

2013

## The Moral Imagination in Pre-service Teachers' Ethical Reasoning

Amy Chapman

*Australian Catholic University, amy.chapman@acu.edu.au*

Daniella Forster

*University of Newcastle, daniella.forster@newcastle.edu.au*

Rachel Buchanan

*University of Newcastle, Rachel.Buchanan@newcastle.edu.au*

---

### Recommended Citation

Chapman, A., Forster, D., & Buchanan, R. (2013). The Moral Imagination in Pre-service Teachers' Ethical Reasoning. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(5).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2013v38n5.8>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.  
<http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol38/iss5/9>

## **The Moral Imagination in Pre-service Teachers' Ethical Reasoning**

Amy Chapman  
Australian Catholic University  
Daniella Forster  
Rachel Buchanan  
University of Newcastle

*Abstract: This paper will discuss findings from a teaching project pilot study designed to investigate the ways in which pre-service teachers understand and reason through ethical tensions perceived to arise during their final professional experience situation. The project utilised an assessment strategy based on the 'community of inquiry' model to document the ways in which pre-service teachers understand and reason through ethical tensions perceived to arise in their profession. Whilst there is significant research examining the pedagogical development of pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills after their internship experience, there is little research examining their experience of ethical tensions, nor ways to further enhance pre-service teachers' ethical reasoning. This research aims to provide points of reflection regarding how pre-service teachers process and reason through situations and indicates directions learning opportunities more aligned with their experiences and expressed needs*

### **Introduction**

#### **Teaching Ethics in Pre-Service Teacher Education**

In this paper we examine data gathered in a teacher education project pilot, which studied secondary pre-service teachers' experiences and understandings of ethical tensions that were perceived to arise during their final professional experience situation. The rationale for this project rests predominantly in the difficulty associated with responding effectively to ethically salient workplace situations and the use of institutionalised Codes of Ethics to defend moral views. Principles and values provided by professional organisations can often be in conflict, and ethical dilemmas are, by nature and definition, not solvable in an entirely satisfactory way. Whilst all States and Territories in Australia have a teachers' code of ethics or conduct, research demonstrates that teachers cannot be expected to 'learn' codes of ethics but may tend to treat them superficially and 'pay lip-service' to them without genuine engagement or care (Terhart, 1998, p. 439). Evidence suggests that Australian pre-service teachers consider ethics removed from daily working life; they feel that they have little 'ownership' of professional ethics and even though most had experienced ethical dilemmas, the greater majority were unable to distinguish these from poor practice (Coombe, 1997).

Further, practicing teachers who are consciously aware of their moral agency have been found to experience a 'fading' of ethical knowledge and a diminished sense of the moral dimensions of their actions (Campbell, 2003). In Australia, a recent comparative study of codes of ethics and conduct has demonstrated that whilst there is a shared family of values in teaching, these values are presented as static and their application is riddled with ambiguity and tensions in deference to authority. In general, there is an absence of support for the development of ethical knowledge in serving teachers, such as through opportunities for professional dialogue on questions of value (Forster, 2012). Interpretations of ethical value can be difficult, particularly given the cultural diversity of our schools and the need to justifiably defend professional decisions.

Previous accounts of teacher education have highlighted a deep appreciation of the value-laden nature of teaching, as well as teaching as a moral craft, and teachers' own sense of their work as moral in nature (Beyer, 1997; Campbell, 1997). More recently, it has been suggested that ethics education requires a multi-dimensional approach to avoid problems of relativism and moral despair, but must also avoid overemphasis of highly structured ethical reasoning, which can undervalue narrative moral sensibility (Warnick & Silverman, 2011). Pre-service teachers can be supported in a number of ways to develop collegial dialogue around questions of ethics. Professional ethics can take the form of one-off workshops based around real-to-school-life ethical challenges to professionalism and accessible online resources such as video conversations with teachers, who use their code of ethics to talk through issues of moral relevance and researcher-teacher collaborations, which can be focused on ethically charged professional experiences. Sustained conversations, such as those that take place in teacher education programs, often provide an introduction to moral theories and processes for engaging in ethical decision-making but raise pedagogical challenges for teacher-educators.

