

**AVONDALE COLLEGE  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

April 14, 2005

A Submission to:

**The Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training**

**INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION**

**A response to aspects of inquiry category No five**

5. (i) The philosophy underpinning the teacher training courses

- The use of particular language, in the terms of reference for the inquiry, reflects a prevailing mindset that can have far-reaching consequences for the current preparation of teachers.

The distinction between “education” and “training” has been long recognised by analytical educational philosophers. For example, persons are not *educated* to operate a machine, throw a discus, or ride a motorcycle. The wider the range of activities, the less specialised they are, the more appropriate it becomes to speak of “*education*”. The narrower and more circumscribed they become, the more likely that the term “*training*” is applicable.

Given the breadth of cognitive activities and the minimum length of four years of pre-service teacher preparation to qualify for a BEd or BA/Tch degree, it would be more accurate to use the term “teacher *education*”. Thus faculty at Avondale College see the subjects studied by pre-service teachers at the institution not merely as training, but more importantly, as contributing to their education.

Because language may be significant in shaping practice, there is a real danger that teacher preparation is perceived as a training exercise to provide technically skilled human resources. As in the case of practitioner-based research, where inquiry may be in the “technical”, “interpretive”, or “critical” mode, some teacher preparation also may be in the “technical” mode. However, it should not be confined to that mode, as the terminology seems to suggest.

- Allied to the restricted conception of “training” is the viewpoint that sees teaching as a *profession*. A scanning of relevant literature covering the last two decades reveals an increasing, but perhaps problematic trend, for teaching to be regarded as a profession. While teaching meets many of the criteria to qualify as a profession, practitioners still lack control over their workplace and the entry and exit from their ranks. Among additional factors that are often cited for impeding teachers’ claim to belong to a profession, are the need for a code of ethics, a relatively poor public image, a reluctant and coerced clientele, and that most

teachers are members of industrial unions (engaged in the education *industry*), rather than professional associations.

There have been calls in the past (Wise, 1990), to transform teaching into an “authentic” profession. The political, administrative, and financial will to accomplish this would require, *inter alia*, the federal reform of:

- a) *Teacher education* - to consist of a six-year course that includes a year-long internship. It is during a lengthy internship, under experienced mentors, that graduands should be able to develop and grow substantially in areas under 7. (i) – (viii).
- b) *Teacher licensing* - so that teachers are credentialed in similar ways to engineers, architects and lawyers.
- c) *Teacher unions* - to balance the interests of occupational associations, their members, and members’ clients.
- d) *Teacher incentives* - matching teacher remuneration with professional services provided to clients. This should have a flow-on effect on teacher education courses being able to attract high quality applicants.

It should also be noted that the perceived pejorative aspects of professions (eg. exclusiveness, protectionism, excessive concern with status and power), have given rise to alternative conceptions of teaching. Teaching is perceived, by some, not as a job or a profession, but as a vocation or calling, where teachers are:

- \* committed to students, their families, and the school community at large,
- \* passionate about the subjects they teach,
- \* diligent in making learning relevant, meaningful and interesting,

in schools that are seen as “bonded” learning communities (cf. Heath, 1994; Palmer, 1998; Sergiovanni, 2005).

#### 5(ii) Course structure and materials, and methods for assessment and evaluation

Over a number of years of experimenting, trialing, and fine-tuning at Avondale College, we have found that a number of structures and strategies have been particularly effective in achieving planned outcomes for primary and secondary pre-service teachers in the final year of their course. What we endeavour to do is perhaps most accurately described as a sequential, co-ordinated, and integrated program. Over two semesters, it focuses on pre-service teachers preparing to take up full-time employment in public or private education systems, at the close of the academic year.

