As recently as 2006, Lisa Delpit (2006 p. 28) argued that American education is grounded in ‘liberal middle class values and aspirations’, thereby maintaining the status quo and marginalising black, poor and minority group children, that is ‘other people’s children’. A similar situation occurs in Australia and from early childhood settings through to schools, white middle-class educators grapple with the dynamics of inequality in their work with other people’s children (Krieg, 2010; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). Likewise, teacher educators are implicated in these struggles as they prepare a future generation of early childhood professionals to work for social and educational change.

Thinking historically, the kindergarten movement was one sector that focused specifically on other people’s children, along with crèches and day nurseries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Beginning in New South Wales, the kindergarten movement spread across Australia with the formation of Kindergarten Unions (Brennan, 1994). Whereas crèches and day nurseries were usually staffed by nurses (Swain, 2004), Kindergarten Training Colleges were established to prepare young white middle-class women to educate other people’s children in kindergartens (Whitehead, 2008). This situation continued until the 1970s when a slew of social and education policies, not the least of which was the Child Care Act of 1972, laid the groundwork for the expansion and integration of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in early childhood settings and in teacher education.

As suggested by the title, historical analysis involves a consideration of both personal and institutional histories. In this paper, the authors’ historical method involved accessing and analysing primary sources including archived letters, meeting notes, newspapers and curriculum documents in relation to Marjorie Hubbe’s life and teaching. Looking back and then forward, we explore the preparation of early childhood educators to work with ‘other people’s children’ (Delpit, 2006) both historically and in contemporary times. We describe Marjorie Hubbe’s studies at the Adelaide Kindergarten Training College from 1911–13 before exploring the raft of policy decisions in the 1970s which have led to the current integration of early childhood education and care in Australia. The impact of these changes is highlighted in our discussion of ‘Joanne’s’ preparation to teach other people’s children in the twenty-first century.

‘Herstories’:
Using an historical lens to examine continuities and changes in early childhood teacher education

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This article situates the Child Care Act (1972) in a broader account of early childhood education and care, teacher education and the dynamics of inequality over the past century. Our specific focus is the preparation of early childhood educators to work with ‘other people’s children’ (Delpit, 2006) both historically and in contemporary times. We describe Marjorie Hubbe’s studies at the Adelaide Kindergarten Training College from 1911–13 before exploring the raft of policy decisions in the 1970s which have led to the current integration of early childhood education and care in Australia. The impact of these changes is highlighted in our discussion of ‘Joanne’s’ preparation to teach other people’s children in the twenty-first century.
‘The child and his interests are the important things’

The late nineteenth century fields of child care and education were thoroughly fragmented in South Australia. The vast majority of young children were cared for within the family unit. The first crèche opened in Adelaide in 1887 but there was little further institutional provision to support working class mothers in paid employment (Swain, 2004). Compulsory schooling was introduced for seven- to 13-year-olds in 1875, along with the first teachers’ college. From 1892 children under five were excluded from the fledgling state school system but five- to seven-year-olds were encouraged to attend (Miller, 1986). Although a few kindergartens had been established for middle-class children in young ladies’ schools in the 1880s, the kindergarten movement dates from the formation of the Kindergarten Union of South Australia (KUSA) and the first free kindergarten in 1906. Lillian de Lissa was recruited from New South Wales to open the Franklin St Free Kindergarten and one year later she established the Adelaide Kindergarten Training College (Whitehead, 2008, 2010). ECEC and teacher education would remain divided along these lines for most of the twentieth century, and certainly during Marjorie Hubbe’s childhood and youth.

Marjorie was born in Adelaide in April 1893 to Edith and Samuel Hubbe. The Hubbes were an Anglo/German middle-class family. Samuel was killed in the Boer War in South Africa in 1900 (Miller & Butler, 2007). Edith had a well-established reputation as an educator, having been the second headmistress of the Advanced School of Girls in the early 1880s, and then opened a private girls’ school, Knightsbridge, in 1886. She was close friends with KUSA Secretary and feminist social reformer, Lucy Morice, as well as de Lissa, and served on the KTC Education Committee from 1910 (Miller & Butler, 2007; Trethewey, 2008). Marjorie’s childhood and youth were thus spent in a milieu of social and educational reform. Along with her older sisters, Marjorie was educated at Knightsbridge and qualified for admission to Adelaide University. With Morice and Edith’s encouragement, however, she chose the KTC (Miller & Butler, 2007).