In Australia, teacher education around ethics is sometimes based within the pedagogy of 'community of inquiry,' which encourages critical, creative and respectful peer-facilitated discussion of stimulus issues (Burgh, Field, & Freakley, 2006). Another approach (Haynes, 1998) uses worked case studies and the Borromean Knot decision-making model, drawing on multiple ethical theories (Care, Consequences and Consistency), as interpretive lenses to draw out tensions. Others, situated in early childhood teacher education, offer the Ethical Response Cycle, which is a reflective cycle that enables pre-service teachers to work through legal and professional considerations, basic ethical principles, multiple ethical theories, intuitive responses, shared justifications, documentation procedures and retrospective evaluation (Newman & Pollnitz, 2005). Professional bodies such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching and the NSW Department of Education tend to offer different forms of decision-making models that are more linear in nature. The teacher education course (from which the data in this paper is sourced) combines the above approaches to provide pre-service teachers with case studies, a variety of decision-making models and open-ended assessment tasks within a community of inquiry context that is aimed at pre-service teachers facilitating their own discussions and exerting greater autonomy over assessment topics and personal learning outcomes.

There are perennial problems associated with the teaching of value-laden content. In a recent review of teacher education in professional ethics, Warnick and Silverman (2011) point out that educating teachers in a way that encourages autonomous moral thinking but avoids relativism and moral despair is a particularly difficult challenge. As Johnson (1993) puts it: "I had all the arguments, philosophical and theological, one could imagine. I had moral ideals a plenty. I had all of the moral laws I could use, and then some. *And I couldn't decide what was 'right'*" (p. 186). These authors argue teacher-educators are right to take a mixed approach that incorporates: case-studies; a range of moral theories as ways to 'see'

moral problems; guided dialogue to communicate moral convictions; reflective journals for self-analysis and codes of ethics to provide normative foundations. However, these program aspects also “tend to pull in different directions” (p. 276). Hence, the use of ethical guidelines is recommended (such as those indicated above) to give teachers ‘limits and tools’ to prevent distortion of judgment.

Since moral matters are so complex, they require interpretation through multiple frames or theoretical positions in order to cut between “relativism ... and the kind of absolutism that seems to follow the quest for ethical rules” (Bullough, 2011, p. 28). Thus we are interested to examine how pre-service teachers practically demonstrate their ethical knowledge. Jensen (2007) found that knowledge-seeking in professions such as teaching was characterised by an unfolding process, which forms a “back and forth looping” (p. 496) of theory and practical considerations. Others have shown how teachers’ practical knowledge has a strong element of “the self” in which idiosyncratic practice is embedded within and justified by reference to concepts of intuitive plausibility, social utility, rational standards, rules of practice and, as emotionally compelling via notions of hope and commitment (Tirri, Husu, & Kansanen, 1999).

An ability to imagine has been posited as one way in which teachers can negotiate such competing positions. Johnson (1996) contends it is our capacity to imagine morally significant conditions and possibilities that actually support moral understanding. From this, moral education hence entails learning to utilise certain imaginative capacities to work through the complex territory of laws, codes of ethics and various stakeholder positions, including our own, in the educative domain. Joseph (2003) posits the advantages of drawing on the notion of the moral imagination as one possibility for drawing together accounts of the moral nature of teaching that spans reflective practice, professional ethics, values spirituality, moral curriculum, and that emphasises moral praxis. Werhane (1999) defines the concept of moral imagination as: “The ability in particular circumstances to discover and evaluate possibilities, not merely determined by that circumstance, or limited by its operative mental models, or framed by a set of rules, or rule governed concerns” (Werhane 1999, p. 93). Later, Werhane (1999) adds:

Moral imagination entails an ability to understand a context or a set of activities from a number of different perspectives, the actualizing of new possibilities that are not context-dependent, and the instigation of the process of evaluating those possibilities from a moral point of view (p. 5).

Given the variety of perspectives on the notion of the moral imagination, Joseph conceptualises it in terms of an integration of the cognitive and affective domains comprising the components of: perception, rationality, reflection, emotion and caring for self (Joseph, 2003, p. 8). Such features, Joseph argues, comprise “the intricacies of teachers’ work and their practice as moral educators” (p. 8).

Perception	The ability of people to become aware of others and their needs, desires, interests, wishes, hopes, and potentials.
Rationality	Realistic understanding of situations calling for moral response and our knowledge of the particular issues and problems at stake. This is our ability to be flexible and not just apply a moral value or rule to every situation.
Reflection	The continuing examination of beliefs and actions and consideration of how they affect other people and the questioning of the origins of our beliefs and values.
Emotion	Feelings that permit sympathetic and empathic connection with and responsiveness to others. The catalyst for moral action is the capacity for feeling.
Caring for self	Affirmation of individuals' need for their lives to have meaning and purpose. Awareness that as moral agents, individuals have needs that must be considered.

