School of Education

Principles

Introduction

# In developing its education programs, the School of Education at the University of South Australia embraces its responsibility to work with the profession, key partners, and local and national accreditation bodies to develop and implement education programs that are consistent with agreed professional standards.

The following eight principles underpin our programs.

Principles

Eight principles underpin the School of Education’s education and research programs. We define our principles as[***fundamental***](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/fundamental.html) ***propositions that*** [***show***](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/represent.html) ***what is valued and thought to be desirable to achieve*** by the School of Education. Our principles declare what we value and strive to realize in our education programs. These programs include pre-service and in-service education, professional development, community engagement and research.

We maintain that:

1. Education for a more socially just and fair society is a professional responsibility and involves identifying and challenging the social, cultural, economic, and education policies and practices that influence the wellbeing of learners.
2. Education is founded on a multi-disciplinary knowledge base which includes content and pedagogical content knowledge about curriculum, an understanding of human development and learning, and an understanding of the contextual issues that influence learning and teaching.
3. Education involves the application of complex pedagogical skills and capabilities.
4. Education requires a commitment to ongoing professional learning.
5. Education involves continuous reflection on all aspects of the education experience to identify ways in which educators can improve their performance as individuals, as a part of the learning community, and as part of the profession.
6. Education depends on the formation of engaging relationships with and between educators, their learners, their colleagues, and the wider community.
7. Education for sustainability through practical action is an educational, social, economic, and environmental priority.
8. Education is a profession that requires sustained commitment to fundamental principles about the importance of nurturing and promoting the learning and well-being of learners.

These principles reflect the shared view within the School that particular knowledge, skills and attributes are needed to become effective graduates. This shared view is based on our interpretation of external accreditation requirements, our experience and expertise as educators, our own research, and our reading of relevant research and educational literature.

We present these principles within a generic structure consisting of 4 elements:

* A title that summarizes the broad focus of the principle
* The principle
* An explanation of why the principle is important to education
* An explanation of how the principle is enacted in our education programs

1. Social Justice

# Educating for a more socially just and fair society is a professional responsibility and involves identifying and challenging the social, cultural, economic, and education policies and practices that influence the wellbeing of learners.

Educators are concerned about social and economic inequalities in our society, and critically reflect on the role educational institutions play in replicating them. Appraising how these institutions can address inequalities in our society is the first step in addressing them. All educators have a responsibility to be active agents of change to promote more socially just and fair outcomes for learners.

Thus, all of our education programs analyse the sources of social and educational inequality. They provide opportunities for educators to identify and analyse examples of unfair and unjust practices that have their genesis in historic inequalities based on ethnicity and racism, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, culture and socio-economic status. By providing educators with the tools of critical analysis and evaluation, they are able to critique the taken-for-granted divisions in society and mount a convincing rationale for more tolerant, inclusive and fairer treatment of disadvantaged and discriminated groups and individuals.

2. Professional Knowledge

# Education is founded on a multi-disciplinary knowledge base which includes content and pedagogical content knowledge about curriculum, an understanding of human development and learning, and an understanding of the contextual issues that influence learning and teaching.

Effective educators possess extensive knowledge of the learning areas they teach. They also have an in depth knowledge of their learners’ cognitive development, learning abilities, and social and emotional wellbeing. To complement this, effective educators also understand the social, cultural and ideological influences that affect the context of education. They are informed by their formal studies, their own experiences, and their ability to read, interpret, conduct and apply research relevant to their field.

Thus, all of our education programs help educators to acquire essential knowledge across four inter-related domains – curriculum studies, educational studies, pedagogical studies, and specialist studies. Within these domains educators learn to collect, analyse, and evaluate learning using evidence based approaches. Our programs reflect a commitment to provide a balanced suite of courses that are research informed and build an essential knowledge base for effective education in a variety of settings.

3. Professional Competence

# Education involves the thoughtful application of complex pedagogical skills and capabilities.

Educators have a repertoire of skills and abilities that enables them to plan and implement learning activities that cater for learners with different interests and abilities. They also know, understand and manage the complex social and physical ecologies of different learning environments to promote learner engagement and pro-social development. They develop these competencies by working with learners individually and in groups, and by reflecting on the effectiveness of the strategies they use.