When she enrolled in February 1911, Marjorie entered a deeply divided field of teacher education. The KTC had just secured its independence after protracted attempts to amalgamate it with the government teachers’ college (Whitehead, 2010). In the absence of government funding, well-to-do women were the only people who could afford the KTC’s tuition fees and like Marjorie, most had been educated in private schools, well away from other people’s children. Under de Lissa’s leadership and with Morice teaching history of education and urging them to ‘stay abreast of social and political developments affecting the welfare of women and children’ (Trethewey, 2008, p. 24), the KTC’s two-year program focused on the transformative potential of education for both young women and other people’s children. To say the least, Marjorie’s engagement with her studies was inconsistent and she was ambivalent about other people’s children (Series 47–1).

Under de Lissa’s leadership, the KTC program was underpinned by progressive liberal values. De Lissa aimed for the ‘all-round development’ (KUSA Annual Report, 1910–11, p. 10. hereafter Annual Report) of students, that is ‘an educated and reasoning mind, an understanding heart, with wisdom, not instinct alone and a hand that can do’ (Annual Report, 1906–07, p. 12). In the same way, Froebel focused on the mental, spiritual and physical development of children (Dowd, 1983). KTC students were offered a broad intellectual program: the liberal arts and professional studies were integrated, so that studies of English literature were combined with children’s literature and the skills of storytelling, for example (de Lissa, 1912, p. 125). Education studies included the philosophies of Froebel and Dewey, along with history, sociology and psychology of education, child study and program making (de Lissa, 1912, p. 125). De Lissa maintained that ‘theory is not divorced from action but runs along hand in hand with it’ (Annual Report, 1909–10, p. 9). Thus KTC students spent each morning in the free kindergartens ‘learning from the child himself. Individually she studies each child, and when she has gathered up some facts, the psychology classes are arranged to throw light upon the many problems’ (Annual Report, 1909–10, p. 9). The intimate relationship between the KTC and kindergartens enabled de Lissa to proclaim ‘there is nothing so ideal as the practical, and nothing so practical as the ideal’ (Annual Report, 1909–10, p. 10). Ultimately, the KTC students’ intellectual, social and practical experiences were intended to be transformative for de Lissa insisted that ‘teachers are not merely leaders of children but makers of society’ (Annual Report, 1908–09, p. 13).

There is no doubt that Marjorie engaged with and enjoyed many aspects of the KTC program. Perhaps the most telling evidence that she valued her teacher education program is the fact that she kept some of her exam papers (Series 47–9), planning sheets from Grey Ward Free Kindergarten (Series 47–8) and annual reports (Series 47–1; Series 47–8), and these were donated to Adelaide University after her death in 1993. Morice’s history of education was intellectually stimulating: Marjorie excelled in Art and struggled with ‘Peer Gynt’ which she read with de Lissa (Dowd, 1983). Aligning with Froebel, she declared that she was ‘not in favour of teaching a child to read and write at an early age, first because he ought to be exercising and gathering his own sense impressions instead of reading about other people’s, second, because the process of teaching him would conflict with his stage of development by making him passive and receptive instead of active and executive’ (Series 47–9). Returning to the KTC for a third year in 1913, Marjorie was introduced to Montessori’s philosophy to which she applied her well-honed capacity for critical analysis: ‘I think that the
child’s individuality should not be developed to the extent that it ignores all social obligations, and one of the weak places in Madame’s theory of education is that it does not sufficiently emphasise the social life of children’ (Series 47–9). Alas, Marjorie was not an overly conscientious student. In 1912, her annual report concluded with ‘Theory 80 per cent (this would have been much higher if there were no spaces against your name for work not handed in’) (Series 47–8).

