

**Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training
Inquiry into Teacher Education**

Terms of Reference:

1. ***Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.***
 - Within these criteria consider hierarchy. For example in a teacher shortage, if you offer more places, the OP will definitely move and what then happens to the standards?
 - Do the standards drop?
 - Does the attrition rate rise?

2. ***Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.***
 - The term “high quality students” needs to be defined. It is suggested this be framed in terms of not only cognitive capacities (declarative and procedural knowledge that is quantifiable) but equally in affective qualities such as a “passion” for teaching, dispositions of flexibility, resilience, creative and innovative approaches to challenges, capacity to make change productive. These are valued attributes of professional teachers and ultimately are just as important.
 - High quality does not equate to an OP score alone although it is necessary to set a quantifiable starting point and that the assigned standard is indicative of cognitive skills needed for university education.
 - Qualitative/affective attributes are indicated in professional standards of teachers (e.g. refer to Education Queensland list). Thus there needs to be careful consideration of what the research is saying about the time required and the ideal environments to ensure high quality students are immersed in an environment (and adequate timeframe) to ensure the growth of these attributes.
 - The status placed on teachers by society and the commensurate salary are important considerations. High quality students often make informed considerations and these factors will most probably be part of their decision not to teach.
 - Why are “high quality” and “diverse backgrounds/experience” separated?

3. ***Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for the attrition.***
 - In particular factors such as:
 - (i) Students’ intellectual capacity to cope with the demands of university “education” (not training*)
 - (ii) Student use of teaching courses to upgrade to other courses
 - (iii) Prac experiences - the reality of the job different to the preconceived idea/ideal.
 - (iv) Negative portrayal of teaching in the media
 - (v) Lack of status of teachers in the community

4. *Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members.*

- Again this needs careful consideration. The work of McInnis may be a useful starting point, noting that some present CEQ data used to make judgements about the quality of experiences can in fact reward less desirable practice. One particular point made in this work relates to creating a consumer mentality amongst students that in turn creates demand for less rigorous and non-contact courses. This is particularly of concern for teacher education where networking within and beyond class and having the opportunity to do this over time, supports deep approaches to learning (see work of Marton). This “meaningful/holistic” approach helps create confident, informed and purposeful teachers who are lifelong learners.

5. *Examine the educational philosophy underpinning the teacher training courses (including methods used, course structure and materials, and methods for assessment and evaluation) and assess the extent to which it is informed by research.*

- Strongly support this approach. This may also assist in raising the status of scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching in universities, which must in turn, improve teacher education. Consideration must also be given to the funding to support this.
- Are there consistent published criteria/standards against which teacher education programs are evaluated and is this applied consistently by all accrediting bodies when accrediting teacher education courses?

6. *Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.*

- In looking at teacher education, the work of Biggs should be considered. In particular, notions of functional knowledge, SOLO taxonomy and approaches to learning (deep and surface) considered. Whilst there is no doubt that teachers require extensive discipline knowledge, there is equally the need to consider professional practice frameworks and developing personal meaning of “teaching” and “learning”. For example, it is possible to have a science student/graduate who can recite and apply formulae and yet never be assessed on, or worse still, understand, how a scientist “thinks” and “acts”. Also the massaging of the discipline knowledge to the detriment of “educator know how”, compounds this issue. This needs to be carefully considered especially in terms of graduate entry proposals and the differences between discipline knowledge and professional teacher attributes. We are considering quality education degrees and quality teaching.
- In this, consider that the real lack of teachers is in rural areas where teachers do not necessarily have ease of access to mentors and everyday role models and communities want quality “teachers/educators” not chefs or engineers..

7. Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:

- **Teach literacy and numeracy**
 - i. Examine also the notion of “teach” in phrasing this statement. Some practitioner/mentors assigned to students in prac experiences may also support the notion “teaching” literacy and numeracy on “occasions”. Perhaps phrasing could be such that its integral and inherent nature is better captured and so automatically part of preparation courses.
- **Teach vocational courses**
 - i. Which pre-service teachers? All?
 - ii. Which year levels are these pre-service teachers educated to teach?
 - iii. Does this suit all geographical areas where the teachers may be employed? Does the specificity of this vocational training, limit the teachers flexibility to offer a viable and valuable education for all students in that location.
 - iv. Does this suit all schools and their vision?
 - v. Are “educators” the best people to “train” to industry standards? Are industry people the best people to draw on for delivery of these skills and concentrate on teachers doing a quality task.
 - vi. As evidenced here. This is yet another “thing” to do on an already long list of considerations.
 - vii. Who pays for industry training? Are pre-service educators expected to pay this on top of their HECs bill?
 - viii. Does this higher expense (than say their science counterpart) stop on graduation? When does this teacher stop paying in terms of financial and time and extended hours of work expenses?
 - ix. Is this equitable for all pres-service teachers or just a requirement for some?
 - x. Are some disadvantaged by being required to being (i) an educator, (ii) a trainer and (iii) an industry current employee?
 - xi. Does this extend their course time? If it doesn’t, then what is lost to make room for this added requirement?
 - xii. Are there better alternatives – financially and from an industry/employee perspective?
 - xiii. Consider the tension between university education levels and training certificates. Competency training associated with vocational training is a very different sets of skills and abilities to a set of graduate capabilities that drive education approaches to learning and teaching in universities. Consider the difference between education and training.
 - xiv. Consider what is fair, equitable and best practice for all stakeholders.
- **Effectively manage classrooms**
 - i. As schools have developed behaviour management plans consideration needs to be made of school specific contexts. More importantly, including statements like this, continues to pass responsibility for addressing “causes” of the behaviour problems

to universities and pre-service educators, whereas in fact, many stakeholders must work together on this.

- ii. This needs addressing co-operatively in many areas, including pre-service education, but not left solely to the university sector. This should also be looked at in consideration of attrition rates of pre-service and graduate teachers.
- ***Successfully use information technology***
 - ***Deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;***
 - i. As above (classroom management), but again look at the terminology used here. “[D]eal with” in its self suggests a lack of focus on addressing issues and expecting pre-service teacher programs to “solve” what is a complex and a multi-disciplinary issue. Again, there is a need to look at support offered and at what cost, in including this in programs. It should be there but enormous support is needed if it is to be effectively addressed.
 - ***Deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;***
 - ***Achieve accreditation;*** and
 - ***Deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.***

Also see point made in (8).

It should be noted in this section that the sub-titles of terms of reference are “negatively” focussed. This negativity of discourse aligned with teaching is of concern and dwelling on challenges and a relative lack of attention to forward looking, opportunity focussed approaches needs to be encouraged. This failure to address these issues and expect teacher education alone and unsupported, to do this could in itself suggest a reason for low uptake rates of places for teaching and high attrition rates.

8. *Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.*

- Consideration needs to be given to “input” generally and not just schools.
- The demands of “many masters” on universities and how this arrangement impacts on what the teacher education program looks like needs careful consideration. For example, the role of schools, Board of Teacher Registration, different employing authorities, government authorities responsible for syllabus development and accreditation (e.g. QSA) etc. – all come with demands. Rarely are the demands accompanied by a shared and common understanding between the stakeholders or even an awareness of what others are asking.
- Again who is making what demands and in whose interest, needs clarification.
- The support for teacher education programs by co operating teachers is an important part of pre-service education but it must also be realised that not all schools are the same and the destinations of graduates and demands on them are diverse and this must be reflected in their university course.

9. Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary training.

- As above, consider the environment for which the graduate is prepared. There are considerable variations in policies across the employing authorities, the infrastructure that exists in schools, the policies and the enactment of those policies at the chalkface. It is often the pre-service educator and/or university lecturer who bears the complaint about generic preparations approaches, insisted on by some, but not implemented by others.

10. Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.

- Again, there is lack of clarity regarding who sets the standards and requirements – employing authorities, BTR? Who is responsible for this? Who pays?

11. Examine the adequacy of funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.

GENERAL STATEMENT

It is strongly recommended that the use of the term “training” be replaced with “education”. There is a vital and significant difference especially if we are considering ways to educate “professional educators”. Training alone will not produce change, it will merely seeks to perpetuate what exists as the norm.