



INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION OF AUSTRALIA

**SUBMISSION TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION**

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Authorised:

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) represents teachers and other staff across Australia's 2,600 non-government schools, and other private educational and training institutions. It represents its 60,000 members in a wide range of professional and industrial capacities, including on curriculum bodies, institutes of teaching and registration authorities, negotiation of internships, provision of inservice courses including to beginning teachers, and negotiation of industrial and professional arrangements surrounding the induction and mentoring of new teachers.
- 1.2 The IEUA believes that the present Inquiry to be undertaken by the Committee, if it is not to issue in just another unremarkable report into a well-studied area, should undertake a serious analysis of the previous reports (over the last 25 years!) into pre service teacher education, the recommendations in these reports, and the history of implementation of these recommendations. Some serious consideration by this Committee of the nation's Parliament into the poor history of implementation of so many well-founded recommendations by serious researchers and inquiries would be a valuable service to the teaching profession and would provide a thoughtful and cautionary foundation for any recommendations the Committee might make.
- 1.3 While the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry focus mainly on the pre service education of teachers, the role and importance of ongoing professional learning is also included. This reflects some understanding that the complete preparation of a successful teacher is not exclusively a matter for pre service teacher education: there must be a continuum of learning and skill development from pre service, through a well constructed, purposeful and resourced induction in the first couple of years of teaching, to an ongoing agenda of professional learning throughout the teacher's career.

One recent report, that of Professor Gregory Ramsey 'Quality Matters – Revitalising Teaching: critical times, critical choices' (Nov. 2000), sets out well the need for teaching to be conceptualised as a continuum, with appropriate standards established at key points (graduate, professional competence, accomplished teaching, leadership levels in Ramsey's structure). It follows that the outcomes of university-based teaching education, and a considered assessment of the quality of the graduates, must be considered within the context of the state of teaching and the profession at any time.

Consider then what might be the case if a key recommendation of the August 1980 Report of the National Inquiry into Teacher Education (chaired by Professor Auchmuty) had been implemented. The recommendation in question provided that all teachers should have a paid sabbatical of one term every seven years. Relatively young teachers at that time are now in their 50's and comprise the most experienced senior members of the profession. By now they would have completed three terms of extended professional development from which no doubt – given the resources involved – strong standards and frameworks would have emerged to govern the

connectedness of such professional development with the requirements of teaching today.

Consider also the profound effect on the transition of new teachers from University through the first years of their career if a reasonable portion of this professional development resource had been directed to the emergence of a class of skilled mentors in all schools dedicated to the successful induction of new teachers.

Apart from overcoming many of the problems still experienced routinely by new teachers, a benchmark of practice would have been established which would provide the objective and goal of pre service courses and strengthened relationships between schools and teacher education faculties. A focus on skilled and learned practice might well be in place – a matter relevant to a number of the current Inquiry’s Terms of Reference.

- 1.4 The IEUA is apprehensive of yet another report being issued that does not seriously consider such previous recommendations and the failure for them to be implemented. A consideration of earlier documents will assist the Committee in its work.

2.0 SOME ISSUES FROM EARLIER REPORTS

- 2.1 Appendix 7, p 258 of the Quality Matters (August 2000) by Professor G. Ramsey provides a list of reports on teacher education 1980-1999 the IEUA suggests the Committee should have regard to. There have been others since then, including the Commonwealth’s Inquiry into Maths and Science Teacher Preparation, the Victorian Inquiry into Teacher Education and an ACER study. These will be referred to below.
- 2.2 The IEUA draws attention to the sabbatical leave for professional development (one term every seven years) recommendation made by the National Inquiry into Teacher Education, in 1980, as already mentioned.
- 2.3 The Report of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training “The Shape of Teacher Education: Some Proposals” (Dec 1990) was itself a synthesis of three other reports produced over 1989 – 1990! The Committee could usefully consider the extent to which some of its observations and recommendations have been progressed. Some have – notably the emergence of better internship models during the 1990’s and the establishment of Institutes of Teaching with functions of standard setting that go beyond initial registration, although it remains to be seen whether the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL) can develop into an acceptable and useful national professional body given the likely makeup of the body and its distance from representative organisations of teachers and their employers, and the centrality of the Commonwealth Minister in its legal structure.

The report discusses the following matters of direct relevance to the Committee’s terms of reference:

- Minimum face-to-face hours of contact for primary maths and science education; subject attainment prerequisites at Y12 for both primary and secondary courses; closer proficiency screening in the early years of pre service; improved school involvement through internships, improved initial induction, scholarships and school – university staff exchanges
- Employer specification of assumed knowledge levels in particular areas and greater school – university integration in teacher education courses
- More satisfactory models for providing and funding practicum supervision
- A serious structured induction program for all beginning teachers to be provided
- The development of suitable bodies, including a national professional body, focused on quality of initial preparation and standards at different professional points
- A 2% of total salary commitment to inservice by employers
- Improved co-operative arrangements

- 2.4 The Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project “Preparing a Profession” (Feb 1998) was commissioned by Minister Kemp and chaired by Professor Adey on behalf of the Deans of Education. It was conducted by a strongly representative advisory committee.