Like most free kindergartens, Grey Ward operated three-hour sessions each morning in the poverty-stricken heart of Adelaide (Dowd, 1983). About 80 other people’s children were being educated by two KTC-trained teachers, Annie Burgess and Rachel Luxmore, along with Marjorie and other KTC students. Marjorie’s weekly plans (Series 47–8) show that each day commenced with morning talks and circle time, and then two periods separated by ‘lunch’. Learning was organised thematically across weeks, and included ‘Fathers work in the home and environment’ and ‘The life of Australian natives’. Froebelian gifts and occupations were emphasised, and gardening was integral to the children’s activities. Dewey’s influence was registered in the frequent excursions to cultural and industrial sites such as the Museum, Art Gallery, wood yard and baker’s. There were many follow-up activities which engaged the children’s interests and Marjorie soon learnt that ‘the children are all much more interested in making definite articles than just doing gift plays’. However, her pedagogical work was problematic. As far as ‘table work’ and ‘circle work’ were concerned, de Lissa noted that Marjorie tended to ‘give the children too many ideas and so confuse them, and you are apt to sail along on your own thought leaving them far behind’ (Series 47–8). Indeed she chastised Marjorie about her interactions with children on several occasions, but focused on Marjorie’s failure to accommodate children’s individualism rather than her liberal middle-class values. For example de Lissa wrote, ‘From an adult standpoint maybe a grocer is a prosaic plebeian! But when you see him with the imagination of a child he becomes the most romantic and artistic individual … the child and his interests are the important things’ (Series 47–1).

Marjorie’s weekly plans also include her reflections on the Grey Ward Free Kindergarten children. Of the whole group, she wrote, ‘the children are all most interesting, and seem much more brighter than the Bowden [Free Kindergarten] ones, but I am probably partial. They look much nicer looking than the Bowdon ones, for which I am glad’ (Series 47–8). As far as individuals were concerned, Marjorie had great difficulty reconciling her experiences of other people’s children with her middle-class expectations of ‘normalcy’ (Delpit, 2006, p. 25). With no regard for their economic and social circumstances, she frequently named individuals as ‘irritable’, ‘preoccupied’, and often ‘nervous’ and ‘greedy’ rather than hungry. In an implied criticism of Charlie’s family she claimed that he had returned to kindergarten ‘a little spoilt since his illness’. Marjorie valued obedient children who had learnt their social obligations. Thus she commented, ‘Maisie seems much brighter and obeys me quicker than she did, and says “please” for some lunch’. Duncan and Herbie ‘helped very well’ and Laurie was ‘full of sterling virtues’. Marjorie also valued the active and inquiring child but struggled to enact her beliefs about children’s learning.

Henry Sykes has not helped much with his lips but I think that with George, Noel and Henry their talkativeness comes from their interest and excitement in the work. I have to go rather carefully in stopping them talking as that may diminish their interest and then they might become like Gladys Meadows. Gladys Meadows and Thelma are both very quiet and, so far, uninteresting children (Series 47–8).

After observing Marjorie on several occasions de Lissa concluded, ‘I think your application of theory is still poor. I think your child study must be superficial because you don’t seem to be able to determine what to give them from your store of knowledge which you would be able to do if you studied him more carefully and deeply’ (Series 47–8). In 1912 Marjorie’s annual mark for ‘Practice’ was 69 per cent (ibid).

It was not only that Marjorie did not come to terms with other people’s children but her relationships and work with other KTC students and teachers also concerned de Lissa. KTC students were incorporated into the KUSA community socially and politically as well as educationally, and encouraged to become active citizens, that is makers of society (Miller & Butler, 2007). From the outset, Marjorie was intimately connected to the movement by virtue of her mother’s position on the KTC Education Committee and the family’s friendship with de Lissa and Morice. According to de Lissa, Marjorie had high ideals, expansive interests and a generous nature, but ‘sometimes your impulsiveness spoils other people’s opportunities and has the effect of putting yourself over the other girls’ (Series 47–1). Furthermore, Marjorie repeated confidential information, thereby ‘causing many complications’ (ibid). De Lissa urged her ‘to develop a more sympathetic understanding for others’ and to work collaboratively ‘towards your greatest good’ (ibid). In the early twentieth century, there were limits to this collaboration in the field of early childhood education: There was no institutional cooperation between KUSA and the Education Department, the KTC and government teachers’ college, or between teachers in infant departments and free kindergartens. These divisions were evident in Marjorie and de Lissa’s personal and professional networks.