**Table 1: The components of moral imagination. (Joseph, 2003, p. 16)**

In order to cultivate and empirically explore the moral imagination of pre-service teachers, we drew on the 'community of inquiry' (Burgh et al. 2006), a pedagogical model based in deliberative democratic ideals and drawn from Deweyan notions of genuine inquiry. A fundamental premise of this model is that there are good reasons to struggle against the obstacles to thinking well, which exist both within the individual and outside in social norms and practices (Dewey, 1978). Having what Dewey calls a 'vital mental career' can form an integral part of a professional's sense of trust in his or herself. The model aims to support independent learning, high-level communication and inquiry skills in participating pre-service teachers. More importantly, however, it aims to develop an appreciation of real (i.e. lived) complexity, which is a feature of the 'ethical environment' (Haydon, 2006). By providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage with authentic assessment tasks through the community of inquiry model, it was hoped researchers would be able to gain access to qualitative data on the reasoning processes of pre-service teachers and their readiness for the complex challenge of understanding and responding to ethical issues associated with teaching.

## Method

The study conducted involved 136 fourth-year secondary pre-service teachers from one regional university campus. Pre-service teachers were enrolled in a compulsory final year that combined professional practice and ethics courses, which were delivered in tandem with their final year 'internship experience' at a local high school (a 10-week block of practical teaching). Course content included preparing for professional practice and the provision of problem solving frameworks to help them identify and discuss ethical dilemmas. Assessments were focused on providing pre-service teachers with an opportunity to describe and analyse ethical tensions that arose during 'internship experience'.

Research ethics approval was obtained with participation solicited by email and being entirely voluntary. Data was collected through the use of peer facilitated group discussion seminars that formed the basis of the final assessment for the course. This dimension of the course was modelled on Burgh et al.'s (2006) pedagogy of a community of inquiry. The 'community' aspect of the discussion is built by the management of the tutor/facilitator during semester tutorials where pre-service teachers, in small groups, learn to self-manage and contribute critically and constructively to discussion about topical issues in teacher ethics as para-professionals. Thus our data set comprised six 'community of inquiry' groups with 10-14 participants in each, with group discussion lasting approximately one hour. Participants

were asked to respond to ethically charged case studies based on their knowledge from the course and drew on their internship experiences. The community of inquiry discussion consisted of an inner circle (between 5-7 pre-service teachers directly involved in discussion) and an outer circle (a matching number of peer assessors acting as supportive colleagues who made comments and asked questions based on observations of the discussion). An academic staff member acted as a facilitator, adding additional comments and intervening in discussion, particularly when the discussion took on a more technical or pedagogical nature rather than focusing on the ethical tensions presented. Discussions were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data in this pilot study consisted of the occurrences of articulated reasoning that demonstrated pre-service teachers use their moral imagination. Using the framework developed by Joseph (2003), we sought to apply these discrete categories of the moral imagination, as well as to explore some of its blind spots and limitations.

'Imaginative reasoning' was identified using a combination of recognised and emergent themes (Glasser, 1992). The research team analysed the data set as individual researchers, reading the complete set of forums for expressions of themes before meeting regularly throughout to discuss and moderate an initial analysis. This coding system was then transferred into NVivo qualitative data analysis software and coding was applied to the complete data set by one researcher.

## Results

The nature of the data set provided insight into the range of reasoning strategies employed by pre-service teachers. We began with Joseph's (2003) five main categories for coding, yet aimed to build a more nuanced picture of these components. Instances invoking the moral imagination were singly coded into the five categories provided by Joseph; where a contribution could fit across one or more categories, it was coded into the category of best fit. Blind spots and limitations of the categories are explored in the subsection of 'additional elements'.

From these categories, 'perception' was invoked most frequently in total across the six sessions, occurring an average of 12.8 times per session. 'Rationality' was the next most frequent, occurring an average of 10.3 times per session; this was followed by 'reflection', which occurred an average of 5.2 times per session; and 'caring for self' occurred an average of 4.2 times per session. The least frequent category was 'emotion' which only occurred 6 times in total – an average of only one invocation per session.