This report is significant for the high level of involvement in its work of most of the education faculties in Australian Universities and the high degree of agreement it was able to attract to the set of National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education that it promulgated. Like the early National Competency Standards for Beginning Teachers, the framework produced by the Adey Inquiry has been used by Faculties in the development and review of their courses. The Committee should note the considerable overlap between the areas mandated by Adey and the terms of reference of the current inquiry. The Committee should be able to easily elect from the faculties the ways in which the various standards are integrated into their courses.

- 2.5 Attention is now drawn to the fourteen “graduate attributes” that the Adey Report mandated, and their alignment with the Terms of Reference (ToFR) the Committee’s work:

- (i) General professional attributes (ToFR 1,2,3)

Readiness for professional work of considerable complexity is stressed; high ethical commitments, self awareness and a range of personal attributes, communication skills and a capacity to be practitioner – researchers. Such a range of attributes is best developed and assessed through the course rather than be divined by pre-course psychometric testing. Appropriate interviews could assist in discerning the development of these attributes or at least the capacity for them.

(ii) Duty of care, health and safety (TofR 5, 7iii, 7v and 7viii)

While the importance of graduates obtaining a grounding framework in child protection law and practice and occupational health/safety and general duty of care issues is undoubted, this particular outcome illustrates the inherent limitations on what can be reasonably achieved in pre service courses. Schools have specialist staff of considerable experience and seniority to handle the rapidly changing developments in these areas. Some of the terrain is professionally contested. Graduates need a reasonable 'starter pack' of concepts and guidelines for sound ethical practice. The complexity of actual practice will await their proper induction and further experience.

(iii) Students and their communities (TofR 7v, 7vi, 7viii)

This relates to knowledge of how learning happens and the relevance for learning of the personal, group and community circumstances and realities of students. Cultural and linguistic diversity, the challenges of learning difficulties and impairments, and other differences of various kinds are necessarily treated from a theoretical base with some limited practical exposure through case study and practicum also occurring. The resourcing of such courses, and indeed of schools, will have to substantially improve for this following requirement to be genuinely met: "graduates should have substantial, specific competency in teaching students with disabilities, and students who require teaching of English as a second language, and any other specific groups as locally determined" (Report p 11).

(iv) Indigenous education

This is not listed as a topic of interest in the terms of reference, regrettably. The NSW Department of Education and Training requires, through Ministerial fiat, this area to be a mandatory component in pre service education, and similar requirements exist in other states. The Committee should consider the adequacy of these mandatory components to begin to equip teachers to meet the specific needs of indigenous students in accessing a rich and complete education against the history of undoubted disadvantage that frames their opportunities.

(v) Content Studies

(vi) Curriculum

(vii) Literacy (TofR 7i)

(viii) Numeracy (TofR 7i)

(ix) Teaching and Learning (TofR 7i-vi)

(x) Relationships with learners and behaviour management (TofR 7iii, v)

- (xi) Technology (TofR 7iv)
- (xii) Assessment and evaluation
- (xiii) Working with others (TofR 7viii)
- (xiv) Working in schools and systems (TofR 7viii, 8)

A close examination of the explication of these last outcomes as specified by Adey could well be undertaken by the Committee. The Report itself acknowledges that some of the matters drawn into these attributes/outcomes of pre service courses are there because of the inadequacy and underfunding of structured induction programs where they would be better located.

2.6 Literacy

The IEUA acknowledges the concurrent review of literacy teaching in Australia, and we rely on our submission to it. In brief, we deplore the political crudity surrounding the establishment of that review, clearly initiated as it was by one partisan group. The union considers that a range of literacy teaching methodologies are appropriate and is underwhelmed by the partisan claims of single method advocates. Phonics, whole language, functional/genre and other approaches all have their place and pre service courses should equip teachers with the fundamentals of each and some guidance on the appropriate flexible and considered application of different strategies.

2.7 'Identifying the Challenges: Initial and Continuing Teacher Education for the 21st Century' June 1999

The Committee is urged to consider carefully this helpful report. (MACQT, NSW). We draw attention to some consequences of Commonwealth policy:

- a rapid increase in student load per full-time teacher resulting from a decrease in staffing levels at a time when student numbers within universities are generally increasing
- a decrease in the student-lecturer contact hours through reductions in both the length of semesters and the teaching hours available for each course. This has particularly affected the capacity of universities to address those desirable professional and mandatory aspects of teacher preparation, particularly within secondary Graduate Diploma of Education courses
- more difficult working conditions for academics with less time to undertake research essential to tenure, progression and promotion and less access to academic conferences and other collegial activities
- a decline in academic salaries relative to other occupations, especially with respect to school teachers' salaries from whence most new entrants to teacher education are drawn. From a salary perspective there is little incentive for school teachers to enter academe. This will have serious implications for the

renewal of the profession and for the credibility of programs with practicing teachers

- an increase in the casualisation of the teacher education workforce with part-time and casual staff increasingly undertaking contract marking, and a larger proportion of the supervision of the in-school practicum component of courses

2.8 The above report led to establishment of the Ramsey Inquiry into Teacher Education (Quality Matters, Nov 2000). The Committee's attention is drawn to this report, and especially sections 5.4-5.8 (pp 50-81) which deal with many of the areas covered by the terms of reference.