Notwithstanding the positional differences and disagreements during Marjorie’s three years at the KTC, she and de Lissa (and Edith and Morice) formed a lifelong friendship that transcended their contrasting life paths. De Lissa left Australia permanently in 1917 to become
the foundation Principal of Gipsy Hill Training College for nursery school teachers in London (Whitehead, 2008). Eschewing other people’s children, Marjorie conducted a private Montessori kindergarten in the family home from 1915–22, when she married Alfred Caw and moved to a farming community in Western Australia (Miller & Butler, 2007). Both were makers of society: De Lissa was a leader in the British nursery school movement and Marjorie led several women’s organisations in her local community into the 1960s, by which time the still-separate fields of early education and child care were on the cusp of significant change.

**Early childhood education as the key to a democratic society**

Writing to a South Australian friend in 1962, de Lissa reflected ‘I do remember my enthusiasm for education and my unquenchable confidence in the possibility inherent in it in bringing about a new social order of really mature men and women … I still believe that the education of the whole man is the only sound way of making for social wellbeing—slow as it inevitably is!’ (de Lissa to Finnis, 1962). Her comment was prescient as, by the 1970s, economic, social and political factors conspired to produce a widespread commitment to education as the key to a more democratic society. These included the post-war economic boom, spectacular growth in birth rates and immigration, and the rejuvenation of labour and feminist movements, among others (Connell, 1993). In this context, the South Australian Labor Government commissioned the Vice-Chancellor of Flinders University, Peter Karmel, to examine ‘the whole education system of the State’, as well as teacher education (Karmel, 1971, p. viii). Acknowledging the ‘upsurge of interest in early education’, Karmel devoted a chapter to ‘Pre-School Education’, and included the KTC. He found enormous gaps in the provision of early education. Most children had no access to preschool. There were 129 kindergartens affiliated with KUSA and about 100 private kindergartens charging high fees and thus only open to wealthy families. He also noted that kindergartens were of limited assistance to working mothers with young children. Convinced of the value of preschool education, Karmel recommended a substantial increase in government funding, targeted especially towards new free kindergartens for other people’s children, namely working-class, migrant and Indigenous children. He also investigated teacher education. He found that the KTC offered a limited range of academic subjects and that KTC students came predominantly from well-to-do families, rather than reflecting the heterogeneous population of the state. He recommended that the KTC remain autonomous but cooperate more closely with the government teachers’ college. He also stated that the latter should cease to be the responsibility of the Education Department. In essence, Karmel set the scene for the expansion and reconfiguration of early childhood education and teacher education (Connell 1993; Miller, 1986).

Karmel’s brief did not include child care but he advocated the provision of pre-school programs in ‘full day child-minding centres used by working mothers’ (Karmel, 1971, p. 368). In so doing, he supported the intent of feminist and other groups that were lobbying for the extension of child care in South Australia and federally, and foreshadowed the integration of ECEC. Their lobbying provided the impetus federally for the 1972 Child Care Act, passed in the final days of the Liberal government (Brennan, 1994). The new Labor government led by Gough Whitlam implemented the legislation, thereby expanding the provision of childcare centres. Promoting ‘education as the key to the improvement of society’ (Connell, 1993, p. 259), Whitlam also commissioned Karmel to identify areas of greatest educational need (Miller, 1986). Karmel’s report largely replicated his South Australian findings and recommendations (Connell, 1993; Miller, 1986).

Under complex regimes of federal and state government provision, funding and regulation, early education and child care have gradually intertwined. Today, South Australia’s field of ECEC is much the same as other states and includes child care, preschool and the early years of school. Many changes in the ways these dimensions of early childhood education are staffed and regulated relate to the federal Labor Government’s reform agenda, instigated at their election in 2007. These reforms focus on providing Australian families with high-quality, accessible and affordable integrated early childhood education and child care. A National Quality Framework (NQF) now provides expectations at a national level across seven quality areas including the implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009). Alongside the Early Years Learning Framework, educators working with children aged five to eight are mandated to use the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2009).

