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# The construction of early childhood teachers' professional identities, then and now

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**THIS PAPER EXPLORES THE** ideas of teacher educator Lillian de Lissa, who established the Kindergarten Training College in Adelaide in 1907 and spent the following 40 years in early childhood teacher education in Australia and the United Kingdom. I argue that de Lissa's enduring concern was the construction of early childhood teachers' professional identities. To this end, the curriculum, teaching methods and culture of the training colleges focused on the 'all round development' of the pre-service teacher—that is her head, heart and hand. These historical understandings are used to discuss early childhood teachers' professional identities in contemporary times.

**THIS PAPER DRAWS ON** the writing of Lillian de Lissa (a pre-eminent figure in the field of early childhood teacher education a century ago) to explore early childhood teachers' professional identities. De Lissa was the first principal of the Kindergarten Training College (1907-1917) in Adelaide and then foundation principal of Gipsy Hill Training College (1917-1947) in England (Jones, 1975). Her numerous reports, speeches and academic papers over her 40-year career provide significant insights into the ways training college curriculum, teaching methods and culture contribute to the construction of early childhood teachers. Furthermore, they disrupt the dominant understandings of the kindergarten movement in Australia, namely that it was 'women's charitable work' (Brennan, 1994, p. 13). As a teacher educator, de Lissa was much more interested in women teachers' socially transformative potential.

First I discuss de Lissa's background and the establishment of the Kindergarten Training College (KTC) in Adelaide. The main part of the paper outlines the two-year pre-service program of studies at both this and the Gipsy Hill College, and the development of de Lissa's ideas. I argue that, as a progressive educator, she focused on the education of the whole person, be this the pre-school child in kindergarten or the pre-service teacher at training college. Viewed from a

contemporary standpoint, her overarching concern as a teacher educator was the construction of early childhood teachers' professional identities. In this respect, the final section of the paper points to both continuities and discontinuities with current constructions of early childhood teachers.

Lillian de Lissa was born into a wealthy middle-class family in Sydney in 1885 and educated at Riviere College, Woollahra. In 1903 she enrolled at Froebel House, the recently established training college for kindergarten teachers, and completed a two-year pre-service program of studies with Chicago-trained principal Frances Newton. She returned for a third year of study, and in 1905 both women were invited to Adelaide to demonstrate kindergarten methods. Their visit led to the formation of the Kindergarten Union of South Australia (KUSA) and de Lissa's appointment as Director of Adelaide's first free kindergarten in Franklin Street in 1906. KUSA's decision to enter into pre-service teacher education followed soon afterwards. De Lissa was freed from directorship of the kindergarten to become principal of the Kindergarten Training College (KTC) in February 1907 (Jones, 1975).

De Lissa entered the field of teacher education on the cusp of significant change. For most of the nineteenth century Australia had relied heavily on the

pupil teacher system as the mode of preparing primary teachers. Recruited straight from the classroom, pupil teachers served a three- to four-year school-based apprenticeship. This was followed by one or two years at a training college. By the early 1900s, however, the pupil teacher system had been discredited as too technician and insufficiently intellectual, and was being replaced by two or three years of secondary schooling followed by one or two years at a training college. In South Australia the University of Adelaide and Education Department had negotiated to produce such a scheme to train primary teachers from 1900 (Hyams, 1979). The University Training College (UTC) did not offer a specialist program for kindergarten teachers, and this was one of the reasons the KTC was established.

The decision to establish the KTC was debated at length. Some considered that teaching young children was a matter of instinct rather than intellect, and thus no special preparation was required. Indeed, one member of parliament stated: 'It may be said of the teacher of young children—as indeed of all other teachers—that she (for the kindergartner is invariably a woman) is born not made' (Smeaton, 1905, p. 9). The potential financial burden of teacher preparation was also an issue. Some KUSA members argued that a training college would use valuable funds that could otherwise be used to open more free kindergartens. Others argued that the UTC could provide trained teachers for kindergartens, thereby implying that there was little difference in the pre-service preparation of kindergarten and primary teachers. While de Lissa concurred that early childhood education was indubitably women's work, she argued that kindergarten teachers should not only be trained for their work but also that their pre-service preparation should be substantively different from that provided by the UTC to primary teachers. Her position on these matters was challenged in 1909/1910 when the UTC introduced an infant teachers course and the Director of Education (who was also a member of the KUSA executive) proposed an amalgamation of both institutions. In the acrimonious debates that followed, de Lissa claimed that the aims of the two institutions were incommensurable. She argued that, in keeping with Froebelian philosophy, the KTC focused on the holistic development of the kindergarten teacher and progressive, child-centred education, whereas the UTC program was traditional and teacher-centred; that is, it focused on teachers' intellectual capacity to pass examinations. It was only through some clever political manoeuvring on the part of de Lissa's supporters that the KTC maintained its independence. However, the KTC lost most of its part-time lecturers who favoured amalgamation; student numbers diminished and it was some years before the KTC stabilised (Dowd, 1981; Jones, 1975).

