Specialised knowledge and professional judgement in teacher education: an address to teacher educators in South Africa[[1]](#endnote-1)

‘I doubt, whether we, as educators keep in mind with sufficient constancy the fact that the problem of training of teachers is one species of a more generic affair – that of training for professions. Our problem is akin to that of training architects, engineers, doctors, lawyers, etc. Moreover, since (shameful and incredible as it seems) the vocation of teaching is practically the last to recognise the need of specific professional preparation, there is all the more reason for teachers to try to find what they may learn for the more extensive and matured experience of other callings.

This is not me speaking. It was John Dewey, in 1904, meditating on the relation of theory to practice in education. One hundred and eight years later, we are still struggling to establish teaching as a recognizable profession and with what it means for teacher educators to train teachers for a profession. As the Cinderella of professions we still have to find our fairy godmother who will somehow transform what we do into a carriage that gets us to the ball and dancing with the prince. Only, in our post modern times, we don’t believe in fairy godmothers, and the prince is now the state who employs us as civil servants and beats us up if we get out of line. Why has it taken so long? Maybe teaching is not a profession after all, maybe we have been fooling ourselves, and all we really work with are cinders. I don’t think so. Ultimately we work with kinders, not cinders, and our profession does amazing things with children and the teachers who educate them, lights a fire in them, but until we, as teacher educators, work out what it is teachers specifically do with children, that no-one else can do, that serves society in a way that commits to continually improving both the service and the knowledge base teachers work from, then the training of teachers for a profession will continue to elude our grasp.

Hargreaves makes a distinction between ‘professionalization’ as a focus on teaching as work; and ‘professionalism’ as a focus on teaching as a calling with internal qualities and controls. The first – professionalization - focuses on exogenous factors, relating to how teaching is engaged in a field of societal power relations that negotiate its working conditions and terms of employment. The second – professionalism – focuses on endogenous factors that relate to how the teaching profession defines and regulates its own practices. Trade unions fight for the professionalization of teaching; teaching councils establish, maintain and improve the professionalism of teaching. The two processes are intimately related. The more able a profession is to define its own field of practice as having an abstract knowledge base, specialised set of skills, and professional ethical code; the more able it is to negotiate exogenous struggles with endogenous capacities. I want to focus specifically on what it means for teacher education to have an abstract and specialized knowledge base, for it is in the training of teachers that we establish their professional credentials, and if we, as teacher educators, do not know what our specialized knowledge base is, then we are going to struggle to establish the professionalism of teaching.

There are a number of powerful reasons that give a negative answer to the question ‘Does teacher education have a specialized knowledge base?’ Firstly, there is the hard reality of what teaching is as work; as labour paid for, and accountable to, the state. Teachers have to supply what is demanded in terms of teaching time, specific location in a school, and curriculum delivery. Teacher training needs to prepare students for the world of work that faces them in schools, not some idealised profession that only exists in the minds of old professors who remember some out-dated code. Struggle over conditions of employment is far more important than some abstract code of ethics; doing your work and meeting your performance outcomes more imperative than committing yourself to some nebulous set of principles for teaching. Secondly, teacher education is split by various ideological positions that refuse to engage with each other, that insist on the moral high ground whilst denigrating others as misinformed and as inflicting untold harm on children. We see this in the chasm separating progressivism and formalism in teacher education in the USA; and in the split between learner centred and teacher centred education in South Africa. This position is aggravated by a third problem: the inability of the ‘profession’ to agree on what its methods of research and validation are; so that any researched position can be subverted by counter claims that it is ‘too statistical’, ‘too qualitative’, ‘not replicable’ and so forth, taking away a key method to consolidate a specialized knowledge base. A fourth argument is that we have mistaken what the process of teacher education entails by linking it to a profession; it is a craft learnt through a tacit imbibing of skills, attitudes and demeanour in a master apprentice relation. Student teachers learn how to teach by doing teaching under the watchful eye of a master teacher, not by learning an abstract body of knowledge. A fifth argument is that teaching is far too complex a problem space to ever secure a specialised knowledge base that can rise above the contingencies of context and the individualization of difference. Teacher education has to accept the reality of this complexity and teach teachers how to be adaptable and responsive to whatever the situation thrown at them demands. Allied to this argument is a sixth position that points to teacher education having far too many little bits that are all needed to deal with the complexity of teaching, resulting in an emptying of genuine specialization and a doing of lots of hollow elements that have no real substance. By trying to cover everything that the complexity of teaching demands, no coherent induction into the deep and principled knowledge base of the profession is given, that is if there were such a thing in the first place.