Concomitant changes are evident in teacher education. Teachers’ colleges were separated from state education departments and brought under federal control as Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) from 1973. The Adelaide KTC also became Kingston CAE in 1974; and with increased government funding began to diversify its curriculum and student population. In 1982 the CAEs in South Australia were drawn into a single organisation known as South Australian College of Advanced Education (Connell, 1993; Elliott, 2006). Then in 1991 three of the CAE campuses and the South Australian Institute of Technology amalgamated to form the University of South Australia. This means that the KTC is currently incorporated into the University of South Australia. Recognising the inseparability of early childhood education and care, several contemporary universities across Australia have developed dedicated early childhood degree programs to prepare teachers to work with children from birth to eight years, and in the full range of settings (Elliott, 2006, p. 37). Marjorie Hubbe’s equivalent, Joanne, graduated from one of the most recently established early childhood teacher education programs in South Australia.
Co-constructing knowledge in teacher education

In 2007, a second South Australian University established an early childhood teacher education program, namely the BA/BEd (Early Childhood). This double degree encompasses the birth–eight-year period and focuses on the transformative potential of education for student teachers such as Joanne and young children. From the outset, the intention was to develop a program that addressed the inequitable outcomes that exist in early childhood education, especially for other people’s children. This focus on social justice required a repositioning of young children in the learning process as active social participants. In order to achieve this outcome, student teachers needed to experience a reconceptualised university curriculum that positioned them as able to contribute to and contest knowledge rather than simply ‘receive’ it. This intent has points of connection with de Lissa’s positioning of KTC graduates as makers of society but there are also some significant differences between the historical and contemporary programs.

The 2007 degree contrasts with the KTC program in that it is framed within a social-constructionist paradigm that views knowledge as an evolving co-construction, not as something ‘out there’ waiting to be transmitted to students. From this perspective, knowledge is inseparable from social practices which include speaking, reading, writing and interacting. Mason’s (2000) conception of the teacher as ‘mediator’ of knowledge/s encapsulates teacher educators’ work in the double-degree program. Mason argues that in a Vygotskian (1978) framework, teachers actively participate in the learning process as ‘intentional mediators’, leading learners to increasing complexity (p. 347). Teaching is intellectually and emotionally demanding work for it requires that teacher educators develop authentic, respectful relationships with the diverse students who are enrolled in the double-degree program. Thus another point of difference relates to the students.

Whereas Marjorie and all KTC students were middle-class white women from private schools, each cohort in the historical and contemporary programs.

In 2007, a second South Australian University established an early childhood teacher education program, namely the BA/BEd (Early Childhood). This double degree reflects Karmel’s aim to diversify the ECEC workforce. The double-degree students continue to be predominantly white middle-class women and Joanne was among this group. Taking one cohort of 50 students as an example, however, 32 students had attended public schools while 10 attended private schools. About half of the cohort was the first in their family to attend a university; three were international students and there were a handful of men. This demographic profile aligns more closely to Australian society and bodes well for the education and care of other people’s children.

Alongside a more heterogeneous student population, the BA/BEd (Early Childhood) also provides opportunities for broad intellectual pursuits. Whereas the two-year KTC program integrated liberal and professional studies, current students select from a wide range of BA topics. For example, Joanne studied a major in English and a minor in Health Education. The latter strand includes a second-year topic ‘Crime, Deviance and Social Control: Introduction to Sociological Ideas’. Her colleagues are studying majors such as Philosophy, Women’s Studies, Australian Studies and Drama. Students’ liberal studies in the BA ensure that they encounter and engage deeply with multiple bodies of knowledge, thereby informing their work as makers of society.

In the BEd component of the double degree, Joanne played an active role in testing, contesting and generating new knowledge rather than ‘applying’ knowledge generated by others. Similarly to most teacher education programs, the BEd comprises Education Studies, Curriculum Studies and Professional Experience. Topics are framed within an inquiry-based paradigm drawing from Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (1999) metaphor of ‘inquiry-as-a-stance’ for reconceptualising the relationship between student teachers, teacher educators, practising early childhood teachers and educational knowledge (p. 288). From this stance, theory is used as a basis for testing and exploring classroom practice. In the ongoing process of learning about teaching from a ‘teacher as inquirer’ perspective, the potential to reduce some of the dilemmas in contemporary teacher education is realised. For example, both teacher educators and student teachers become contributors to new knowledge and change agents rather than replicators of the status quo in early childhood education. Approaching the task of ‘learning to teach’ from an inquiry perspective situates early childhood sites and universities, teachers, teacher educators and student teachers as players in Gibbons and colleagues’ (1994) Mode 2 knowledge production teams. Such teams are characterised by heterogeneity and they are generating knowledge that has immediate application to practices identified by a broad range of stakeholders.