The KTC's initial intentions and two-year program were almost identical to those of de Lissa's *alma mater*, Froebel House. She was explicit about these connections and arranged for students to be examined by lecturers from Sydney in order to establish the KTC's credibility (Dowd, 1981; Jones, 1975). Frances Newton, the principal at Froebel House, had been much influenced by Dewey's work at the Chicago Laboratory School (1896-1903) and his reinterpretation of Froebel's ideas to meet the needs of a rapidly industrialising society. Froebelian philosophy focused on the development of the whole person but Dewey was equally concerned with the socially transformative potential of education (May, 1997; Harrison, 1985). De Lissa's early reports were suffused with quotes from American educators, especially Dewey. In 1909 she argued that the kindergarten teacher:

*must know and understand the social conditions in which we live, have high ideals of social life and be filled with enthusiasm for her ideals. A woman who just knows how to impart knowledge cannot even fulfill her duty as a teacher, which is not merely filling individuals with facts, but the development of thinkers, as well as being engaged in the formation of social life.* (Kindergarten Union of South Australia Annual Report [Annual Report], 1908/1909, p. 13).

'Teachers are not merely leaders of children, but makers of society.' De Lissa used this quote and its variant, 'teachers are not merely makers of men [sic], but makers of society' so often that it might be considered a keystone of her early work as a teacher educator. However, her ideas about women teachers were not synonymous with Dewey or Froebel. While she drew on both Dewey and Froebel's ideas, her understanding of women teachers as makers of society was also informed by her personal and professional connections with the women's movement which was working for economic, political and social reform (Brennan, 1994). Dewey rarely considered the gender of teachers and was wary of the women's movement. Froebel promoted kindergarten teaching as women's work but he stopped short of advocating political rights for women (May, 1997). De Lissa envisaged women's equal participation in society as newly enfranchised citizens, and in so doing, conceptualised women teachers' transformative potential from a feminist standpoint.

In the early years the KTC aimed for the 'all round development' of pre-service teachers in the same way that Froebel proposed that 'the child's threefold nature—physical, mental and spiritual—should be developed conjointly' (Russell, 1903, p. 794). In keeping with the idea that women rather than men were best suited to be teachers of young children, de Lissa was explicit about developing 'all that is most womanly in the teachers' (Annual Report, 1908/1909, p. 12). Her

construction of femininity reflected her English middle class heritage and might also have been informed by concerns that Australian girls were less feminine than their English counterparts. In any case the development of the womanly qualities of pre-service teachers was a matter of careful negotiation. De Lissa stated that 'sympathy, intellect, refinement and love' were 'inherent' in women's nature but rejected the common assumption that these 'instinct[s] will teach her all she needs to know', focusing instead on 'the cultivation of an educated and reasoning mind, an understanding heart, with wisdom, not instinct alone as its foundation, and a hand that can do' (Annual Report, 1906/1907, p. 12). It should be noted that the KTC was engaged in the higher education of women in an era when it was not universally accepted. Indeed, opponents of women's higher education claimed that it detracted from their future maternal roles. In her reports, therefore, de Lissa pointed out that the professional training at the KTC was equally valuable as a preparation for motherhood, and thus never a 'waste of time' (Annual Report, 1906/1907, p. 12). Although rarely mentioned, the fact the KTC was in competition with the UTC also coloured her reports. In 1911 she elaborated the KTC's aim:

*With the students in training as with the children, it is the growth of character—the ability to think and plan and the development of the executive powers for which we are working because such is true education. The training aims at all round development. It is not so over-intellectualised as to make the girl unpractical and useless, but by having theory and practice go hand in hand, the training aims to give her the true balance of head, heart and hand, and so help in the development of the true woman* (Annual Report, 1910/1911, p. 10).