So perhaps the reason why Dewey’s old call to professionalism in teacher education still sounds so contemporary is because it’s an impossible task that cannot be achieved. Perhaps we should accept that teaching is not a profession and that we, as teacher educators, need to move away from its fairy tale expectations. Perhaps, but before we undertake such a move, lets first interrogate what a specialised and abstract knowledge base for teacher education could mean. Its not the only indicator of professionalism, but there are good reasons to claim that it is a key indicator. Nick Taylor (2011), Jeanne Gamble (2012) and Yael Shalem (2012) all point to this zone and use the work of Abbott on professions to mark the point. Here is Abbott’s point as highlighted by Jeanne Gamble in her excellent literature review on teacher professionalism (p34):

For me this characteristic of abstraction is the one that best identifies the professions. For abstraction is the quality that sets inter-professional competition apart from competition among occupations in general. Any occupation can obtain licensure (e.g. beauticians) or develop an ethics code (e.g. real estate). But only a knowledge system governed by abstractions can redefine its problems and tasks, defend them from interlopers and seize new problems (Abbott, 1988, pp 8-9)

What a professional knowledge base governed by abstraction looks like is harder to articulate. The classical distinction between knowing that and knowing how helps get us on our way by enabling a double focus: firstly on abstract content knowledge as a specialized ‘knowing that’; and secondly on professional judgement as a specialised ‘knowing how’. I think of the work of Ben Parker, Wally Morrow, and more recently Joe Muller (2012) who have meditated on Gilbert Ryle’s distinction, but it is mainly Muller’s work that has subtly informed the following discussion.

Abstract content knowledge is a strange beast because it is both abstract and specific at the same time. Many of us are suspicious of abstraction because it removes us from the richness of a concrete world, resulting in what E. P Thomson called, in a different context, ‘the poverty of theory’. Abstraction strips the world of its multitudinous characteristics to enable a focus on a generalization that can hold across time space contexts. This ability is crucial for a profession. It must be able to work for different people at different times in different places who all need something special that only the profession can provide. But abstraction normally comes at a cost, and here I am not thinking what a professional charges, but the loss of particularity. Allow me a demonstration of what generic forms of abstraction do to a real, alive and kicking teacher.

When we perceive a teacher, we abstract from the complexity of an individual person a set a characteristics that are common to teacher 1, teacher 2, and teacher 3. We leave out features that are peculiar to the individual and do not relate to teaching. When we say that teachers are professionals, only those characteristics teacher have in common with profession 1, profession 2 and profession 3 are highlighted. What teaching has in common with engineering, medicine, law, and accounting comes into focus, and the other peculiarities of teaching are backgrounded. When we say that professionals are workers, then reference is made to what professionals have in common with other kinds of workers, specifically their labour. Notice that as we reach higher and higher up the abstraction ladder two things happen. The application range gets increasingly wider. There are more teachers than one individual, more professionals than teachers (assuming teaching is a profession), and more workers than professionals. But wider reach comes at the cost of loss of particularity and a stripping away of characteristics until only one general characteristic is left that applies to everything. Of what use is such abstraction? Does it not turn what is most precious and nuanced into something generic and faceless? We cannot step away from the demand that specialised content knowledge is abstract because it has to rise above local instances and personal experiences, otherwise it is lost in the particularity of private, personal, everyday use. But in rising above the concrete everyday world, it cannot drift into empty space. The abstraction has to have density, focus, sharpness. Where do we find such a creature that is both abstract and dense in teacher education?

The first place to look is our school subject specializations. Here dense abstractions come tumbling out in profusion. Photosynthesis, velocity, evolution, tectonic movement etc etc, all have dense sets of concepts and connections packed inside of them in a special, subject specific way that still carry across different contexts, times and places. There is some agreement within most subjects as to what the core concepts are that need elaboration. That’s why we find these concepts in most curricula across the world, but there is nothing generic about the concept that drifts off into some overly general abstraction. Many teacher education institutions take this approach towards bolstering the professionalism of teachers and of teacher education. If the teacher is a subject specialist, she has a specialised knowledge base that is both abstract and dense, and there is some justification for arguing that she is a professional. Its in the detailed abstractions of the subject that specialization of consciousness occurs, for it is here that one has to be abstract, precise and rigorous both around the nature of the concept and how it connects to other concepts. A teacher educator who is a subject specialist can find dense abstraction within the subject.