Like Marjorie, Joanne engaged more deeply with some topics than others and this is reflected in her results. In the topic ‘Play, learning and development’, Joanne almost achieved a distinction. This first-year topic is designed to challenge the dominance of developmental psychology. The descriptor states that the topic:

… uses reflective processes to engage and extend students’ thinking about the relationship between learning and development. Through the inquiry based teaching and learning processes of the topic, students will be drawing from their experiences as learners in order to critically analyse current research and theoretical perspectives regarding the relationship between learning and development in the early childhood years. The topic enables students to develop the knowledge base necessary for engaging infants and young children in significant and challenging learning.
Joanne’s reflective comments demonstrate the extent to which the topic achieved its stated intent:

As future educators it would be in the children’s best interest to take into account a broad spectrum of ideas. If for instance we were to only accept Piaget’s developmental stages, we are in danger of pigeon-holing, as Helen described in the tutorial a few weeks ago. Vygotsky was a lot more concerned with a child’s cognitive development growing through their interactions with adults and peers and the influence of culture, which I do think is more influential than Piaget realised.

Whereas Marjorie drew on Montessori and Froebel, Joanne accessed more recent theorists, namely Piaget and Vygotsky, to frame her critical analysis of learning and development. However, both young women value the active and inquiring child and both are also concerned that children learn their social obligations. Joanne stated that:

Interacting with peers is very beneficial for children because they can help each other form new understandings and can learn important tools for later in life such as sharing, compromising and so on. I would like to mention a really poignant statement from our second reading in Lally that ‘we are a child’s travelling companion in their search for meaning’ (Lally, Mangione & Greenwood, 2006). I think this statement beautifully describes the role that an adult should play in a child’s life. As teachers, parents, grandparents and so on, we have the opportunity to go on a journey with children scaffolding their learning where needed, taking a step back at times for a child to discover for themselves and to maintain a child’s enthusiasm to be inquisitive. By being their travelling companion, I believe we are able to watch a child grow through trial and error and guiding them in the right direction, while at the same time maybe learning a thing or two ourselves.

De Lissa’s comments indicate that Marjorie experienced difficulty in scaffolding children’s learning in the hurly-burly of Grey Ward Free Kindergarten. Joanne’s reflections indicate that she developed a strong knowledge base with which to scaffold children’s learning during her professional experience.

A significant thread of continuity between Marjorie’s and Joanne’s teacher education experience is the concept of integrating theory and practice. This is enacted first through work integrated learning embedded within university topics in Joanne’s degree. Many of the topics rely on student participation in early childhood sites. This is somewhat similar to Marjorie’s situation at Grey Ward but Marjorie’s work was also essential to maintaining low staff student ratios and thus the success of the free kindergartens. Contemporary work-integrated learning does not use students as cheap labour but it relies on each student having a work ‘place’. Therefore, it demands new approaches to students’ university learning and high-level skill and negotiation with all stakeholders. An important aspect of establishing and developing the new degree involved working with a course reference group (the contemporary equivalent to the KTC Education Committee) to develop a partnership with the field that was underpinned by principles of inquiry and professional learning. The course reference group is indicative of the breadth and integration of contemporary ECEC. Stakeholders include representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), Catholic Education, childcare and preschool directors, and school principals with responsibility for the early years of school. Liaison with this group has not only fostered work-integrated learning but also facilitated the dedicated Professional Experience in each year of the degree. The contemporary practicum is far more complex organisationally than in Majorie’s era. The diversity of the contemporary early childhood field, together with state and national accreditation requirements, means that student teachers now require placements in child care, integrated children’s centres, preschools and the early years of school classrooms. Joanne’s professional experience reflected this complexity.