The program, which forms the core of two *professional development and experience* subjects, is best summarised by listing its planned outcomes as given in the respective “Subject Outlines”, a sample of which (secondary teaching) is provided / attached. In practice this requires co-operations on between schools, tertiary education institutions, and employers. As a result pre-service teachers:

- (a) engage in a two-week school familiarisation early in the year, in *preparation* for extended professional teaching experience at the same school in the middle of the year.
- (b) have assignment tasks and lectures at the tertiary institution which tie in closely with the professional experience at school. This includes the planning and teaching of substantial units of work that are informed by current State Governments' curriculum documents such as *Productive Pedagogies* and *Quality Teaching*, the implementation of an action research project, and a "practice" employment interview with the deputy / principal of the school.
- (c) are visited in their schools by *education lecturers* (representing a wide range of subjects) *from the tertiary institution*, for dialogue and consultation purposes.
- (d) meet potential employers, who visit the campus for promotion, recruitment, and employment interviews.

Faculty of Education members have reached the conclusion that the final year of its teacher education course should bring together the various "strands" of the over all program to produce pre-service teachers that fit the course graduate profile: *caring, competent, critical-reflective, collegial professionals, who are committed to excellence in education, and who aim to reach their individual professional potential.*

The high employment rate of graduates each year (on average, about 90%), are seen by many faculty as a reflection of the success of the program and the quality of the teacher education courses offered by Avondale College.

## References

- Education Queensland, (2003), *Productive pedagogies: classroom reflection manual*. Brisbane: Curriculum Implementation Unit.
- Heath, D. (1994), *Schools of hope: developing mind and character in today's youth*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- NSW Department of Education and Training, (2003), *Quality teaching in NSW public Schools*. Sydney: Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate.
- Palmer, P. (1998), *The courage to teach: exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Sergiovanni, T. (2005), "The virtues of leadership", *The Educational Forum*, Vol.69, No 2, pp.112-123.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1994). "Building community in schools". San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Wise, A. (1990), "Six steps to teacher professionalism". *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 47, No 7, pp.57-60.

( For attachment, see next page.)

## Learning outcomes

On completing this subject, pre-service teachers should have:

### Component A:

Relating to Stage 1 (two weeks) of the Extended Professional Experience Program (EPEP); essentially “school-based”:

#### *Knowledge*

1. familiarised themselves thoroughly with the:
  - a. respective school setting (students, staff, facilities),
  - b. role expectations (and acted accordingly),
  - c. published school policies and routines (and supported and implemented these as expected/required).
2. demonstrated a sound knowledge of the content and curriculum context of a series of lessons taught.

#### *Generic skills*

3. a. initiated the planning of a significant unit of work in both their major and minor teaching specialisation field, for actual classroom implementation during Stage 2 & 3 of the EPEP (mid-year).
- b. engaged in a debriefing session/exercise with their colleague teacher/s at their respective school, at the conclusion of Stage 1 of the EPEP, and also with their SP375.1 lecturer/co-ordinator on returning to the tertiary institution.

#### *Specialist skills*

4. written an effective personal Professional Growth Plan to improve their management of the teaching/learning process, and focusing on selected teaching competencies.
5. reflected on and dialogued about their teaching performance in relation to specific/general aspects of lessons/units taught by them, with their colleague teacher/s (before or after lessons/units).

#### *Personal and intellectual development*

6. developed personal viewpoints on the effectiveness of particular teaching approaches/strategies and provided a sound rationale for the position/s taken.

### Component B:

Relating to the one semester of tertiary-institution-based studies that focus on “working in and for organisations”.

#### *Knowledge*

1. analysed a range of ‘typical’ organisational behaviours that contribute to the (in)effectiveness of schools.
2. a. identified and discussed elements of organisational culture and climate.
- b. discussed and evaluated the range of interaction between school and community.

*Generic skills*

3. communicated effectively with their respective colleague teacher(s) in preparation for the six-week July-August EPEP, and also with potential employer organisations.

*Specialist skills*

4. demonstrated effective job application and interview skills.
5. planned and evaluated (self and peer) two detailed units of work (major/minor, or double major) for actual classroom implementation during Stage 2 and 3 of the EPEP.

*Personal and intellectual development*

6. demonstrated personal and professional initiative.