Are there other specialised knowledge bases in teacher education? The second place to look is in phase specialization. Foundation phase has a radically different specialised knowledge base to senior phase, both in terms of the nature and structure of the ‘subjects’ taught – learning to read is not a subject, its not structured like a subject, its not taught like a subject, it has a different way of organising its knowledge base around the process of a young child learning to read. The assumption that any teacher can teach foundation phase because they have a teaching qualification or experience in the higher grades is dangerous. Teaching to read in English is not an earlier, simpler and easier form of teaching English as a subject. It’s a different specialisation.

In both subject specializations and phase specializations, teacher educators find an abstract and dense knowledge base packed with meticulous concepts that have highly specific ways of connecting and ordering, necessitating sustained periods of concentrated study and engagement to enable effective understanding. But what if we move one level up the abstraction ladder and ask about pedagogy or curriculum in general across subjects and phases. Is there not a danger that we work generically rather than specifically at this higher level, is it not more professional to rather focus on subject specific pedagogies, and phase specific pedagogies, rather than imagine we can theorise about pedagogy in its own terms? Do we want to waste the precious time needed to specialize the consciousness of our students with broad, all purpose generalizations about pedagogy, curriculum and assessment? Of what use is a tool like Bloom’s taxonomy really? What can its broad basic levels of knowledge complexity and cognitive demand tell us about the real complexities of a lesson or a test? Can we find an equivalent type of dense abstraction for theories of pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment as found in subject and phase specializations; or do we enter into an empty generic world of abstraction floating high above the detailed and intricate engagement of professionals with the complexity of individual cases. I don’t want to be overly dismissive of generic abstractions. It is of some use to know of general pedagogic forms that circulate around ‘learner centred’ or ‘teacher centred’ descriptors; of integrated or separated types of curricula; of formative and summative types of assessment. But does a concept like ‘integrated curriculum’ have a similar kind of density to the subject specific concepts pointed to earlier, like photosynthesis for example. When we start to unpack what ‘integrated curriculum’ looks like, how many other concepts are attached to it, and how rigourous are the connections between the concepts? I know that there is an aversion to Basil Bernstein’s work in South Africa, and I have some sympathy for those who feel his particular writing style is arcane. But if we want to claim that teacher education is a specialization that rises above specific subject and phase specialization, then we have to step out of a generic mode at this level and begin to work with the density of abstraction demanded. I don’t mind if my colleagues in Teacher Education object to Bernstein, I mind if they refuse to specialise their consciousness and work with an abstract knowledge base at the level of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. I am not thinking here of a knowledge of sociology, psychology and philosophy of education. On an abstraction ladder that takes teacher education as its base, these singular disciplines are far removed from the practice of teaching, with a lot more work consequently needed to tie their own dense sets of conceptual networks to teacher education. Sadly, it is often the case that sociological, psychological and philosophical concepts give the illusion that we have a dense set of educational concepts, creating a gaping hole at precisely the level where we need to develop our abstract knowledge base – at the level of how education works with curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

A specialized ‘what’ is not enough to stake a claim towards professionalism, for it is possible to organise and teach specialised content in a scripted fashion, turning teachers into deliverers. An ability to make worthwhile decisions in a complex problem space is also needed to demonstrate professionalism and this brings us to the need for a specialised knowing ‘how’ as well as specialised knowing ‘what’. If we stick to Dewey’s advice at the beginning of this paper and look at how other professions work with this dimension, then it is professional judgement that springs to the fore in medicine, accounting, engineering and law. Yes, even accounting. They point to the audit as a complex, problem solving space that needs careful and nuanced professional judgement. Interestingly, they also point to the need for professional scepticism, especially more recently with the auditing scandals that led to the demise of Arthur Anderson. Scepticism is a much-undervalued tool in a world that celebrates relativism. It asks you to pay attention to what should be left out as well as what should be included. To make a judgement you firstly have to see what is relevant to the case and what is not. Then you have to know how to combine what is relevant into a coherent case. This case must be built up in such a way that it can be linked to other cases recognized by the profession as instantiating key principles, precedents, and injunctions that make up the core of what the profession has learnt is vital. Yael Shalem has provided a powerful meditation on professional judgement based on the work of Abbott that circulates around the points made above and I strongly recommend her article. Doctors work out what the particular case of a patient is and refer to other cases to make a judgement based on a set of inferences that work between the particular case and an established lexicon of cases. Depending on the complex combination of context and symptoms, only some of which are relevant, the doctor forms a diagnosis that is particular to the case at hand but leans on the collected knowledge of the profession. Be careful of that old Russian doctor who always pulls out vodka no matter what the symptom. He might make you feel good for a while, but not much else is going to happen. Listen to the diagnoses of teacher educators when working with individual cases of teaching and learning and see if all they provide is one medicine, like learner centred education (or teacher centred education), no matter what the symptoms. This is why Shulman and Linda Darling Hammond push for teacher education to take on a case based methodology, because it both provides a specialised knowledge base in the cases, and a need for professional judgement both in the construction of a specific case and how it relates to other cases.

