

# THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Operated by ACPE Limited ABN 28 107 480 848

8 Figtree Drive  
Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2127

**Postal Address:**  
Locked Bag 2000  
Homebush NSW 2140



Telephone: (61 2) 9739 3333  
Facsimile: (61 2) 9764 4144

CRICOS Provider Code: 01822J

E-mail: [admin@acpe.edu.au](mailto:admin@acpe.edu.au)

## **Inquiry into Teacher Education**

### **Submission to the Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training Inquiry into Teacher Education**

#### **Introduction**

The Australian College of Physical Education (ACPE) is pleased to have the opportunity to submit a response to the Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training Inquiry into Teacher Education.

ACPE is a privately-owned, non self-accrediting Higher Education Provider. It offers specialist higher education in the education (physical and health education; dance education), sports coaching and sports business. As well as undergraduate courses in each of these fields, ACPE also offers a one-year postgraduate Bachelor of Education tailored to the requirements of Physical and Health Education Teachers. ACPE does not currently run a major research program, concentrating instead on delivering high quality teaching to its students and fostering a strong level of interaction with the vocational communities that it services.

Located in Sydney Olympic Park, ACPE is registered with, and its courses accredited by, the NSW Department of Education and Training. ACPE has also been registered as a CRICOS Provider and is an approved Higher Education Provider for the purposes of FEE-HELP support to its students. ACPE is, therefore, also subject to quality audits conducted by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). In addition, as a private company, it is subject to the regulatory control of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and other state and federal agencies.

Consequently, this submission is presented from a perspective quite different to that of the traditional publicly-funded university. ACPE supports the need for a review into teacher education, especially in light of recent developments in NSW. Specifically, the launch NSW Institute of Teachers represents a unique opportunity to review the training of teachers and their ongoing professional development.

The following discussion is focused on specific issues raised in the terms of reference specified for the Inquiry. Not all terms of reference are addressed in this submission, as three are not applicable to ACPE.

#### **TR1. Criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.**

The current practice of most tertiary institutions, especially universities, involved in teacher education, is to use the UAI mark as the sole determinant for entry into teacher education courses. While this criterion may provide an indication of the likely success of students

completing tertiary study, the mark gives little or no indication of the suitability of students becoming an effective teacher.

Reasons for the lack of predicability stem from the eclectic nature of teacher work. Teachers require diverse skills and knowledge, including: academic understanding of discipline areas; child and adolescent psychology; child and adolescent growth and development (emotional and physical); pedagogy; and, curriculum (development and applied). Yet in a broader picture, teachers are also required to engage significantly on an interpersonal level with children and peers.

It is the aspect of interpersonal engagement, and more specifically the emphasis on child and adolescent engagement, that makes teaching so unique among the professions. On the basis of this point alone, it can be logically argued that the criteria for the selection of students into teacher education courses should be more broadly based than practiced currently. The College makes no specific recommendation in this regard, but views establishment of greater diversity in entry criteria as critical to the health of the profession.

**TR2. Extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including student from diverse backgrounds and experience.**

The following issues are provided as discussion points only. Although the issues are discussed in discrete points, the potential inter-relationships between issues should not be ignored.

**Salary:** The issue of remuneration has been problematic in the teaching profession for some time. Increasingly, students are being attracted to professions which offer high levels of remuneration in the medium and long term. A perception exists that teacher salaries are not commensurate with other professionals, and in many cases, this claim is legitimate. However, the problem exists not only with the capacity of the employing organisation to pay appropriate salaries, but also how salaries are determined. Currently, the general 'one size fits all' approach means highly competent and committed teachers are remunerated at the same level as less able teachers. Such an approach to remuneration is less apparent in other professions where differentiated salary is determined by the quality of work. While such an issue seems fundamental, salary according to ability and contribution is pivotal to the determination of appropriate remuneration.

**Status:** Studies have shown that the status of teachers, especially in comparison with other professions, is not high. Reasons for the reduced professional status are complex, and include salary levels, working conditions, and professional respect from pupils, employees, and the wider community. Improvement to the status of teachers is paramount to attracting highly quality students into teacher education courses. However, any strategy needs to be multi-faceted and implemented over the long term.

**Career paths:** The career path for exceptional teachers tends to lead teachers away from what teachers are good at, ie, teaching and learning. Promotional positions tend to move teachers into career paths related to educational administration. Clearly, such a career path is not suitable for all teachers. There is no current pathway that results in the recognition of teacher excellence to the level where outstanding teachers are remunerated equivalently to their administrative counterparts.

However, the College does acknowledge the steps taken in recent times by the NSW Institute of Teachers in recognising levels of teacher expertise. Such a move has the potential to provide a career path in the teaching and learning area as opposed to educational administration. The College views the creation of greater diversity in career path options as helpful to the profession.

**TR3. Attrition rates from teaching courses and reason for that attrition.**

Annual attrition rates in teacher education courses at ACPE vary, with approximately 10-15% leaving in the first year, and 5-10% in years 2-4. Reasons for the attrition rate are predominantly academic in 1<sup>st</sup> year, then financial for the remaining years. With the implementation of FEE-HELP from semester 2 2005, it is anticipated that attrition rates will reduce notably.

