



**THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND**

**Parliamentary Standing Committee for  
Education and Vocational Training**

**Inquiry into Teacher Education**

**Written submission to support appearance at public hearing 7 July 2005  
School of Education, The University of Queensland**

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### *Response to General Purpose of Enquiry*

In accord with the sentiment of submissions by ACDE and BTR to this Inquiry, it is somewhat disconcerting that teacher education has attracted an inordinate number of broad briefed Inquiries and Reviews in recent times. However, an Inquiry into the quality of Teacher Education in Australia such as this provides a welcome opportunity for us to take stock of our progress toward producing the highest quality educators possible for our children and our communities. Our collective future depends on the continual monitoring and evaluation of our practices as teacher educators, and their impacts on the achievement of exceptional educational experiences in our schools. The Committee can be reassured that Teacher Education in Australia (and at UQ) continues to push the boundaries of excellence on a world scale, such that our graduates are actively sought by recruiters from around the world. The educators that our programs select and prepare for local and world communities are immensely capable professionals who deserve our support and pride.

At The University of Queensland there has been a dramatic and ongoing rolling review and reform of our teacher preparation programs in the past five years, and particularly in the last year. Our programs acknowledge and respond to research investigating how people develop as teachers across their career. They also draw on cutting edge research regarding the enhancement of learning through appropriate curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in these New Times and to the future. In designating and implementing our programs we model practices that derive from this research. Our programs provide a balanced exposure to various theoretical paradigms of research that impact on teaching and learning, and challenge our pre-service professional to develop themselves as reflective, scholarly, responsive and capable practitioners.

The University of Queensland is unique in the field of teacher preparation. Our School of Education is nested within the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences which affords us many opportunities to develop synergies across disciplines. As a research intensive University, we provide a unique environment for nurturing teachers as practitioner researchers. This orientation to teaching best prepares teachers to respond appropriately to the diverse needs of their schools and classrooms. As a School we have a high status within our University as researchers who make substantial contributions to contemporary public debate and policy development in education. We have a large number of PhD students who have been attracted to the School as result of our international profile and our prominent contributions in the sector. These students are predominantly educational leaders at the coal face, thus the University of Queensland's strengths in research are feeding directly into our nation's schools.

Academics from the School of Education have led innovations that have had wide ranging impact for policy development and practice in schools (e.g. New Basics, Middle Years of Schooling, Literate Futures, Productive Pedagogies, Gifted and Talented, Effective Education for Boys). In a sense we are at the research forefront in education and this is central to our provision of quality teacher preparation programs.

## **TOR 1**

### **Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teaching training courses.**

Several submissions have reacted against the use of the term “training” with respect to teacher preparation, as do we. Training implies a mechanistic preparation process and suggests teaching is simply a set of dispensable skills. Teaching, individually and as a profession, requires insight, foresight and responsiveness. It is not a trade.

At The University of Queensland, we believe that a diversified teaching force is needed and this is reflected in our selection of teacher candidates. We draw from all sectors of the community and are proud of the cross-section that is represented in our student cohorts. We agree with the points made in submissions by USC who have noted that inclusion rather than exclusion is a more productive path to a diversified profession and that teacher preparation programs should be sufficiently rigorous to ensure that only the most committed and capable students move into the profession. As a result, we believe that attrition is not necessarily a negative thing, so long as the learning experiences and assessments are appropriately aligned to desired outcomes, that is, they are not unreasonable.

Illustrating these points are the practices of one of our programs The Middle Years of Schooling Bachelor of Education degree. The Middle Years of Schooling Teacher Education Program has a number of pathways, Dual Degrees and Graduate Entry. We do not set a base entry level OP for school leavers, but rather recruit from students who have already received an offer for a degree program at the University of Queensland. These students then proceed along a dual degree path with Education as a companion degree program.