We have numerous examples of this in teacher education and I would like to highlight two – one from continuing professional development and one from initial teacher education.

Lesson study originated in Japanese primary schools and provides a particularly apt example of professionalism in continuing professional development. A group of teachers get together, identify gaps in their young students learning and then set out a goal to bridge the gap. This is often put in the form of the students’ activity of learning, not specific content. The content of the lessons are specifically addressed to impact on the actual behaviours and activities of learning and are drawn up in a communal way, resulting in a high quality set of activity resources. A teacher then tries it out in a real classroom while other teachers observe its specific impact on the learners. Improvements are discussed and often another teacher then teaches the improved lesson to check whether the improvements actually work. The whole process is recorded and filed, with the lessons moving into the repertoire of all the teachers involved and then shared with other schools in the locality. Experts in the area are also consulted. What is hard to get a sense of in this brief description is how detailed the engagement is. When working out the learning activities, the teachers develop a set of predictors around what the expected student reactions are and what their responses should be to these reactions both in terms of specific subject content and student skills. See ‘Lesson Study: An introduction’ by Yoshida and Fenandex at [www.globaledresources.com](http://www.globaledresources.com) for a presentation that gives a good practitioner feel for how lesson study works. Note this is not an individual form of professionalism where a teacher claims, on the basis of her professionalism, independence, privacy and a right to do what she wants behind the shut door of her classroom. It’s a public, shared resource that has gone through a process where professional judgement and dense forms of abstract knowledge have come together in a detailed, concrete and specific way that improves the service teachers offer their children. No wonder Hiebert, Gallimore and Stigler (2002) celebrate lesson study as an archetypal example of a knowledge base for the teaching profession.

Dewey, in ‘The relation of theory to practice in education’ points to laboratory schools as providing a clear example of how a principled knowledge base intersects with a concrete particular case is a way that illuminates both. Laboratory schools are particularly germane to us in South Africa, given that the Department of Higher Education and Training along with the University of Johannesburg are exploring the possibility of teaching schools. Dewey warned against a simple apprenticeship model that focuses on giving teachers in training a working command of the necessary tools of their profession, control of the techniques of class instruction and management, skill and proficiency in the work of teaching. The focus on making an efficient workman on the spot so they can go into schools and get on with the job. Counter to this, Dewey set up the laboratory point of view where practice work is used as an instrument in making real and vital theoretical instruction, knowledge of subject matter and principles of education. Rather than using the time of training for extensive and detailed practice, the focus is on typical and intensive cases that give the student independent mastery of practical skills and insight into the rules of combination. The laboratory school strips the school of many of its external complexities, especially around issues of keeping order in the class, and focuses the student teacher on getting the principles of the profession, rather than immediate proficiency. Here we can see a focus on developing early levels of principled subject proficiency and judgement, rather than immersion in practice or a drifting into theory.

Lets step back for a moment and see where we currently are. We are asking whether teacher education has a specialised knowledge base in a context where such a thing is vital for the professionalization and professionalism of teaching but highly contested with a number of naysayers arguing against teaching being a profession. To construct a positive answer, we have looked for a form of knowledge abstraction that is not only generic and empty but specific and dense, and found it in subject specific knowledge, phase specific knowledge, and one abstract level above this, more general forms of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. We have recognised that, on its own, an abstract ‘knowing what’ does not a profession make and that a specialized ‘knowing how’ is also needed, and we found such a creature in professional judgement that is able to both sceptically leave out irrelevant elements and include relevant elements into a case that has both internal coherence and refers outwards to other cases that make up a professional core. This means that a specialised knowing how is also empty if it does not work with a specialized knowing what. . We then detailed two examples of professional practice, from continuing professional development and initial teacher education by exploring how both lesson study and laboratory schools work in a principled way to develop both subject specialization and professional judgement rather than attempting to get workers ready for and doing their jobs.