As far as the curriculum was concerned, de Lissa claimed that 'the correlation of subjects is natural in our college, because our starting point is the child and all branches of study are vitally related to him [sic] and his work, and so one to another' (Annual Report, 1909/1910, p. 9). KTC students spent each morning assisting at a free kindergarten, closely supervised by its director who met with them on Fridays to plan the following week's work (Dowd, 1981). Students were also expected to study individual children, and 'when she has gathered up some facts the psychology classes are arranged to throw light upon many problems' (Annual Report, 1909/1910, p. 9). The afternoon's program at the college was extensive and typical of such early twentieth century institutions. Indeed, it was almost the same as the Infant Teacher's course at the UTC (Dowd, 1981; Hyams, 1979). In 1912 de Lissa stated that 'intellectually the training involves the study of psychology and child study, history of education, hygiene, pedagogic principles, stories and storytelling, program making, elementary sociology, philosophy

of education—Froebel's Philosophy of Mother Play, Froebel's Education Material—modern educational developments, educational ideas like the philosophy of play and games' (de Lissa, 1912, p. 125). The education studies component was comprehensive in that it included history, sociology and philosophy as well as psychology, and the latter did not dominate. De Lissa stated that 'the sociological aspect must be observed for in preparing children for life the educationist must never forget that it is life as a member of society and not as a hermit' (Annual Report, 1910/11, p. 8). General and professional studies were integrated, and addressed the three-fold development of the woman teacher. For example, stories and storytelling combined studies of English literature with material that was suitable for young children and the skills of storytelling, thereby contributing to the culture and intellect of the pre-service teacher and her professional skills and knowledge. Physical culture classes developed 'grace and ease in bodily movement', along with learning suitable games for children and their theoretical underpinnings (de Lissa, 1912, p. 125). Teaching methods at the KTC simulated those advocated in kindergartens, also approximating this lesson as described at Froebel House in 1903:

*Miss Newton—with the instinct of the true kindergartner—drew from her pupils the suggestive thoughts contained in the lesson, with the best methods of application. In no case was the desired information given by the teacher, unless the pupils proved incapable of developing the hidden meaning. However, in most cases the students grasped the thought indicated and worked out for themselves the correct solution* (Russell, 1903, p. 795).

The integration of theory and practice throughout the program was essential to achieving the all-round development of the pre-service teacher.

While de Lissa was able to emulate much of what had been in place at Froebel House, one crucial aspect of teacher preparation eluded her in Adelaide—the establishment of the KTC as a residential institution. She wrote in her 1907/1908 report that 'before long we hope our college will be residential ... The kindergartner needs to be more than a teacher, and the home life of the residential college makes possible the development in her of many qualities that otherwise may lay dormant' (Annual Report, 1907/1908, p. 13). The intention was to translate the familial and domestic customs of the middle-class home into an institutional setting in order to complete the construction of the pre-service teacher's femininity (Edwards, 1993). De Lissa asserted that 'kindergarten teaching requires special and careful training and that training is not merely showing how to teach, it is first of all awakening and developing all that is most womanly in the teachers' (Annual Report, 1908/1909, p. 12). In 1913 the KTC council rented a 14-

room mansion and set it up as a residential college. This turned out to be temporary and it was not until 1915 that a benefactor donated a large house, thereby securing permanent premises for the KTC. However, almost all KTC students continued as day students, and thus during her 10-year career as a teacher educator in Adelaide, de Lissa did not fulfill her hope of full residential training (Dowd, 1981).

