



The IEUA
speaks on...

Authorised by Lynne Rolley, Federal Secretary Independent Education Union of Australia

TEACHER PRACTICUM

The Independent Education Union of Australia believes that high quality initial teacher preparation is critical to fostering and sustaining an appreciation of the teaching profession as being of profound importance and value to society and one which is challenging and carries great responsibility.

The IEUA is of the view that it is very important that there is a collaborative effort by governments, employing authorities, schools and the teaching profession to properly resource and support the various sets of relationships involved in the professional preparation of those seeking to be teachers.

To this end, schools and Higher Education Institutions must develop improved strategies to ensure greater skill and confidence-building for students by making schools and HEI's more integrally related.

The IEUA notes that there are emerging and existing examples of "partnership" models where schools and universities enter mutually reciprocal arrangements regarding the practicum. These include for example, action research frameworks built into course components allowing more direct input between schools and universities.

The IEUA supports such approaches on the basis that care is taken to ensure that schools receive benefits from entering such partnerships, and that such partnerships become more formalised and therefore more transparent regarding expectations and outcomes.

The IEUA believes that the coordination of links and the strengthening of support roles for student teachers are important. Better links could be built if experienced practitioners (together with other key stakeholders) were involved in a collaborative process with teacher educators in the design and delivery of teacher education courses. Greater involvement of teacher educators in school based projects would strengthen

links and break down the barriers between theory and practice.

The industrial implications of such collaborative models require collaboration and negotiation between employers, personnel in training institutes, teaching professionals at the school level and unions in order to define the roles and responsibilities of the parties and to negotiate and resolve the payment issues.

The importance of a well-resourced practicum and well-resourced, well-structured induction in order for new teachers to be able to develop confidence and a repertoire of skills/strategies in student management cannot be understated. More effective management of classrooms will be a direct consequence of such an approach.

It should also be noted that no pre service course can equip teachers for the full range of schooling circumstances they will encounter. This confirms the importance of the notion of a continuum of learning from pre service through induction to skilled practitioner.

A critical problem concerning the practicum is the inadequacy and tenuousness of appropriate funding from government, HEI's and school authorities. This arises from general funding cuts to education at state and federal levels to both schools and tertiary institutions and contributes to the pervasive low morale within the profession and the often low status within the university for the practicum and the staff involved.

The IEUA strongly supports the payment of teachers with responsibility for the supervision and coordination of the practicum. Further, prac teaching supervisors need to be inserviced and supported in their role. These arrangements need to be the subject of negotiations between the HEIs, employing authorities and the education unions and part of an updated formal industrial agreement.