**TR4. Criteria for selecting and rewarding faculty members.**

Since the demise of Colleges of Advances Education and the subsequent move of teacher education courses into university faculties, the role of teacher educators has been moulded around the requirements of university academic staff. This has lead to a refocusing of work for teacher educators. Increasingly, teacher educators are being pre-occupied by the need to research and publish. Pressure has mounted on teacher educators to contribute the institutions research quantum, and an argument now exists that the quality of teacher education instruction is compromised by the research emphasis.

Correspondingly, promotion for teacher educators has been dominated by criteria associated with research and publication. Teacher educators are now being promoted for reasons other than their effectiveness as teachers, with their teaching expertise only minimally rewarded. As a possible solution, universities may need to reassess their position on the criteria for promoting teacher educators. The criteria may need to be determined with respect to an emphasis on an academic's contribution and engagement with the teaching profession.

The reward of faculty members, when viewed from a salary perspective, is an important issue. Real salary levels have fallen in comparison with the teaching profession, while simultaneously expecting teacher educators to hold higher qualifications such as master and doctorate degrees. Consequently, this dual salary and qualifications framework acts as a disincentive for potential teacher educators moving from the school system (where as stated previously, salary levels are already problematic) to tertiary teacher education.

**TR5. Educational philosophy underpinning teacher training courses**

The philosophical underpinning of teacher education courses raises notable debate. The current practice of linking theory and professional experience through university based learning, complemented by school-based experience, has served the profession for may years. Nevertheless, there is a ground swell of anecdotal opinion seeking to emphasise the importance of school-based experience in teacher preparation. To illustrate this point, it has been argued that learning (and the assessment of learning in teacher education courses) should mirror practices in schools, and that the development of teaching skills and techniques needs to take a greater priority in teacher training.

It is the College's position that the current model emphasising theory and professional experience should remain. The maintenance of the status quo will allow teacher education students to view their courses as legitimate university courses (important for professional status) and foster the development of generic skills which are important for modern workplaces (eg, communication, critical thinking, teamwork and so on).

**TR6. Interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.**

Not applicable to ACPE

**TR7 The preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:**

- (i) teach literacy and numeracy;**
- (ii) teach vocational education courses;**
- (iii) effectively manage classrooms;**
- (iv) successfully use information technology;**
- (v) deal with the bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;**
- (vi) deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;**
- (vii) achieve accreditation; and**
- (viii) deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.**

Teacher preparation with respect to the areas listed above are encompassed – to varying depth and significance – within the NSW Institute of Teachers developmental framework. Consequently, all teacher training institutions in NSW will, from 2006, be required to ensure teacher graduates have competence in these areas.

However, in preparing a curriculum for teacher education there is a developing tension between the inclusion of expanding generic areas (eg, literacy, technology, etc) and the more traditional areas of teacher training such as discipline content, curriculum, and pedagogy. Given teaching degrees are normally four years in duration, the depth with which the diverse aspects of teacher preparation are addressed is becoming less and less. Consequently, an argument can be mounted that the breadth of areas requiring attention has the potential to compromise the depth of learning required by teacher graduates.

**TR8 The role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.**

The College would welcome moves to improve opportunity for current teachers to contribute to the teacher training process. In particular, the College views the input of teachers as a valuable mechanism for informing students of current practices and procedures in schools.

An obstacle to closer relationships between teacher training institutions and schools has been the lack of fluidity of teacher movement between schools and teacher education institutions. Structural issues such as teacher timetables and other school demands can limit opportunities for teachers to make a contribution to teacher trainee programs. Similarly, bureaucracies such as the NSW Department of Education make it difficult to second teachers from NSW government schools for more than one year (teachers lose their right of return to their teaching position if secondments exceed 12

months). This policy results in an annual turn-over of seconded staff which means that the benefits of continuity are lost.

However, given the College's position to foster closer school relationships, the College is prepared to work in committee or other collegial structures with a view of providing closer working relationships between teachers and teacher training institutions.

**TR9 Appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training.**

Not applicable to ACPE

**TR10 The construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teacher already in the workforce.**

The ongoing professional development of teachers is fundamental to the quality of teaching provided by teachers, and the recognition of teaching as a legitimate and committed profession.

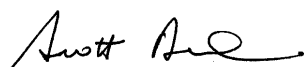
The construction of professional learning should be focused in two perspectives. The perspective first relates to the ongoing development of teaching practice (incorporating pedagogy and curriculum) and discipline knowledge. Development in these areas is important to improve teacher effectiveness, with the net benefit being for the pupils.

The second perspective relates to the teacher progression through promotion structures. It is incumbent on employing bodies to provide the professional experiences and learning for teachers to improve their status within the profession and to be ready to take promotional opportunities when available.

Clearly, the resourcing of professional learning is problematic. However, it can be logically argued that the employee and employer are equally responsible for professional learning and development.

**TR11 The adequacy of funding for teacher training courses by university administrations.**

Not applicable to ACPE



Dr Scott Dickson  
Dean

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005