Lest it be thought that de Lissa's perspectives were unchanging—by the time she emigrated to England in 1917 she had incorporated some of Montessori's ideas into her understanding of progressive education. She had visited Sydney in 1912 to observe Montessorian methods at Blackfriars Practising School and reported that 'much as we have to learn from Montessori on the psychological side, we feel her work is lacking from not having a sociological side which we consider equally important' (Annual Report, 1911/1912, p. 14). In 1914/1915 she travelled to Europe, studied with Montessori in Italy, and then addressed the Conference on New Ideals in Education in England. There, she was welcomed into the circle of educational reformers known as the New Idealists. These people did not rigidly adhere to a particular theorist of progressive education, but drew on the ideas of Montessori, Froebel and Dewey among others. It was Belle Rennie, a leading member of this group, who founded Gipsy Hill Training College (GHTC) and recruited de Lissa (who had returned to Adelaide by mid-1915) as its first principal (Petersen, 1983).

GHTC opened in September 1917 as the first college to provide a two-year pre-service program specifically for nursery school teachers, the English equivalent of the kindergarten teacher. GHTC's focus was progressive education, the intention being to produce early childhood teachers who would combine the best features of the Montessorian and Froebelian systems. De Lissa intended to promote Froebel's focus on the spiritual and disrupt the rigid application of his gifts and occupations, which was prevalent in England at the time. She drew on Montessori's scientific approach to education, and claimed that 'Montessori teaches her students how to become scientific observers, and how and when to come forward to the child's help'. In bringing Froebel and Montessori together, de Lissa argued that 'science is meeting religion so that both together are firmly establishing the same truth' (de Lissa, 1915, p. 11).

At the 1918 New Ideals in Education conference de Lissa's presentation was entitled 'The making of the teacher of young children'. In it she outlined 'three fundamental aspects of thought which should have equally important places in a scheme of training. These three are: scientific, artistic, religious'. With Montessori in mind, she argued that 'scientific knowledge cultivated a love of accuracy and truth which prevents one from

forming hasty and false generalisations on inconclusive or scrappy evidence'. In keeping with her ideas about the importance of sociology, de Lissa claimed that the teacher should also use these skills to investigate the 'social conditions and homelife of the child'. As had been the case at the KTC, de Lissa considered that pre-service teachers should have a wide and general knowledge of all branches of the arts. A 'good training in the arts' developed 'emotional responsiveness and sensitiveness as well as intellectualism' in the teacher of young children. This aspect of thought also 'served directly for the education of the children' as it helped the teacher to choose 'the pictures, poems, stories and music suited to a child's development'. In line with her understanding of Froebel, de Lissa proposed that teacher preparation 'must be religious. It must be tuned to the key of spirituality'. She claimed that 'students in colleges spend far too much time in reading or listening to other people's ideas' and too little time contemplating 'the whole evolutionary process of life'. Accordingly, she argued that pre-service teachers 'must have leisure to think and to meditate' for it 'is such leisure that makes for the maturing of the whole personality'. In effect, de Lissa was updating her understanding of the all-round development of the teacher in the light of her new knowledge (de Lissa, 1918a, pp. 35-46). The main points of her presentation and her ongoing commitments to women teachers' socially transformative potential were incorporated into her annual report. She concluded that 'the training should aim at providing opportunity for each student to develop her womanhood, her wisdom and personality to the fullest degree, and to send her out prepared to take her part, not only in the training of individuals, but in making the society of tomorrow' (de Lissa, 1918b, p. 1).

Teacher training in England was state-funded, so GHTC had to comply with the Board of Education's requirements. This meant the curriculum was similar to that of other English training colleges. Education studies included philosophy, history and sociology along with child study and psychology, and practical work in nursery schools and infant departments was part of the Board's requirements. Nature study and hygiene were also compulsory subjects along with the arts—that is literature, speech training, music, art and handwork. Although GHTC lecturers decided the content and pedagogy and set the examinations for each subject, they were moderated by the Board of Education (de Lissa, 1958).

De Lissa's philosophical commitment to progressivism underpinned the college curriculum and culture, and that of Rommany Nursery School (the equivalent of a free kindergarten) which was attached to the college. Students had ongoing practical experience with Montessorian and Froebelian ideas at Rommany, and also spent blocks of time in other progressive nursery