Joanne’s first placement was in a public school situated in an impoverished working-class suburb. The school incorporated a special Disability Unit and an early childhood program called ‘Learning Together’ which is also a learning program for adults with young children. In 2011 75 per cent of children at this school came from low-income families and about one-third were Aboriginal. As a white middle-class woman, Joanne was working with a much more diverse group of other people’s children than Marjorie. For all student teachers’ placements in Joanne’s degree, schools and centres nominate inquiry projects in which student teachers can participate: this means that they are seen as contributing to children’s learning rather than as a drain on staff time. Joanne’s first placement was focused on supporting children who were transitioning between the Disability Unit and the mainstream early childhood classrooms.

Similar to Marjorie’s situation, Joanne’s second placement was in a kindergarten with an enrolment of 50 preschool children, plus about 40 enrolments in an occasional care program. The DEECD website describes occasional care as ‘short term child care for babies, toddlers and children under school age’. The service is intended for other people’s children. It is explicitly stated that ‘Priority access to sessions of Occasional care is given to children not enrolled in another early childhood service, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children, children from low income families, with additional needs or at risk, and children of parents with a disability’. This preschool has a staff team of 12 that includes teachers, early childhood workers and preschool support workers who work with children with additional needs. Joanne worked with eight Aboriginal children and 23 children with English as a second language.
for four weeks. The kindergarten is co-located with a public primary school but children from the preschool also transition to a local Catholic school.

A small Catholic parish school was the site for Joanne’s final integration of theory and practice. Yet again Joanne became a ‘travelling companion’ for a variety of other people’s children. This school had an increasing enrolment of English as second language learners, some of whom were categorised as New Arrivals. Joanne spent a total of 35 days in a Year 1 class with six-year-old children and two mentors (classroom teachers), thereby completing all requirements for registration as an early childhood teacher and qualified to work across the birth–eight age range in child care, preschool and the early years of school.

Together, Joanne’s professional experiences exemplify the heterogeneity of contemporary Australian society. They also reflect the long-term outcomes of the Child Care Act 1972 and the Karmel reports. The latter highlighted the inequalities in Australian education and identified Indigenous, migrant, working class and children with disabilities as disadvantaged. Karmel proposed that these groups of other people’s children be provided with extra resources to facilitate their success in education and to bring about a more democratic society. Joanne’s professional experiences are indicative of the complex field which she has now entered as a graduate of the double-degree program and maker of society, and the ongoing challenges of social and educational change.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have used an historical lens to juxtapose two student experiences, that of Marjorie in the early twentieth century with Joanne’s contemporary early childhood teacher education degree. In this process, many continuities have been evident alongside significant differences. Underpinning our comparison has been the concern for ‘other people’s children’ (Delpit, 2006). Our historical analysis leads us to conclude that the KTC’s liberal-progressive principles and focus on children as individuals did not necessarily challenge Marjorie to interrogate social difference and the dynamics of inequality. Likewise, one of the most profound implications for contemporary early childhood educators working within a normative, age-based and individualist developmental framework is the way this positions the early childhood educator in relation to educational reform. This positioning can be seen at the level of the day-to-day work of teaching, where other people’s children who do not ‘fit’ conceptions of ‘normality’ as described in child development discourses are seen to be deficit, labelled and ‘treated’ accordingly, thus aggregating the inequalities produced by race, class, and gender difference.

In summary, the imperative for reform is urgent. We share Ryan and Grieshaber’s (2005, p. 45) position that ‘we are no closer to achieving equity for all children than we were thirty years ago’, and that this situation demands a better understanding of the limits of the traditional early childhood knowledge base. Contemporary Australian early childhood teacher education demands approaches which support student teachers to understand how they are being positioned within the contemporary knowledge environment. This requires teacher educators to work alongside student teachers as mediators, mediating between the known and unknown in ways that use the analytic tools offered by postmodern perspectives to support inquiry and contestation of knowledge, rather than simply ‘applying’ the knowledge that has been developed by others. Analytic tools that will support the examination of the practices in early childhood from different perspectives and that ‘open up’ spaces for considering what could be different are of critical importance if Joanne is going to be able to effectively educate other people’s children in their earliest years.

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