Graduate Entry students enter with an appropriate first degree and a solid academic record. Applicants must also demonstrate other skills and interests in their application, including volunteer work and employment with children. If eligibility requirements are satisfied, prospective students are normally offered a place in the Bachelor of Education (Middle Years of Schooling) Graduate Entry program. However, if there are more applicants than there are places available, applicants are placed in an order of merit based on their academic results and offers made accordingly.

The University of Queensland offers the following dual degree programs for secondary teaching preparation:

- Agricultural Science/ Education
- Applied Science/ Education
- Behavioural Studies/ Education (MYS)
- Business Management/ Education
- Commerce/ Education
- Contemporary Studies/ Education (MYS)
- Economics/ Education
- Music/ Education
- Natural Resources/ Education
- Science/ Education
- Social Science/ Education
- Social Science/ Education (MYS)

The prerequisites for entry into the Graduate Entry Secondary teaching preparation program include, completion of an undergraduate degree and ability to satisfy the prerequisites for two teaching areas. The prerequisite for a teaching area is the equivalent of eight semester-long tertiary level courses in that discipline area. Where the second teaching area is related to the first, the prerequisite may be 5 – 6 semester long courses.

Students wishing to teach music, languages other than English and/or have a non-English speaking background are required to attend an interview to ensure appropriate level of musical/ language skills and knowledge.

We are confident that through our practice of evaluating and managing the offer of places to students with particular disciplinary expertise we provide an appropriate spread of specialisations to cater to the need to produce a balanced workforce for education.