schools and infant departments. As far as the on-campus work was concerned, two subjects distinguished GHTC from other colleges. According to de Lissa, 'biology, an innovation in a training college course, held a key position: it not only provided a sound basis for nature study ... but prepared in students a scientific attitude and a method to bring to their study of children and education' (de Lissa, 1958, p. 5). A special feature of the biology course was the varied practical work that included individual projects and a two-week camp which also emphasised the arts—painting and sketching, drama and poetry. The second subject, hygiene, so-named to meet the board's requirements, was much more than a study of children's growth and development, personal hygiene and factors affecting health. It was a social science course in which students learned about children's social conditions, social services, community health and the welfare state. Hygiene at GHTC also differed from the subject at other colleges in that a medical practitioner rather than a lecturer taught it (de Lissa, 1958, p. 5). Although there was an increasing focus on scientific perspectives of the child, they never dominated the curriculum. De Lissa argued that 'history and English, rightly viewed, are as illuminating as biology and psychology, and are but different standpoints from which to view the same life processes' (de Lissa, 1921/1922, p. 2). Each subject was designed to complement the others, and students were exposed to multiple perspectives of their future work.

Although there were some differences in curriculum, it was the culture of GHTC that distinguished it from other training colleges in England and also the KTC. When in Adelaide, De Lissa had longed for a residential training college, and fulfilled her wish at GHTC, for it was residential from the outset. Residential colleges were commonplace, but GHTC was different in that it was conceptualised as a democratic community rather than an extension of middle-class family life. In this respect de Lissa's ideas had shifted from her time in Adelaide when she had argued that the college should be home-like. The difference was registered in GHTC's prospectus which stated that:

*college life is arranged to enable [the students] to live in accordance with the truest principles of education. Our community is self-governing and provides opportunities for each student to develop herself as fully as possible, to plan and control her life and work, and to gain something of that power of leadership and of independent thought and action so necessary in a teacher (Prospectus, 1922/1923, p. 5).*

To these ends there were spaces for private study and also contemplation through the 'college silence' every evening. The college was non-denominational but the spiritual dimension was fostered with weekly chapel services that were planned jointly by staff and students. While the metaphor of the family pervaded other colleges

and students were closely supervised (Edwards, 1993), a distinctive feature of GHTC was the College Council, a forum where college rules were constructed jointly by staff and students, and issues resolved democratically. Students also learned about leadership, public speaking and meeting procedures. Clubs and societies honed these skills and fortnightly lectures and debates included speeches from representatives of various political parties, as well as topics of cultural and academic interest (de Lissa, 1958). These skills and knowledge would enable them to take their places as citizens as well as teachers in a democratic society. In effect, women teachers' socially transformative potential was signified in the culture of GHTC.

De Lissa's writing is a rich source that can be used to trace continuities and highlight discontinuities in early childhood teachers' professional identities. A century after she established the KTC in 1907, residential training colleges have disappeared and early childhood teacher preparation in Australia has been incorporated into the state-funded system. The de Lissa Institute of Early Childhood and Family Studies at the University of South Australia is the current incarnation of the KTC, and GHTC was incorporated into Kingston University some years ago. However, many teacher education programs continue to separate the preparation of early childhood and primary teachers, and energy is invested in constructing the former as child-centred, at the same time marginalising primary teacher education, just as de Lissa did at the KTC. Although the needs of the child continue to be the starting point for curriculum design in teacher education, developmental psychology has become hegemonic (Kilderry, 2004; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). So concerned are some contemporary teacher educators about the dominance of 'developmentally appropriate practice' that they are reconceptualising teacher preparation in ways that might resonate with de Lissa's understandings. For example, in their work with pre-service teachers, Ryan and Grieshaber (2005, p. 36) have begun to examine the 'historical, social, political, economic and cultural contexts that have given rise to various understandings and practices associated with young children'. De Lissa's students would have engaged with equally diverse knowledges during their two-year program. Likewise her students were exposed to 'multiple readings' or theoretical perspectives and applied them during their practical experiences. Besides Dewey, Montessori and Froebel, whose works were analysed in depth, they were familiarised with Rousseau and Pestalozzi, and early twentieth century researchers such as Isaacs and Gessell (de Lissa, 1949). Not so Piaget and Vygotsky, for these men were influential in the second half of the twentieth century. Ryan and Grieshaber (2005) also explore the complex issues of teachers' professional identities with their students, a matter of significant concern to de Lissa.