### Perception

In our analysis, perception was deemed to be occurring when pre-service teachers articulated recognition of others needs or when they expressed a belief in doing something that was in the best interests of students. Perception was also deemed to be exhibited when pre-service teachers were engaged in imaginative perspective taking, when they interpreted dilemmas as an encounter with the 'other', and when they expressed a belief that they could (or should) be trying to 'fix students'. That is, they were making sense of situations in particular ways. Within all sessions, these elements were present, especially imaginative perspective taking; pre-service teachers were trying to understand the parameters of the dilemmas that they had been presented with by taking or looking at the perspectives of

students and fellow teachers. The following comments reflect some of the ways in which pre-service teachers demonstrated perception:

*I think it's equity versus equality. I mean you can provide equality for the kids, it's not going to mean it's going to be the same rule. If it's like literally they didn't have access to that, they couldn't get that in place, then you need to provide extra for that to be equal for that kid at certain time (participant, community five)*

Many participants put the needs of their students first in their ethical deliberations; some connected this perception response with rationality by invocation of UN Rights of the Child:

*But then if we go back to the UN conventions on the rights of the child then his rights aren't being addressed, his needs aren't being met and he's declining – rapidly by the sounds of it, in a few days (participant, community three)*

### **Rationality**

In our analysis, rationality was represented by a realistic recognition of the moral dimension of the situation. This included elements such as fairness, knowledge of particular problems, rational traits combined with open mindedness, creative thinking, envisioning new possibilities, evaluation from a moral viewpoint and not just a technical one, the use of moral language, where there was moral uncertainty and deliberation, considering the stakeholders (especially who has responsibility and rights and for what), and applying the moral rule to every situation. The notion of fairness was frequently invoked by pre-service teachers as a way of explaining the ethical principle of each of the dilemmas and most sessions contained instances of pre-service teachers attempting to resolve the dilemma by reference to codes of ethics of conduct or the moral principles of care, consistency or consequences. Rationality occurred frequently in each of the sessions as pre-service teachers attempted to come to terms with the dilemma that they had been presented and to find ways of resolving it. The following data demonstrate the ways in which pre-service teachers were drawing on rationality to explore their dilemma:

*Participant One: Well, which principle is more important, school policy or the perceived needs of the student?*

*Participant Two: Because it comes down to the whole thing of fairness if – because these kids are being marked down*

*Participant One: That's [our] responsibility to the child; it's not to the parents.*

*Participant Two: But ethics aren't – don't work like that. There's often blurry lines – there's two rights or two wrongs (community one)*

In these examples, participants are attempting to make sense of an assessment policy dilemma that they have been presented with by naming the ethical principles being contested in their scenario.

### **Reflection**

Although the element of reflection was seen less frequently than 'rationality' and 'perception', it was present in moments where pre-service teachers recognised their own personal bias, in instances when they characterised themselves as moral practitioners and when they exhibited deep reflection on their own practice or gave a serious critique of schooling. Some moments of reflection revealed the profound moral concerns or tensions at play, such as the unease evident in this example where the discussion centred on the practice of ability grouping. Having experienced this practice (as interns or as students) several participants were able to reflect upon it:

*Participant One: And what I found on my internship is I was given an A stream class and almost through sort of my own bias, I gave them a better quality of education because I expected more of them. Whereas I spent all my time in the low ability classes trying to remediate the kind of difficulties they were having. And so you end up sort of not giving the quality of education to the lower ability kids.*

*Participant Two: Yeah, being a product of streaming [myself] I personally don't agree with it. Me and my friends would just be so distraught and upset, because going to a selective high school, a lot of kids get pressured to succeed (community four)*

Through reflection, participants were able at times to recognise that the dilemmas went beyond the confines of the school gate and consider the broader influence social context. In a dilemma about the consumption of alcohol in the presence of students, participants offered the following reflection:

*... If the community didn't give a damn there wouldn't be an issue. But the community does give a damn, so do the students and the staff, so I think in order – you know, it takes a community to raise people, and the community wants those people raised to their social moral standards. So you sort of say well then it's up to the community to help discipline them as well, I guess (participant, community six)*

*Participant One: And we've come up with scenarios like this in our classes, our ethics classes before too, that even if we're not being paid at 10 o'clock at night, but if we're at a venue and students come in and we know they're underage, we've asked different teachers before and they suggest you leave. ... It's that same kind of situation that in a community we still have a moral ...*