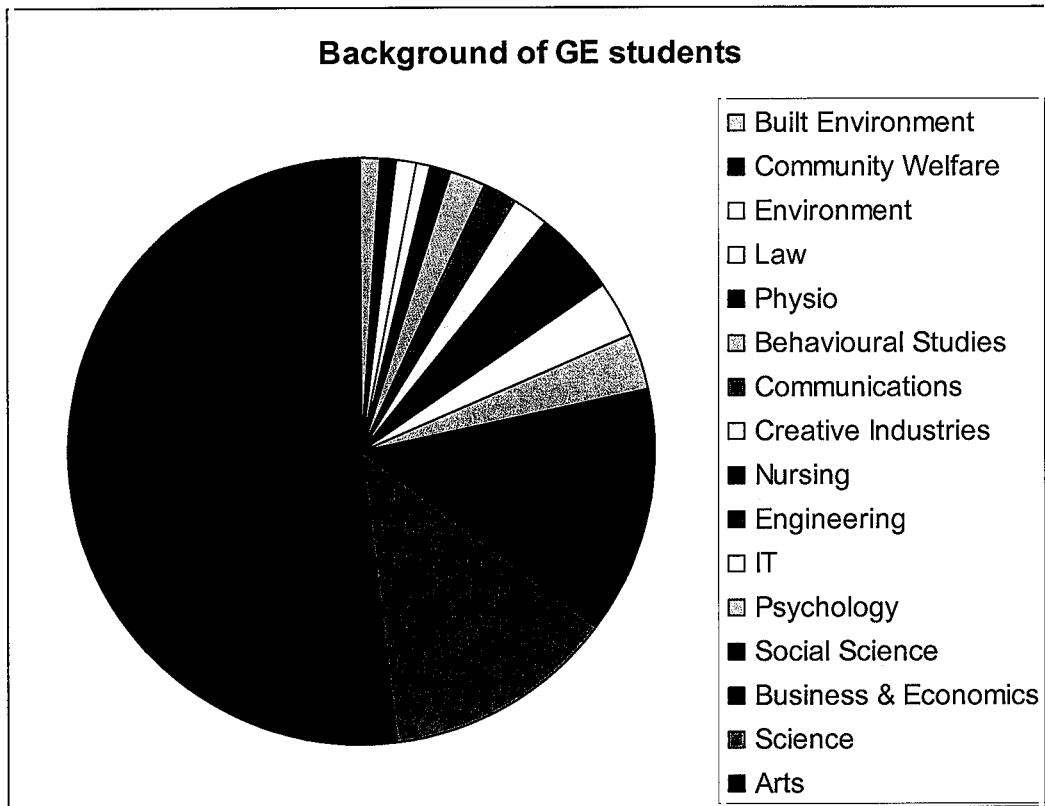
## ***TOR 2***

### **Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.**

There is considerable data to show that Academic performance is not a reliable indicator for teaching aptitude. Effective teachers need to be people who can communicate with young people. They need energy and commitment; they need to be engaging with a deep seated love of children and adolescents and of creatively designing learning experiences. These attributes are impossible to quantify and may not be evident on the pages of a CV, an academic record, or even in a personal interview. Therefore as discussed in TOR 1, we need to be inclusive rather than exclusive. We need to cast the net widely and then set in place carefully designed programs that allow people to develop into the quality professionals that we need.

The Graduate Entry programs however, are a particular challenge. We have limited time with these people to hone and develop their skills. Therefore we are a little more prescriptive with these applicants than with the Undergraduate students. We have found that Graduate entry students come from a wide range of academic backgrounds including Nursing, Science, Arts and IT (see Figure 1). They learn along with dual degree students, sharing skills and knowledge in a variety of assessment based task and group work. There are also a number of international students in the program. This reflects both the quality of our programs and their reputation overseas and the achievements of these students, who are often scholarship recipients in their own countries.

We are currently developing a tailored program for indigenous students that is responsive to the needs of indigenous students and indigenous communities, and which caters to teacher preparation of indigenous people. We anticipate that this program will be implemented from 2006. This program will also enhance the program for students without an indigenous identity by helping them to more fully develop their selves as responsive practitioners to diverse classrooms.



**Figure 1.** Background of Graduate Entry Students to the Middle Years of Schooling Degree.

**TOR 3**

**Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition.**

The University of Queensland is not concerned with attrition rates in the education programs. We have found that there are particular points in our pathways that see movement of students. For example, in the dual degree Middle Years of Schooling program, there is a decision point at the end of year two where students may elect to complete their first degree rather than move to the professional education component. We do find some students make this choice, and we respect this decision. We believe it is a strength in our programs that students can make informed decisions about their futures without severe penalties. In the secondary programs there is some movement at key decision points of the dual degrees. In the Bachelor of Education Graduate Entry Secondary programs we have a retention rate of approximately 80%.

It appears that once students enter the professional education components of their degrees, attrition is relatively low and exit interviews have highlighted that withdrawal is generally due to personal problems rather than issues with the course. Of concern is that most of these personal problems are related to the challenges of juggling family and finances for change of career mature age students. It is almost impossible to maintain a part time and successfully complete an Education degree given the intensity of the program and the requirement for full time day to day attendance during practicum and internships. Further, on the realisation that teaching is relatively lowly paid with little scope for financial advancement throughout their career in the profession, some mature entry students decide they cannot afford to teach.

A problem for the profession is not our ability to attract students, but rather how we retain them after they have qualified. Teaching is a comparatively low status profession. There is little acknowledgement of the commitment needed to continuing professional development, and there is wide spread low morale. Teachers bear the brunt of the media's blame for almost every societal wrong. They have seen an incredible increase in their work intensification in recent times, and they are tired. Teacher education programs develop people who have a range of capabilities that are desirable for many employer sectors and many teachers leave the profession at around the five year service mark. The indications are that we lose 30% of new teachers in 3 years and up to 50% in 5 years. We are educating for replacement in many cases. There is a paucity of research detailing where these people go when they leave the classroom.

However, in some teaching areas in the secondary program it is also difficult to attract viable cohorts of students from the university's perspective with regard to the feasibility of providing classes for very small numbers (e.g. Agriculture, Tourism, Hospitality, Studies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples).

#### ***TOR 4.***

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

We are a research intensive institution with high quality academics. Education faculty members are subject to the same system of promotion and appraisal as all other academics, therefore they have to perform in areas of research, teaching and public service. This means that there is ongoing development of research, commitment to the improvement of teaching, and service to the professional community within the school.