In foregrounding the construction of 'an educated and reasoning mind', de Lissa positioned the early childhood teacher as an intellectual. Her training had encompassed a broad knowledge of the arts, politics, the welfare state and social conditions, as well as professional knowledge and skills. Her intellectual work began with the 'gathering of facts' about individual children. De Lissa did not specify the nature of these facts in the early years, but from the late 1930s the teacher could purchase a set of commercially-produced 'Lillian de Lissa Nursery Record Sheets' to record physiological functioning, intellectual activity, and social and emotional behaviour (de Lissa, 1949, pp. 317-323). The teacher's careful observations and scientific attitude 'prevented hasty and false generalisations'. Having gathered and analysed the facts, she would know 'whether the child needs the help she can give by personal approach or whether modification of the environment is desirable' (de Lissa, 1949, p. 317). While observations and record-keeping are commonplace in contemporary early childhood education, they are more likely to be positioned as 'technical' than intellectual work (Kildery, 2004).

Rather than intellectuals with a broad knowledge-base, contemporary early childhood teachers are more likely to be constructed as 'practitioners' on the basis of their professional skills and knowledge (e.g. Osgood, 2006). Contemporary early childhood teachers 'use their knowledge of how children develop to structure learning experiences that facilitate children's learning through play and discovery' (Ryan, 2005, p. 99). Likewise, the ideal early childhood teacher in de Lissa's era had 'the ability to think and plan' an activity-based integrated curriculum for young children. In 1912 de Lissa described an integrated unit of work based on the theme of 'food, clothing and shelter', and showed the correlation of each subject. For example, 'in mathematics the children weigh ingredients, count things in shopping, learn money values' while 'in geography they discover the situation of food shops in relation to homes' (de Lissa, 1912, p. 123). In this kindergarten, children were active learners and transmission teaching was inimical to the teacher. She was not in the business of 'filling individuals with facts but the development of thinkers'. To this end her constructivist teaching methods replicated those at the KTC, and she supported children to construct knowledge through 'happy and spontaneous play'. While some contemporary early childhood teachers are reluctant to intervene in children's play (Ryan, 2005), de Lissa urged the 'teacher to remember that she is an educator, and to come forward, sometimes to guide, sometimes to influence, sometimes definitely to teach' (KUSA, 1975, p. 16). The teacher was expected to actively challenge students' ideas and behaviour, and guide, influence and teach them to act in socially responsible ways. In the integrated unit, for example,

the teacher stressed 'such matters as honesty in dealing, cleanliness, unselfishness as regards food, gratitude for it and reverence to God the source of all. We lay great stress on these things because we are concerned more with helping children to be than to know' (de Lissa, 1912, p. 123).

Teaching as women's intellectual work also entailed the use of the 'executive powers' beyond the kindergarten in de Lissa's time. The early childhood teacher as Director was responsible for the administration and management of the free kindergarten and its interactions with parents and the impoverished community in which it was located. After the morning sessions with the children, the Director would spend the afternoons visiting families and, for example, organising mothers clubs. With her 'knowledge and understanding of the social conditions in which we live' she could also be constructed as a maker of society. One of de Lissa's proudest moments seems to have been when, as Director of the Franklin Street free kindergarten, she worked with the mothers to petition KUSA for a free kindergarten in Bowden: 'I was more stirred by this than anything that had happened in my life up to that time, because I saw a vision of a new world; a world in which women, as women, would begin to think about children who were not their own and who would work for them and their wellbeing' (KUSA, 1975, p. 29). Here, women teachers' socially transformative potential is writ large. In contemporary times 'those of us working in early childhood can choose to position ourselves as drivers of social change' (Sims, 2006, p. iii). This work often focuses on individuals and their families, the ripple effect being a more just society, rather than de Lissa's explicit feminist commitment to 'making the society of tomorrow'.