I would now like to set up two test cases and place them within the developing context that is South Africa with a bimodal education system placed within a bi modal economy. By bimodal economy I mean a country where most are poor and only a few are rich, with not much movement between the two; and by bimodal education I mean a system where around 80% of children are in schools that condemn them to failure almost to a person; and 20% of schools that, almost to a person, enable passing and a moving on to the next phase of the system. Professional judgement works in a context specific manner. It applies abstract knowledge to concrete situations in ways that recognise the complexity of the case. So what should teacher education look like in such a bimodal world? The first thing we should take seriously are the kinds of teachers we have in most of our schools and the types of pedagogy and subject knowledge they have themselves experienced and enact. Even though we had a brief period that experimented with outcomes based and learner centred education, these practices did not cement themselves in any meaningful way across our schools. Traditional forms of pedagogy remained because they were embedded in the habits and way of being of our teachers. Where are the detailed studies of these more traditional forms of pedagogy, not in terms of a dismissive duality that makes rote learning with call response rhythms evil and the teacher as facilitator good, but one that looks at traditional forms of pedagogy as one particular type that has its logic, uses and problematics. What are forms of pedagogy that are close to teaching as chorus, but somehow push one step beyond it. What of pushing for more complexity in content sequencing whilst keeping the same rhythm, pace and chorus driven teacher learner relationship? Note that I am not talking about subject specific cases here, we are one level of abstraction beyond subjects and phases, looking at different types of pedagogies, but still in a detailed and specifically engaged manner. How can we take traditional forms of pedagogy that many of our students and teachers are comfortable with, and shift one of the many variables that make it up – in this instance keeping the chorus relationship and pacing the same but varying the sequencing, so that the chorus relationship makes small inferential leaps with each call response. The learners think and move quickly, with each jump small enough to make on its own, with a longer and planned end result emerging as the lesson unfolds. In some ways keeping the pacing quick is counter intuitive, especially as some research shows that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from slower pacing that gives them a chance to really grapple with the issue at hand and develop understanding. But slow pacing is not an inviolable rule: the smaller the cognitive gaps in the sequence, the faster the students can go, enabling a pedagogy that is similar to the traditional chorus, but more cognitively challenging. It’s a highly specialised skill to work out how to break up a lesson sequence into small jumps that build into a longer course, and because of this these kinds of lessons are mostly scripted by curriculum experts over a long period of time, with trials showing up inadequacies and misunderstandings, until a lesson is developed that works. I hope you find such a pedagogy worthwhile, or at least interesting, and I hope this interest would hold even as I label the pedagogy as Direct Instruction where teachers learn a script and then implement it in class. Its not that Direct Instruction does not have its dangers and poisons, just like we found OBE to have poisons when taken for the wrong reasons. There is a diagnostic art to education, just as there is in medicine, law, engineering and accounting, but to get there we need to move beyond subject specific content knowledge as teacher educators and into an abstract knowledge base of curriculum and pedagogy that is not generic and vague but specific and engaged. I am not saying that Direct Instruction is the answer here; it has many issues to do with the types of knowledge it can work with, the level of complexity it can reach, the impact on teaching as a profession that works with scripts, the attrition of doing this kind of pedagogy day in and out. But Direct Instruction is not even on our horizon, and when I have raised it, often there are responses of outright horror and rejection from supposedly experienced teacher educators who have no idea what it really entails or what the research around it says. Direct Instruction does things which other pedagogies don’t do, and rather than stand on one side of an ideological divide shouting at the other, we should ensure we are up to our professional task of understanding in detail what the range of pedagogies are and when they are medicinal or poisonous. Only then will we shake the Russian doctor syndrome of recommending one kind of pedagogy no matter what the situation is, because we have personal experience that it works and a moral sense that it is right. Only then will our abstract knowledge base and professional judgement move up one level into the details of education as an object of focus larger than the subjects it contains, and begin to work with abstractions that are dense, sharp and have both analytical and practical purchase that are of use when engaging in the professional practice of teacher education.