The issue of funding availability, or lack of it, for educational research has a direct impact on the career trajectories of academics in education faculties – despite the rhetoric of governments and commitment to research. In ARC funding for example we compete with Science and technology for the same pools of money - educational research is often less expensive than Science research and has an equally large impact on society and the economy, however last year only 9 projects in education were funded from the ARC nationally.

Academics in Universities have fallen behind in salary and so it is hard to attract new academics into education. Most senior classroom teachers earn more than early career University Academics, and yet the school based experience that these highly qualified and experienced academics offer is not a factor in determining their place on the promotional scale at University.

At The University of Queensland we employ teaching associates, course conveners and tutors who are master teachers with current relationships with schools and students. These experts complement our internationally renowned educational researchers. Our academic staff are fine University teachers as demonstrated by the Local, National and International Awards that staff as individuals, and in teams have received for Teaching Excellence, Program Design and the provision of Authentic Learning experiences. University Awards for Excellence in teaching are often won by people in the School of Education but there is nothing that targets Education

Academics for outstanding work in the field of Education as opposed to rewards available to other academic groups.

### ***TOR 5***

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

Staff at the University of Queensland, School of Education, come from a variety of research and theoretical paradigms. We believe that this is one of our great strengths. As a research intensive University we provide a unique environment for nurturing teachers as practitioner researchers. This orientation to teaching effectively prepares teachers to appropriately respond to the diverse needs of their schools and classrooms. Across the programs, students are introduced to a wide range of educational theory, research, and practice. We focus on developing teacher-researchers who will work in professional learning communities (Wenger, 1998). Socio-cultural models of teaching and learning provide a pathway for beginning teachers to navigate through the various paradigms and foster the development of well rounded professionals.

A further strength of the staff is our commitment to researching our own practices and the concurrent profile that develops from publications. The interrogation of practice is integral to the lives of teacher educators as they conduct research with teachers, and of teachers.

### ***TOR 6***

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

The School of Education is not a Faculty in its own right as is the case at many other tertiary institutions. We are embedded in the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences and as such benefit from collaboration with active researchers from a diverse range of social and behavioural research fields.

Cross-faculty relationships are integral and interdependent for students in dual degree programs in both Middle Years of Schooling and Secondary programs. The School has developed strong administrative partnerships through the dual degree programs with other faculties across the University. Specifically we have relationships with Arts and Humanities, Behavioural Studies, Social Science, Contemporary Studies, Business, Human Movements and Sciences. Students undertake pre-requisite courses within these Faculties and Schools, ensuring that they have an appropriate level of disciplinary content knowledge for teaching. Shared appointments between Human Movement Studies and Education, and Science and Education are an initiative that the University has undertaken.

## **TOR 7**

### **Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:**

- (i) teach literacy and numeracy;

All Qld syllabuses have a literacy and numeracy component and all pre-service teachers develop their literacy and numeracy pedagogical practices as integral components of their programs.

#### Literacy:

Literacy is explicitly taught in discipline areas through workshops and assignments, in accordance with BTR's second professional standard: *that graduates will possess and be able to apply a range of literacies relevant to their professional roles*. Students learn strategies both to improve their own literacy skills and the literacy skills of their students in their discipline areas. In addition, students undertaking the dual degree program take courses in Language and Discourse in Education, Media and Technologies. Students critically examine contemporary and traditional approaches to literacy. The School of Education is internationally recognised for research in this area (e.g multi-literacies, Literate Futures, phonics etc) and this feeds directly into our teacher education programs.

#### Numeracy:

Our programs promote preservice teachers' personal numeracy competence and prepare them to teach numeracy, in accordance with BTR's second professional standard. As well as the syllabus documents prepared specifically for this state, our courses consider national and international research and curriculum documents together with statements and policies relating to numeracy across the curriculum.

- (ii) teach vocational education courses;

We do not explicitly prepare teachers for vocational education settings. However, after graduation, several of our graduates have been employed in that sector. We do address the ETRF and issues for schooling in all of our programs.