In constructing early childhood teachers' professional identities, de Lissa left nothing to chance. She was concerned with the all-round development of the early childhood teacher, that is 'her understanding heart', as well as her mind and hand. However, her construction of the early childhood teacher as emotional worker did not conform to the individualised notions of caring that are dominant in contemporary times. Osgood (2006, p. 193) argues that 'an ethic of care and emotional labour are cornerstones to practitioners' understandings of themselves'. Contemporary early childhood teachers are expected to display 'strong feelings towards protecting and supporting children and engaging empathetically with a child's wider family and community' (Osgood, 2006, p. 191) but their emotional work is not connected directly to the transformation of society as it was in the early twentieth century. In 1908 'Synda' explained that the ideal teacher 'knows and loves each child individually' but 'this feeling of the teacher is based on knowledge [so] it is not likely to become sentimental and spoil the child'. The teacher's love emanated from

her 'wisdom' and knowledge of social conditions. It was not a mother's instinctive sentimental love which frequently 'resulted in mismanagement and spoiling'. Instead, the early childhood teacher's emotional work 'was for the love of mankind', and thus it extended well beyond an attachment to individuals and their families ('Synda', 1908, p. 11). De Lissa shared Synda's perspective. She was concerned with 'the training of the feelings and emotions in the direction of loving service to humanity through the little child. There is an awakened reverence for the sacredness of all life and a respect for the importance of their work in the community as skilled women. Emphasis is laid upon the social side of the work and the students feel that in caring for the little children they are doing the social service which dignifies and ennobles every aspect of the work' (de Lissa, 1912, p. 123). In essence, the early childhood teacher's emotional work had socially transformative potential.

De Lissa was not only interested in the heart of the early childhood teacher but also in other womanly qualities that contributed to her professional identity. These qualities were integral to the construction of the teacher as a role model. In 1910 de Lissa explained why early childhood teachers' womanly qualities mattered: 'Because she realises the power of imitation, she tries to make herself worthy in life, conduct and character. Her appearance, manner, self-control, deportment and thought all matter vitally if she is going to minister to the most impressionable being - a child' (Annual Report, 1909/1910, p. 9). During her years at the KTC de Lissa was explicit about the development of these qualities in her reports. Perhaps her English students were already more closely aligned with de Lissa's construction of middle-class femininity than were their Australian counterparts because, as principal of GHTC, de Lissa rarely addressed these matters in writing. That does not mean that womanly qualities were less important to de Lissa's construction of the teacher in later years. In 1949 she wrote:

*... it is what she is that influences children who, at this age are prone to identify themselves with the adults they love and copy them both consciously and unconsciously. Her every gesture, word and facial expression, the daintiness and suitability of her clothes, her hair, the movement of her well-kept hands, her walk and manner of ... speaking to colleagues—each and all these things are noted and have their influence on the child (de Lissa, 1949, p. 230).*

This is the image of the early childhood teacher that Ryan and Grieshaber's (2005) students accessed through popular culture. However, this paper has shown that the early childhood teacher of past times was a complex construction. Bringing historical understandings to bear on images from popular culture is another way of

probing professional identities. Furthermore, what de Lissa made explicit about the early childhood teacher's 'self' and worked hard to produce is now mostly normalised and taken for granted, that is, part of the hidden curriculum of pre-service teacher preparation. It is only when some aspects of a teacher's life, conduct and character transgress social norms that it becomes a matter for discussion—the student teacher who does not dress the part or loses her temper with a child or colleague are two small examples. Interpersonal qualities are equally important to the construction of professional identities in contemporary times.

Finally, in the early twentieth century de Lissa constructed the teacher as role model in relation to disadvantaged children. She explained, 'We feel very strongly that the best teachers are needed for the saddest homes. There is so much to counteract in a free kindergarten—things of both the neighbourhood and the children's homes—only a fine woman is strong enough to do it. We have no difficulty in getting these women to do the work for the small salaries, for they are all imbued with the missionary spirit and prefer to be in charge of a free kindergarten at a poor salary than at work among the better-favoured children for more remuneration' (de Lissa, 1912, p. 124). This construction of the teacher as philanthropist or charitable worker has dominated the history of early childhood education in Australia. In 1912, however, de Lissa was impelled to differentiate the KTC from the UTC to justify its existence as a separate institution. Constructing the early childhood teacher's work as philanthropy was but one way of doing so. In other forums she was highly critical of the unequal salaries paid to Australian women teachers compared with their counterparts in England (KUSA, 1975). Rommany Nursery School is evidence of her ongoing commitments to disadvantaged children, but the construction of teacher as philanthropist never dominated her work as a teacher educator. Rather, this paper has shown that de Lissa's focus on the all-round development of the woman teacher produced a complex professional identity that both resonates with and disrupts contemporary understandings of early childhood teachers. Such is the value of historical understandings of teachers' work.

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