Thus, all of our programs have sequential and developmental professional experience courses that focus on the development of specific teaching and reflection skills, and include dedicated courses which deal with the theory and practice of managing learning environments and promoting pro-social learner behaviour through reflective practice.

4. Professional Learning

# Education requires a commitment to professional learning.

Effective educators undertake career-long professional learning to acquire the skills and attributes they need to respond positively to changes in society. Education needs to be framed as the beginning of an ongoing process of learning to be an effective and evolving professional.

Thus, all our education programs promote the view that what is taught and learnt in courses is the foundation for further learning. Our programs position educators as enquirers into their own practice through professional reflection and research. They also prepare educators to be critical researchers and to draw on the best available evidence to improve their practice.

5. Critical Reflection

# Education involves continuous reflection on all aspects of the learning experience to identify ways in which educators can improve their performance as individuals, as a part of the learning community, and as part of the profession.

Effective educators are able to analyse and critically review learning and teaching processes within the broader social and political contexts in which they take place. This involves knowing how to change aspects of their teaching by identifying problems, proposing solutions, implementing them effectively, and analysing their effects. Effective educators are also well aware of, and critically evaluate, competing beliefs and views about education.

Thus, all our education programs provide opportunities for educators to develop the skills and attributes needed to become critically reflective educators. This involves making explicit the link between thoughtful self-evaluation and professional growth. Critical reflection also involves preparing educators to collect and analyse formal and informal assessment information to modify and adapt their strategies to promote learning. In addition, our programs encourage educators to think deeply about the moral, political, social and economic dimensions of education that impact on their pedagogy. By being aware of these dimensions, they develop an understanding of the multiple contexts in which learners learn, an appreciation of the diversity of views on educational issues that exist in our community and a commitment to articulate their own social and educational visions that inform their pedagogy.

6. Engagement

# Education depends on the formation of engaging relationships between educators, their learners, their colleagues and the wider community.

Education is first and foremost about relationships. Effective educators have the interpersonal skills and attributes to form strong relationships with learners and with their colleagues. Such relationships are characterised by mutual respect, trust, caring, and reciprocity. Effective educators have the ability to promote cohesive, inclusive, safe and welcoming environments in which learners experience a sense of belonging and social connectedness.

Thus, all our education programs provide opportunities for educators to learn about the importance of treating learners respectfully. This involves promoting approaches to behaviour management that enhance the integrity and dignity of learners. Our programs focus on the development of educators’ interpersonal communication skills and social skills. They promote the view that education is a collective enterprise in which relationships, social bonds, and teamwork promote educator effectiveness, and the learning and well-being of learners.

7. Sustainability

**Education for sustainability through ethical and practical action is an educational, social, cultural, economic and environmental priority.**

Effective educators who are committed to environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability provide learners with opportunities to develop knowledge and a deep understanding of the world in which they live. They make explicit connection to personal values and cultural worldviews. They promote the dispositions to, and skills of critical reflection, evaluation and argument, and foster a commitment to sustainability through ethical and practical action. They invite learners to make appraisals and informed decisions by using well thought through ethical principles which have been constructed through the consideration of social, cultural, economic and environmental perspectives. Educators value and ensure inter-generational fairness, intra-generational fairness and fairness between species.

Thus, all our education programs provide opportunities for educators to develop their ability to think critically, and in a balanced way about the complexities of practices which influence social, economic, cultural and environmental sustainability. They actively promote the principles of Education for Sustainability and encourage educators to contribute to the development of action-oriented, sustainable practices by institutions, social groups, and individuals.

1. Commitment

# Education is a profession that requires sustained commitment to fundamental principles about nurturing and promoting the learning and well-being of learners.

Effective educators encourage learners to develop moral and ethical principles. They are committed to making a positive difference in the lives of those they teach and nurture. They have a strong sense of individual and group efficacy and the capacity to manage challenges, solve problems, and persist in the face of adversity. Effective educators work collaboratively with their setting community to create the conditions within that setting that promote optimism, hope, trust and a commitment to achieve positive learning outcomes.

Thus, all our education programs emphasize the importance of educator efficacy. They ensure that educators take responsibility for ensuring high levels of learner motivation and engagement and deep learning. Our programs encourage educators to work collaboratively, to logically address issues and problems, to seek help, to persist during difficult times, and how to engage and relate to their learners and colleagues.