- (iii) effectively manage classrooms;

Behaviour management is often mistakenly conceptualised as the application of selected skills from a generic toolkit of effective practices. This does not sufficiently account for the role of interpersonal relationships in the classroom for behaviour management. Our students come to understand themselves and their students as individuals which impacts on their development of behaviour management plans. We do respond to the perceived needs of our students in this regard by providing target seminars and workshops to develop positive behaviours and relationships. In our programs we also focus on developing our students' understanding and knowledge of extant policy and theoretical issues regarding behaviour management and the planning for behaviour management.



Queensland schools have recognised effective approaches to behaviour management and many contemporary programs and policies have derived from research emanating from collaborations with our School of Education academic staff (e.g. Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study). This brings particular benefits to the preparation of our pre-service teachers.

- (ii) successfully use information technology;

The BTR *Professional Standards for Beginning Teachers* (Board of Teacher Registration, 2003) and the UQ *Graduate Attributes* (The University of Queensland, 2002) both call for focus on the development of high level technological skills for productivity and communication for the enhancement of teaching and learning. UQ has a comprehensive e-learning platform that is used throughout the program for coursework and assignments. As such, technology is embedded. Some examples of the incorporation of technology include: multimedia productions, digital technologies, online coursework, assignments and discussion groups. When considering technology we carefully address ethics, how learning can be enhanced by effective uses of technology for the digital native generations, and how technology is transforming teaching and learning. We model the uses of technology for teaching and we explicitly teach how to use these technologies in course workshops as part of specific discipline areas.

- (iii) deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;

This TOR seems to promote a deficit model and a reductionist approach to issues of social disadvantage and behaviour management. As such, we refer the Committee to the statements made under TOR 7(iii) above.

- (iv) deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;

Courses which introduce students to pedagogies and practices around effective teaching of children with special needs and/or disabilities are elective for dual degree students and compulsory for graduate entry degree students. In the new program structure these pedagogies and practices will be addressed in the compulsory course "Teaching and Diversity".

Pedagogies and practices around diversity have been addressed collaboratively in some discipline areas. In English for example, students have undertaken collaborative planning projects with Special Needs Area curriculum students. This project represents a substantial element of their coursework, involving lectures, workshops, and the explicit teaching of collaborative strategies.

It should also be noted that one of the teaching areas offered to students is Special Needs.

- (v) achieve accreditation; and

Our programs are rigorously scrutinised internally by The University of Queensland Academic Board and externally by the BTR before they are accredited by the BTR as being appropriate for registration of graduates to teach in Queensland.

Beginning teachers are also prepared for accreditation and employment through the requirement of developing their own professional portfolios as part of practicum and their course studies.

The school is also responsible for the management and organisation of students to complete the required number of practicum days across their programs.

(viii) deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.

Our professional experience courses introduce students to the complex working environments that are our schools. However, their capacities to communicate and contribute within these are part of their ongoing induction to the profession. We do have a capstone experience where students are asked to develop a persuasive presentation for a professional audience regarding an issue of adolescence in schools and communities.

### **TOR 8.**

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

Schools and their staff play a significant role in the preparation of our pre-service teachers. We depend on them to provide places and supervision for practicum, and we involve schools in the development of our programs through the establishment and maintenance of reference committees. Schools provide us with valuable and necessary feedback regarding the progress and performance of our students during practicum and internship. Supervising teachers complete practicum evaluations that make comment regarding the achievements of pre-service teachers against the *National Competency Framework for Beginning Teachers*. Our program accreditation relies on the inclusion of specific types of practicum experiences, and we rely on schools to manage these collaboratively with us.

However, the partnership between universities and schools needs to be stronger. Factors that provide a challenge to improving this partnership include the limited budget available to the University to fund practicum and for University facilitators to visit schools. In the current climate individual schools decide whether they will accept students for practicum. The University has no control over who should be supervising teachers in the schools. This means some of the practicum teaching experiences have the potential to be of limited quality as some teachers who take pre-service teachers are not adequately trained for mentoring and supervision. This leads to large variability in students' practicum experiences and outcomes, added to this is the shortage of experienced teachers willing to accept pre-service teachers for practicum and/or internship.