The second test case is the transposition of lesson study as conducted in Japan to South Africa. As an archetypal demonstration of continuing professional development should it not be trialled over here? It’s an exciting idea, especially for teachers who already have a specialised content knowledge base and a strongly developed sense of professional judgement. But for teachers who have mainly experienced forms of rote learning and have low levels of specialised content knowledge it will be hard to do lesson study properly, especially initially. Strange as it may seem, doing a number of scripted lessons first to develop a sense of what a well structured, sequenced and paced lesson feels like could be a first step down the long road towards professionalism in teaching in South Africa, and could result eventually in lesson study becoming standard practice in a country where Ubuntu is understood in a professional way as shared expert practice.

What do the six objections to teacher education working with a specialized knowledge base look like after this elaboration? Teaching will struggle to shake its status as labour, partly due to how many teachers we have in the state system and the economics of affordability, as well as the undeniable reality that almost all teachers are employed by the state and have to work within its confines. But this struggle to professionalise teaching can be separated off from a more internal drive to define what the profession is that starts with us as teacher educators and our ability to understand what it means to produce an ethical teacher able to use professional judgement with a specialized knowledge base that is abstract and dense in concrete and specific instances. The struggle to professionalize teaching needs internal forms of professionalism to give the struggle a heart that goes beyond worker rights.

Nor will the ideological divide between progressive and formalist camps go away very easily. It will only begin to change as we produce lived examples of mixed pedagogies working in our classes and teach our students to think on their feet and diagnose what is needed depending on the educational context at hand. Building up a set of cases within our profession that illustrates different pedagogies will assist.

The contestation over research methods and forms of validation will not go away either until we undertake, as professionals, to understand what the different forms of validation are, of when they are worthwhile, mistaken, incorrectly carried out, overly confident, simply wrong, or astonishingly revealing and key to the profession. Our professional judgement as teacher educators needs to have built within it a passion for good research with a sceptical edge that can discriminate between worthwhile and poor research and has mechanisms to vet and include new breakthroughs and unexplored variations as well as take on board serious and effective critiques. Here I think of examples like John Hattie, who has used educational research to good effect in working out which pedagogic strategies are the most effective in improving results, and which are not, and then used this information to improve both teacher training and professional improvement. There are limitations to his meta study approach, especially as it gives a list of what is effective and not so effective as an average, cutting off questions of different context, different subjects, different students as well as not providing a coherent account of how the different elements hang together in a coherent whole. But his research is useful and illuminating if used with a critical edge.

The fourth objection that teaching is a craft now gets incorporated into a bigger picture that has craft as one case of how teacher education happens, and places it within a larger set of cases that teacher education works with. It is the responsibility of teacher education to understand how craft actually works, of what its advantages and disadvantages are, and of when to use it in the education of teachers and when not to. The danger is when a teacher educator sings the virtues of craft without being adept in what the other possibilities of teacher education are.

The fifth concern that teaching is too complex a space to have an abstract knowledge base is also incorporated within a professional project precisely with the recognition and celebration that working in a complex problem space is a part of what makes teaching a profession, only we have to teach how to do this in a principled and informed way. That’s what professionals do – make nuanced, informed and principled judgements in a complex problem space.

The sixth concern of teacher education emptying itself out as it tries to do too many subjects is an on-going struggle in all our institutions. There are personal and historical trajectories that often force the time-tabler’s hands, with lecturers insisting they do what they personally find interesting rather than what the profession states is necessary. This stems from a weak and conservative form of academic freedom that refuses to recognise what it means to be engaged in the project of producing a profession. Medicine, law, engineering and accounting all take seriously what their professional bodies state are the key knowledge and skill outcomes of the profession and then undertake to ensure their students are inducted into the practices of the profession in a principled way. It is ironic that, as the supposed specialists in what the different forms of education are, we don’t take seriously what our sister professions recognise as good practice and that we are practically the last to recognise the need of specific professional preparation. As Dewey said, there is all the more reason for teachers to try to find what they may learn from the more extensive and matured experience of other callings. I would like to add, that as specialists in the field of education, we should understand the process of professionalism better than anyone else, for that is our profession. We need to seriously undertake the task of specialising our own consciousness as teacher educators rather than just focussing on specializing the consciousness of our student teachers.

1. Plenary presentation given at the Teacher Education Conference at the University of Pretoria, 19th September, 2012. I have kept the speech form for this paper but added endnotes to provide more sustained elaborations and references. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)