*Participant Two: We're moral agents (community one)*

## Emotion

Of all the categories described by Joseph (2003), emotion was the category that occurred the least across all sessions, appearing an average of once in each session. It was also the most difficult to code. Whilst embodied emotions witnessed by facilitators were prevalent in all sessions, their embodied nature was not adequately expressed or represented in the transcription data. Thus, emotional responses were often coded as perception in the analysis, unless they verbalised a feeling or emotive language. The emotions that were represented in the sessions were empathy, conflict, confusion or anger. At times tension between rational communication and the emotive responses of empathy, care or anger were evident in the dialogue, with the pre-service teachers opting to be seen as rational and preferring to tie their emotions to the rational discourse of fairness for the students, rather than care for them, or become angry at injustice. Emotion was especially evident in dilemmas where the actions of a new teacher were being questioned:

*I really like the chance to sort of – it's a bit late to tell people about my – or explain my integrity. Tell them why, ask why I'm being questioned. I find that really personally offensive if someone's questioning my motives, my pedagogy as a teacher (participant, community six)*

In a dilemma about ability grouping, teachers were able to articulate their anger about some of the inequitable practices they had recently witnessed:

*I [just want to] add to this – at the school that I've just been to literally the head of English was saying like basically streaming and then saying the best teachers go to the best classes. And that just made me so mad. I just sit [sic] there and I just didn't want to see – so I avoided that. He's going that's it, the best teachers should go to the best students because they believe that marks were in line with wanting to be there*



*and effort. So I can't remember who was saying about it before, but there are kids that are really intelligent but just don't have the motivation. So basically the teacher's going well that's it, that kid's not putting in enough effort they don't deserve to be in that class (participant, community five)*

### Caring for Self

Caring for self was evident in articulations of an emerging professional stance, and in instances when they demonstrated agency; that is, in the moments in which they described surviving and actually standing up for something, making change in the broader school or system, self-reflexively acknowledging their own needs and feelings (anger, risk isolation, frustration, alienation, anger, passion, fear) and taking themselves seriously. This is demonstrated by the participant who described, when presented with a difficult dilemma, that she would follow the appropriate process so that, as a new teacher, she could be confident that she was doing the 'right' thing:

*The first thing I would do is look at my staff handbook, if I'm a new teacher, and I'd flip through it and I'd be like, "All right. What do I do now? Who do I talk to? How do I work it? Where do I stand?" you know, and talk myself through that – you know, "What's my first step? What's my second step?" to really figure it out in my head, to the school code of conduct, knowing what I know and standing up for my kids in [an] ethical way. And that's the step that I would take (participant, community two)*

In another example, the participant's care for self was demonstrated in their belief that as a new teacher, they have something unique to offer the profession:

*Exactly. You come in fresh; you've got enthusiasm. So you can't necessarily say that an older teacher is better (participant, community six)*

Yet the importance of self-care was not made evident on many occasions during discussion. Instead, its inverse was invoked as pre-service teachers often conceptualised their role as 'guardians' or 'advocates' for their students, thus negating their self-care for the perceived good of others. As one participant remarked:

*It's not about defending my teaching; it's about making sure that my kids get the marks that they deserve (participant, community six)*

Given the critical urgency of teacher stress and burnout, finding ways of introducing caring for the self may be advantageous in regards to the ongoing issue of retaining teachers in the profession.

### Additional Elements

In addition to the five elements identified by Joseph, one of the most significant issues noted in the discussions of ethical tensions was the participants' tendencies to initially attempt to 'solve' each dilemma. That is, they sought pragmatic, technical and pedagogical 'fixes' to the specifics of the dilemma given. These technical instances outnumbered the instances of perception of ethical tensions and were the most frequently occurring response across the sessions. Pragmatic or technical responses to the tensions occurred at an average of 14.5 times per session.

When attempting to solve their dilemmas pragmatically, pre-service teachers would initially ignore the wider ethical implications of the situations that they had been presented with and often gave responses that focused on the specific details of the dilemma. For example, in a dilemma that involved the deduction of marks for late submission of

assessments (in accordance with school policy) but without consideration of students' "difficult circumstances", the participants in our study initially sought a specific solution:

*I think the main thing here is like Anne should collaborate with the welfare and like other areas to determine like what she's going to do (participant, community three)*

Most sessions started with this pragmatic focus before the moral and ethical tensions were explored and in most sessions, this pragmatic reasoning was returned to throughout the course of the session.