This is an issue for the School as the burden for preparing teachers and paying supervising teachers falls to the University. None of the employing authorities in Queensland or the BTR contributes in any financial sense to practicum. However, the employing authorities and the BTR expect beginning teachers to have been mentored and supervised appropriately. It seems unreasonable that Queensland Universities bear both the financial and administrative loads for practicum experiences.

### ***TOR 9.***

#### **Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training.**

In Queensland, teachers are registered with no distinction made regarding sectors or limiting their employment. They are employed on the basis of their presentation to recruitment officers, and often find themselves teaching outside the nominated focus of their preparation programs.

UQ focuses on secondary and middle phases of education. The Middle Years of Schooling has been increasingly recognised as a crucial stage of schooling with significant consequences for ongoing educational success and future participation in society. There have been significant policy, structural and systemic changes in schools to accommodate the increasing awareness of the needs of early adolescent students. There have been substantial projects funded by DEST, MCEETYA and Education Queensland (SRLS study) that have pointed to the educational difficulties that emerge across the middle years of schooling and how they can be addressed through transformative practices known as the signifying practices for the middle years. The University of Queensland has been the first tertiary institution to develop and conduct a program that prepares specialists for teaching in the middle years.

In preparing teachers for the secondary sector, our teacher education moves across primary, middle and senior phases of learning through developing students' understanding of adolescent learners as they mature. Current syllabuses in Queensland from years one to ten recognise the stages of children's and adolescents' development through the adoption of outcomes based education levels which span both primary and secondary sectors.

### ***TOR 10.***

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

The University offers course work and research Masters programs. Staff in the School also supervise large numbers of EdD and PhD students who are often working as professionals within the field of education. Staff develop joint seminars and conferences with professional organizations. Many staff hold leadership positions in professional associations locally and nationally.

Individual staff share their expertise with teachers through delivering professional development workshops and seminars to schools in a range of discipline areas. There are several research projects within the School that involve ongoing professional development for teachers. For example the WriteIdeas project, funded by the ARC, provides workshops for teachers and ongoing support for implementing teaching strategies over a six month period.

Practising teachers should be encouraged to undertake higher degrees. However, there is little incentive from employing authorities in terms of acknowledging and rewarding such qualifications. In addition, educational authorities have to take more responsibility after initial training for the ongoing in-service of new teachers.

It could be argued that in general the funding and recognition for professional development are insufficient. Not only are postgraduate studies undervalued, but teaching as a profession is undervalued by the community. Central to the notion of developing effective teachers is the notion of life long learning. However, the lack of funding and support for these endeavours suggests that this remains an aspiration for many teachers rather than a reality.

### ***TOR 11.***

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

The School of Education is situated in the SBS Faculty. Funding from the Federal Government for pre-service teacher education programs is not passed directly to the School of Education by the University of Queensland. The University passes funding on to faculties according to a funding index for each faculty. In 2004/5 the School of Education received additional funds from the SBS Faculty and central administration of the University of Queensland specifically to assist with particular funding needs of the School.

It is still a struggle to operate pre-service teacher education programs given tight funding. Certain teaching areas such as science are relatively expensive given the resources/facilities required.

The strengthening link between funding and research is making it increasingly difficult for pre-service teacher course coordinators who are pressured, therefore, to devote more time to research in order to attract funding.

The current funding regime assumption that programs can be supplemented by full fee paying students is not correct for pre-service Teacher Education programs. Specific requirements in different countries result in challenges in attracting international or full fee paying students to the pre-service teacher education programs.

Worth noting are the particular circumstances of the Queensland schooling system which includes a number of remote and regional schools. It is difficult to fund rural placements within the parameters of our current allocation.

This document has been prepared by Dr Nan Bahr, Dr Karen Moni, Letitia Madden and Joy Reynolds in consultation with academic and administrative staff of the School of Education and the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, The University of Queensland.