

Not only are the inherent time-scales involved in the program re-development process potential blocks to achieving effective reforms to these programs, but so are the difficulties involved with developing the number of new courses which have to be written, proposed and justified internally and externally during the time available for University Learning and Teaching Committees to consider them. To date, the education team have written 34 new course outlines with all the associated documentation, in addition to the documentation required for 5 completely new teacher education programs. In hindsight, it would have been more beneficial to allocate additional time for the presentation of such a significant number of proposals at the internal approvals stage of the process, in order to ensure comprehension of the complex teacher education tapestry being woven.

The cycle for reform within educational contexts appears to get shorter and shorter with what Fullan (1992) describes as ‘political pressures combin(ing) with the segmented, uncoordinated nature of educational organisations to produce a ‘project mentality’ which leaves teachers and the public with a growing cynicism that innovation is marginal and politically motivated’ (p3). Therefore, there are blocks to the process of teacher education program re-development as indicated here in terms of the length of time for accreditation, in conjunction with prediction of the introduction of renewed cycles of reform before innovations can be actualised. With this ‘project mentality’ approach to the task, it is possible that the ‘project’ may be doomed to failure before the next cycle of reform appears on the horizon. Fullan’s solutions to this challenge include:

- ‘1) reform must focus on the development and interrelationships of all the main *components* of the system simultaneously—curriculum, teaching and teacher development, community, student support systems, and so on, and
- 2) reform must focus not just on structure, policy, and regulations but on deeper issues of the *culture* of the system.’ (p3)

Consequently, it became apparent that these issues of the time required to develop such teacher education programs and the change of focus to one of a ‘culture of reform’

instead of simply one of ‘project mentality’, are aspects which need serious consideration by all accreditation bodies and other stake-holders for the effective emergence of excellent teacher education programs.

## Our Tapestry

Despite the blocks we encountered during the process, our teacher education re-development model began to emerge during the early stages of the program re-development process, with a focus on myriad sources of consultation (‘threads’) which were woven into a rather organic tapestry in a horizontal fashion:



**Figure 5: Tapestry of Teacher Education Re-development, 2012 (see Glossary for explanation of acronyms and abbreviations).**

This tapestry model (Figure 5) grew somewhat haphazardly. Even though the metaphor of a woven tapestry seemed appropriate early on, the end result was more of a ‘bricolage’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003) as the threads were added at random. During 2012, the Education Team were also engaged in developing Core Values and these would need to be incorporated into the tapestry as we progressed.

The Education Team’s Core Values were the result of staff consultation, and they encompassed the following concepts:

- *Transformative and Informed Practice*
- *Social Justice and Inclusion*
- *A Future Orientation*
- *Community Capacity Building*

As the process developed it became increasingly apparent that these values were the stabilising values amidst the myriad threads we were working at unravelling – and they would be the strengths of our eventual program in that they would reflect an owned process of establishing what was important to us as teacher educators at the University of the Sunshine Coast, in designing and delivery teacher education programs of quality.

## **Pedagogical Symbolism of the Tapestry Metaphor**

For the contributors to this process of program re-development to understand more fully the complexity of the task they were involved in, the teacher education tapestry metaphor expounded here is an example of a cognitive metaphor in that it associates an object to an experience outside the object's environment. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) refer to this type of analogy as a 'conduit metaphor', in that ideas or objects can be put into words or 'containers' and then sent along channels or conduits, 'to a listener who takes that idea or object out of the container and makes meaning of it' (pp3 – 13). The process was enhanced by metaphor of the tapestry in order for all stake-holders 'to make meaning of it' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

The aesthetic qualities of using the tapestry as a metaphor are also of pedagogical value to the teaching team at the University of the Sunshine Coast. In 1873, Vischer asserted that when we look at a painting, we 'feel ourselves into it' through the visual metaphors inherent in the work of art. Whittock (1992) maintains that nonlinguistic metaphors can be the foundation of an empowering experience across all the Visual and Performing Arts, whilst Schroeder (2010) expounds the elevating qualities which can be the result of artistic metaphor:

'From an aesthetic perspective, artists create images that abstract and reify things, people and holy figures. They have honed these skills for centuries, building up a visual vocabulary that expresses our highest hopes and our deepest failures' (p28).