Also discernible within each of the sessions was a recognition of the power dynamic present in the school system. Issues relating to power were raised by participants an average of 4 times per session. As each of the dilemmas presented involved either early career or pre-service teachers, the participants exploring the dilemmas were able to identify the power dynamics inherent in the school system and how, as pre-service teachers, it impacted upon them. In a scenario regarding teaching practice that was perceived as unfair, pre-service teachers were acutely aware that, like new service teachers, the situation would be difficult for them to address:

*Participant One: But would you challenge it on internship?*

*Participant Two: You're more worried about getting a mark as an intern.*

*Participant Three: Like in theory I'd definitely say no, it shouldn't be like that. Just because you're an intern doesn't mean you shouldn't behave ethically, or at least – but in practice, and I know from my experiences, I've let things go...(community one)*

The final salient feature of the sessions was the group processes that were evident. Pre-service teachers were noting points raised by one another and extending or critiquing the analysis, as is evident in the following exchange around the idea of quality teachers:

*Participant One: Well you need to distinguish between the best teachers and the beginning teachers, like they may not...*

*Participant Two: Who is distinguishing? Like who is the best teacher?*

*Participant Three: You have to go based on results, not who the best teacher is, because they not may be getting good HSC results.*

*Participant Four: I know this is a utopian idea, but who's hiring the crap teachers to begin with?*

*Facilitator: Well, you can see there's a whole lot of issues just around the staffing of schools, isn't there? (community two)*

This group process was also impacted by the facilitator (whose responses were not included in the coding and analysis). In some sessions the facilitator was more involved and provided some of the analysis for participants, while in other sessions, the facilitator was less involved. Facilitator's role focussed mainly in summation, reflective dialogue when discussion was off track and scaffolded direction when discussion became focussed on technical rather than ethical aspects. This perhaps (along with the differences between the dilemmas presented to the groups) accounts for some of the variation seen between sessions.

## Discussion

The following discussion will focus on two primary issues in regards to our understanding and use of the moral imagination in teaching pre-service teacher ethics. First, we will consider the contribution this research has made to extending and operationalising the conceptual elements constituting the moral imagination, particularly in terms of the generation nuances, counter examples and multiple perspectives based on Joseph's conceptual model; and second, an argument is made for taking the moral imagination

seriously in teacher education and recommendations for further research in this area are given.

The data analysed builds on the model of moral imagination described by Joseph (2003) but also reveals the struggle to achieve this challenging but valuable educational aim. Perception was the most vigorous dimension of the moral imagination demonstrated by participants. Pre-service teachers often began to explore the moral dilemmas presented by taking on the role of student-advocate and then using this position as a reference point. An interesting extension of the willingness to take the child's side was also evident. Arising from this common position (that is, advocating for the needs of the child first), pre-service teachers sometimes positioned themselves in ways that revealed the questionable assumption that teachers have the capacity to know and understand student needs 'better' than the educational community or even than the child's parents. Thus, important to the dimension of perception is the ability to be open to multiple stakeholders' perspectives, as well as the most central and vulnerable, the child.

To guide their rational decision-making, it is evident that pre-service teachers used moral principles such as: appeals to autonomy (respect for personhood); non-maleficence (don't cause harm); beneficence (do good); justice (promote fairness); and occasionally, the ends justify the means (the means might be unpleasant, but lead to some worthwhile goal). The data indicated a tendency to consider compelling legalities first, as advocated by the Ethical Response Cycle (Newman & Pollnitz, 2005) and a latent awareness of the requirements of professional codes of ethics in teaching. These form a useful starting point in ascertaining viable solutions to problems posed in the dilemmas, but critical reflection on these codes and rules was not evident. We found this concerning given that even though there are many convincing accounts of professional ethics, ethics itself is not static. Neither ethics nor education can be completely explained with reference to rules and principles. Morality is not simply a set of 'pre-packaged answers' to the questions posed by ethics: "what ought I to do?" It is not strictly rule-governed which explains why most "act-based moral theories must develop more and more rules to account for the complexity and particularity of moral decision-making" (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 18). This is one reason why virtuous attributes such as fairness, justice, consistency, impartiality, trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, courage, commitment, diligence, respect, responsibility, empathy, kindness, care, compassion, gentleness, patience, understanding, friendliness, humility, civility, open-mindedness and tolerance are also considered important to the ethical teacher (Campbell, 2003, p. 25). Further, education itself is values-laden and therefore contestable. Seemingly benign features of school systems such as streamed classes, professional hierarchies or the rhetoric of 'effective practice' have perverse features and hide questions of educational desirability. Since education is a process of "critical reconstruction", teachers cannot depend on "reasoning as a form of technical calculations" (Carr, 1995, p. 69). Thus, developing and maintaining ethical sensitivities and an awareness of the dynamic relationships between one's values and the morally salient dimensions of daily work is important to the work of teachers as agents. Teachers contribute to society as values educators and role models of competent moral agency; and they belong to a professional community in which trust, integrity and respect are central, if ambiguous, moral concepts.