In particular, the IEUA supports the argument that there needs to be a deeper partnership between schools, teachers and pre service courses of teacher education. That said, the union does not support a return to an apprenticeship model. The IEUA believes that the Committee could well report that a well-resourced, structured induction over the first 2 years or so of teaching is necessary for a sound professional preparation for a teaching career. Recommendations focused on time allocations for both beginning teachers and mentors would be welcome, with Commonwealth financial contribution to the resources needed for this. Equally the now inadequate levels of remuneration for practicum supervision need redress. Given the current government's aggressive industrial relations agenda, the Committee might well consider the implications of practicum opportunities drying up as teachers are left with no time or remuneration to undertake the work of supervision.

2.9 Attention is drawn to "Factors affecting the impact of Teacher Education Courses on Teacher Preparedness" (ACER, April 2005). In particular, the following passages are of note:

- (i) The feature of teacher education programs that had the strongest and most consistent effect on reported outcomes was the extent to which the course had a strong focus on the 'content to be taught'. Courses with a strong content focus enabled future teachers to:
 - a) gain a deep understanding of the content knowledge they were expected to teach
 - b) make clear links between content or subject matter units and units about how to teach the content
 - c) make clear links between theoretical and practical aspects of teaching
 - d) develop a sound understanding of how students learn the specific content that they were expected to teach
 - e) learn how to probe students' prior understandings of content they were about to teach
 - f) learn how to present content in ways that built on students' existing understanding
 - g) learn methods of teaching specific to the content they were expected to teach

- (ii) Opportunity to learn '*how to assess student learning and plan curriculum units*' was strongly associated with preparedness in the areas of professional knowledge and knowledge of students in the first year of teaching. It was also very strongly related to teachers reporting that they were able to deal with core professional tasks in their first year, such as designing challenging curriculum units, managing classrooms, assessing student progress, cross curriculum teaching, and interestingly, working effectively with parents. However, less than 20% of teachers said that their courses had prepared them, to a major extent, to establish appropriate learning goals for their students, give useful and timely feedback to students about their learning and keep useful records of their students' progress.
- (iii) Opportunity to *receive feedback* was also significantly related to the reported effectiveness of courses. Students in the most highly rated courses were much more likely to mention the opportunities they had for gaining timely and useful feedback from lecturers and practicing teachers as helpful features.
- (iv) It is understood that current levels of funding for teacher education do not make it easy for university staff to provide feedback to students about their developing practice. However, the low level of feedback about practice may point to a significant weakness in current approaches to teacher education, as has been found in research on continuing professional learning for teachers, where it is now more widely understood that opportunities for feedback need to be funded and built into programs from the start.
- (v) The study found that courses for the preparation of physical education teachers particularly appear to be organised in ways that facilitate strong links between the presentation of theory and modeling by university staff and opportunities for student teachers to practice the theory and receive feedback and coaching. In contrast, teachers in less effective courses were rarely in situations where it was possible to try new practices and receive feedback. The feedback that supervising teachers gave on teaching rounds was valued, but the relationship between this type of feedback and the theory being taught in the university courses is uncertain.
- (vi) Differences between the schools where teachers spent their first year of teaching made little difference to their reported effectiveness, except where beginners were allocated a formal mentor teacher, as was the case with the VIT's Standards and Professional Learning Project during 2003. Teachers with mentors were more likely, for example, to report that they felt they knew their students well and that they could handle cross-curriculum aspects of teaching literacy and numeracy. (A recent study of a mentor program to support beginning teachers in California has shown that it can also reduce the attrition rate of beginning teachers).

This finding appears to be worthy of further investigation. Well-trained supervising teachers and mentors might help to rectify the theory-practice problem and the low level of accurate and timely feedback mentioned above.

3. OTHER MATTERS

- 3.1 The Committee should note and support the work of the various state Institutes of Teaching in seeking to establish improved frameworks, especially for initial teacher education and beginning teachers.

The Committee in particular should support more realistic resourcing of the practicum and induction processes in schools. The opportunity for a more constant and profound relationship between teacher practice/school experience and pre service education is dependent on this.

- 3.2 The Committee should have regard to the extensive findings of the report of the Senate Employment, Education and Training Committee: A Class Act – Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession (1998). Here is well documented the causes of excessive workload and conflicting policy imposts on teachers emanating from Parliaments, governments, employing authorities, the community and students. Realistic assessments of pre service education need to begin from a well grounded understanding of the complex realities of teachers’ work and this report is of assistance in this regard.

- 3.3 The importance of a well-resourced practicum and well-resourced, well structured induction to new teachers being able to develop confidence and a repertoire of skills/strategies in student management cannot be understated. The more effective management of class rooms 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.