In addition, the type of metaphor chosen can impact significantly on the receiver's perception of the concept/ situation/ process or scenario being portrayed and it can be argued that the tapestry metaphor will have the potential to create an image in the mind's eye of the receiver which enhances what otherwise could be seen to be a dull and bureaucratic process. Sergiovanni (1994) describes the poor image created by educational administrator's choice of metaphors such as 'factories' for their learning environments, when something more community-oriented, creative or altruistic would enhance the receiver's impression. Sergiovanni (1994), maintaining that root metaphors shape the way we understand, reflects on the important use of metaphor in this context by asserting, that you 'can't borrow character, you have to create it' (p214). Creating character to enlighten, empower and inspire is at the root of the tapestry metaphor. Utilising the Dyson (2007) framework to depict the stages in the developing consciousness of the phenomenon posed by the metaphor of tapestry weaving for teacher education program design (as shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3) adds a practical perspective to our assertion that metaphoric use is pedagogically sound.

## **The Tapestry is a Work of Art in Progress**

At the time of writing, working towards the goal of establishing both undergraduate and graduate entry Bachelor of Education programs of quality is an artwork (a tapestry) still in progress. As the deadlines for both internal and external approvals and accreditation for the re-developed programs loom, the big picture task of leading this process for change is accompanied by the crucial micro-managing tasks of cross-checking the details of each course, mapping the professional standards, graduate attributes, generic skills and threshold learning outcomes and complying with all mandated requirements in the submissions. There is a complicating factor of amendments to the University's academic policy and more recent stipulations from AITSL, both of which will impact on the shape and



form of the eventual programs. In addition to this, a re-consideration of the structure of the Bachelor of Education programs for Secondary (currently the Combined Degrees which were going to become Double Degrees) is being undertaken by Academic Board. Thus, internal threads as well as external ones have the potential to be unravelled and re-woven in the emerging tapestry in the months to come.

However, no matter what the precise requirements turn out to be in order for the programs to be approved, keeping sight of the big picture (the emerging final tapestry) is essential. The richness of both the weaving process and the end product will effectively empower teacher educators to deliver both a practical and a visionary product which, it is anticipated, will serve the needs of and inspire future teachers. Even though the current state of play is one of pausing with the weaver's shuttle in hand, observing the process of change and ascertaining whether there can be a successful integration of all required elements in order for us to be able to offer these new programs during 2014 is the focus at the time of writing. It is clear, however, that the integrated, collaborative and creative approach reflected in the metaphor of the tapestry which leads to cognitive understanding of the complex process involved in current re-development obligations regarding teacher education programs, can continue to be used in this program re-development process in the near future, and in other similar contexts.

The process and methodology embarked on in this context has formed the basis for the development of a tapestry-inspired model and will become the focus of further study and application. In the meantime, it remains an important practical consideration for the future as to whether the tapestry of developing teacher education programs can continue to emerge through effective collaboration, within the currently ever-changing internal and external parameters. The end goals of rigour, inspiration and relevance must remain central to the teacher education tapestry loom so that they can have a creative, energising and practical impact on quality learning and teaching in our schools.

At an education staff meeting held at the University of the Sunshine Coast during March 2013, the complexity entailed in the process of re-developing teacher education programs was described at times as a 'series of doors which had to be opened', a 'series of hoops which had to be jumped through' – and, as described in this reflection, a 'tapestry, waiting to be woven carefully with all the essential threads and fibres'. The outcome of this particular discussion served to affirm that teacher educators are passionate about retaining aesthetic qualities of teacher education programs in the midst of compliance requirements. They know that only then, will they be sure that the end results can serve the teachers of tomorrow well, and that we will have reached Dyson's 'Landscape of Transformation' (2007, p 36). And so, it remains a dream and vision, that each teacher education program becomes a.....

*.....tapestry of rich and royal hue,  
An everlasting vision of the ever-changing view,  
A wondrous woven magic in bits of blue and gold,  
A tapestry to feel and see, impossible to hold.*  
Lyrics of *Tapestry* by Carole King, 1971 (Perone, J. 2006)

## Glossary

AECEC	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
QCT	Queensland College of Teachers
SCSEEC	Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency



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