Reflection is an essential feature of moral imagination and this capacity has been connected with and contributes to a person's freedom to make choices. This reflective feature "is the capacity for second-order desires or evaluation of desires" (Taylor, 1985, p. 43). Having a moral second-order desire assumes that the person "is able to distance herself from, and reflect on, first-order desires and can take a stance toward her first-order spontaneous desires on the basis of moral reasons" (Nunner-Winkler, 1993, p. 285). That is, they have an ability to desire or despise a first order desire, and to reflect how this affects one's moral

evaluation of self and of others. The data indicates a lack of reflection initiated by participants; however, this does not mean that reflection was not altogether absent, since only the contributions of pre-service teachers was included in the dialogue analysis. The articulation of points of reflection on solutions, underlying values and salient themes tended to be demonstrated by the facilitator of the group dialogue, potentially in response to the perception of this gap in participants' moral imagination.

Emotion was the element of the moral imagination least invoked in the discussions, perhaps reflecting pre-service teachers' beliefs about the value of rational discourse. "Although philosophers have long denigrated emotions and put a high valuation on reason most have recognised that emotions often motivate action" (Noddings, 1998, p. 135). Emotional reactions did not feature strongly in the data, but this may be explained by the notion that the pre-service teachers were channelling their moral thinking through their developing professional identities and potentially making the subtle distinction between personal and professional ethics, with the view that emotional reactions are not professionally ethical. Sherman (1999) argues that emotions play a crucial role in moral decision-making. They did, however demonstrate an honest and authentic sense of care for the best interests of students, as noted above. This, it seems, is evidence of the entanglement of the different dimensions of moral imagination, particularly perception and emotion and the legitimacy of 'professional' performance in a collegial context. Firstly, they help us to discern morally salient features; secondly, they give us modes with which to communicate morally salient messages (admiration, gratitude, disgust); thirdly, when we appraise a person's character, their emotional maturity is part of what we care about; fourthly, emotions add to the value of the human world, creating experiences like selfless love and friendship; and finally, emotions are important motivators for moral action (Sherman, 1999, p. 42).

Care for self was articulated to a moderate degree and engaged pre-service teachers' emerging sense of their professional identities. The course encouraged pre-service teachers to ask themselves moral questions such as those posed by Charles Taylor: "Have I really understood what is essential to my identity? Have I truly determined what I sense to be the highest mode of life?" (Taylor, 1985, p. 40). These moral questions are raised to prompt pre-service teachers to consider the intersection or overlapping of professional and personal values so that they may get "through to something deeper" (Taylor, 1985, p. 41). This appears to be important in enabling pre-service teachers to begin recognising opportunities for enhancing the meaningfulness and longevity of their work.

In contemporary education, with the emphasis on teacher accountability and professionalism, what seems to matter most in assessing teacher quality is the academic success of students in languages, mathematics and science, where outcomes are measurable by PISA, TIMSS and NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy). However, an important question that needs to be asked of (teacher) educators is whether we are allowing the tools of measurement to dictate educational value and whether we are measuring what we value or "do we end up valuing what we (can) measure?" (Biesta, 2010, p. 13). It is the role of teacher educators to ensure that graduate teachers attain the required professional standards and also that they are adequately prepared to teach in a morally charged environment; however, sustained attention to ethical practice and ethical knowledge seems to be somewhat absent from teacher education programs (Boon, 2011).

Further, in a sector where outcomes-based education dominates, it can be difficult to defend pedagogies such as the community of inquiry, which prioritise so-called 'non-effective practices' that provide "opportunities for pre-service teachers to explore their own ways of thinking, doing and being" (Biesta, 2010, p. 14), thus creating and extending their sense of meaningfulness, whilst recognising the complexity and multiplicity of the subject-matter. In the case of this small pilot research project, it is the ethical dimensions of pre-

service teacher experiences which formed the core course content and as is clear from the excerpts of dialogue presented here, the ways in which pre-service teachers attempt to articulate moral ideas, claims and values are distinctive and often indicate a real struggle for clarity, and demonstrate an engagement and willingness to tackle and work through challenging problems with some moral insight.

## Conclusion

The implications for us as teacher educators is that we must broaden our ideas about the moral dimensions of teaching by imaginatively taking into account the hopes and experiences of teachers, caring about them as people, and helping them to care about themselves. It makes discussions about teachers' fulfilment, satisfaction, and hopes for themselves as professionals and as human beings a normal part of our discourse, not a frivolous aberration (Joseph, 2003, p. 18).

While current teacher education is positioned within the dominant discourse of the 'age of measurement' (Biesta, 2010), with its preference for standardised professional development, pre-determined curriculum outcomes and the rhetoric of 'effectiveness' ("for what? for whom?" he asks), the moral imagination presents a desirable and challenging educational aim. The nature of teachers' work is such that its peculiar conditions cause a documented range of ethical conflicts that may arise given the number of morally rich sub-roles that exist within the relationships between teachers and students (Best, 1996). Considering the vulnerability of student stakeholders (age and developmental levels), pressures for collegial harmony and trust in the profession, providing effective development in the area of a teacher's daily sense of duty of care for others is important. The use of the moral imagination in this pilot project demonstrates that it can be used as a framework to incorporate some of the morally salient dimensions of the pre-service teaching internship experience into teacher education.

## References

- Best, R. (1996). Role Clarity. In V. A. McClelland & V. Varma (Eds.), *The Needs of Teachers* (pp. 98-112): United Kingdom: Cassell.
- Beyer, L. (1997) The moral contours of teacher education, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 48(4), 245–254.
- Biesta, G. J. J. (2010). *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy*. Boulder & London: Paradigm Publishers.
- Boon, H. J. (2011). Raising the bar: ethics education for quality teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(7), Article 6.
- Bullough, R. V. J. (2011). Ethical and moral matters in teaching and teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 21-28.
- Burgh, G., Field, T., & Freakley, M. (2006). *Ethics and the Community of Inquiry*. South Melbourne: Cengage Learning.
- Campbell, E. (1997). Connecting the ethics of teaching and moral education, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 48(4), 255–263.
- Campbell, E. (2003). *The Ethical Teacher*. United Kingdom: Open University Press.
- Carr, W. (1995). *For education: towards critical educational inquiry*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Coombe, K., & Newman, L. (1997). Ethics in Early Childhood Field Experiences. *Journal for Australian Research in Early Childhood*, 1, 1-9.

- Dewey, J. (1978). How We Think. In J. A. Boydston (Ed.), *The Middle Works, 1899-1924* (Vol. 6: 1910-1911, pp. 177-356): Southern Illinois University Press.
- Forster, D. (2012). Codes of Ethics in Australian Education: Towards a National Perspective. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(9), Article 1.
- Glasser, B. (1992). *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*. Mill Valley, California: Sociology Press.
- Haydon, G. (2006). *Education, Philosophy and the Ethical Environment*. New York: Routledge.
- Haynes, F. (1998). *The Ethical School*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jensen, K. (2007). The desire to learn: an analysis of knowledge-seeking practices among professionals. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(4), 489-502.
- Johnson, M. (1996). How moral psychology changes moral theory. In *Mind and Morals*, L. May, M. Friedman, A. Clark (Eds). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Johnson, M. (1993). *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Joseph, P. (2003). Teaching about the Moral Classroom: Infusing the moral imagination into teacher education, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 31(1), 7-20.
- Newman, L., & Pollnitz, L. (2005). *Working with families: Professional, legal and ethical issues*. Frenches Forest, NSW: Pearson.
- Noddings, N. (1998). Thinking, Feeling, and Moral Imagination. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 22, 135-145.
- Nunner-Winkler, G. (1993). The Growth of Moral Motivation. In G. G. Noam & T. E. Wren (Eds.), *The Moral Self* (pp. 269-291). Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Sherman, N. (1999). Character Development. In D. Carr & J. Steutel (Eds.), *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education* (pp. 35-48). London: Routledge.
- Taylor, C. (1985). *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I* (1999 ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Terhart, E. (1998). Formalised Codes of Ethics for Teachers: between professional autonomy and administrative control. *European Journal of Education*, 33(4), 433-444.
- Tirri, K., Husu, J., & Kansanen, P. (1999). The epistemological stance between the knower and the known. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 15(8), 911-922.
- Warnick, B., R., & Silverman, S. K. (2011). A Framework for Professional Ethics Courses in Teacher Education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(3), 273-285.
- Werhane, P. H. (1999). *Moral imagination and management decision-making*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Zagzebski, L. T. (1996). *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.