

Submission to

House of Representatives' Inquiry into Teacher Education.

From –

Dr David Tripp, Associate Professor in Education, Murdoch University.

(Contact details and professional profile in Appendix 3)

FIVE ISSUES IN CURRENT AUSTRALIAN TEACHER EDUCATION

Introduction

This is a personal submission from an experienced practising teacher educator.

My main concern is with two crucial teaching and learning relationships in teacher education: theory with practice and universities with schools (Terms of Reference 7 & 8). I have not dealt separately with the list of areas specified in Term of Reference 7, as my concerns are general and underpin the ability of new graduates to deal with all of these.

1 Inadequately supervised school experience

Teacher education is under-funded and has been so ever since Dawkins' *Relative Funding Model* allowed only 0.3 additional EFTSU to cover all the clinical training necessary¹. Administration, travel and payments to co-operating school teachers can cost more than 0.3 of an EFTSU, allowing nothing for university supervision (Term of Reference 11).

University Schools of Education are coy about this, but financial constraints have rendered them no longer able to supervise and assess their students' school experiences in the ways they used to, and my understanding is that many of them do not supervise their students in the schools at all, and some don't even assess them².

Murdoch University is a typical example of diminished service: whereas in every school where we placed students we also placed a transportable resource and tutorial room, and staffed it with a full-time tutor whose job it was to work with the teachers in linking the students' on-campus learning to their school experience, we now only visit

¹ It was stated at the time that weightings of the Relative Funding Model were provisional estimates, and it was implemented on the condition that its effects would be monitored and the whole system evaluated after 3 years. Neither the monitoring nor the evaluation has occurred. University Schools of Education have difficulty in raising outside funds: there are no earmarked research funds, schools and State Ministries are already hard-pressed, and commercial companies gain no improvement to their bottom line from such investment. The result is that staff-student ratios have ballooned in teacher education, in some cases to over 30:1, and in my experience anything above 12:1 is a ratio that seriously inhibits professional learning and is not tolerated in TAFE's practical vocational courses.

² A major problem with this is that the university has no control over the quality of the school practice: most teachers are very skilled and take their support and supervisory role very seriously, but some are neither equipped nor interested enough to provide students with the experience they need.

the schools to see the students for one or 2 periods a week, and for their final 6-week practice, contact is a mere 2 hours/week. Furthermore, most of the school supervision is done by part-time contact staff who do not even teach in the university.

The result is that no one is there to mediate the students' generally theory-based university learning and the practical realities of teaching in a school. This is not only confusing for the students, it also inhibits a sound understanding of both theory and practice. This makes it very difficult for students to have a sufficient grasp of the practical implications of a theory for it to inform their teaching.

Similarly, university academics are denied the kind of access to schools that both shows them how their students are performing the schools, and keeps them up to date with the practicalities of teaching.

2 Dichotomised learning situations

This exacerbates the age old problem of the separation of on-campus teaching and learning from in-school practice. We know that the 'situatedness' of all teaching and learning is a key factor in students' understanding and application of knowledge. In the current situation, 'learning that' is separated from 'learning how', and both of these are so separated from the experience of actually doing it, and that jeopardises students' learning to teach effectively in a school, which is, of course, the bottom line.

What a person knows changes and is lost over even a short time, and it's well known that "Tests a few weeks or even days after instruction often show a decline in the information learned unless students are given a task requiring them to apply that knowledge³, and also that student learning is facilitated by "activities that require students to actively integrate and appropriately apply skills and conceptual knowledge"⁴.

Much of what students learn in their university courses is never put into practice, first because they learn it out of context, second because they often have to retain it for months before getting into a school, and third because once in school the situation where they could put it into practice, does not arise.

Even when universities arrange for students to go into a school on practice at the end of a semester unit, the practice will only be for 1 or 2 weeks, and there is no way that they can put into practice more than a fraction of what they have learned, for in each unit universities try to give students all that they need about a topic for their first few years of teaching.

³ Jenkins, A. Active learning in structured lectures. In Gibbs, G & Jenkins, A (eds.). (1992:63-77) *Teaching large classes in higher education: how to maintain quality with reduced resources*. London: Kogan Page.

⁴ Collins, A., Brown, J.S. and Newman, S.E. Cognitive apprenticeship: Teaching the crafts of reading, writing and mathematics. In L.B. Resnick (Ed.). (1989:455) *Knowing, learning and instruction: Essays in honour of Robert Glaser*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 453-494.

I would also argue (Terms of Reference 5 & 6) that there is a need for a very close look at what is currently taught to student teachers in universities, not because it is inappropriate in philosophical terms, but because of what it displaces. University teacher education curricula still tend to contain too much of the theories of the traditional academic disciplines, principally those of psychology and sociology.

It is appropriate to ask, for example, if it more useful for a beginning teacher to know about the major schools of psychology than about the kind of active listening and conflict resolution processes that can mitigate a child's rebellion against school discipline. Or whether statistical methods in test construction, or the theory of social class structure, are more important than how to foster collaborative learning relationships, or critical incident analysis for reflective practice? It is for such reasons that much of the so-called theory-practice gap is actually a theory-theory gap, created by the teaching context and content which is only marginally relevant to practice⁵.

Part of this problem is created by academic's focus on and allegiance to their background in the higher status and better established academic disciplines that compose so much of the teacher education curriculum. Whilst it is true that there are many more practice orientated staff employed in teacher education by universities, their lack of higher qualifications and research output means that they remain lower level contract staff. (Term of reference 4)

3 Learning to learn from experience

One solution currently being canvassed to both of the last two problems is to hand the majority of learning how to teach over to the schools. As the appalling failure of the attempt to do this in the UK shows, this cannot be seriously entertained. First, schools are designed, and teachers are trained, to teach children, not teachers. Second, teaching is seldom sufficiently routine to be a purely practical matter.

To expand the second of those factors, teacher education has to be based on the recognition that teaching involves the continuous application of expert professional judgement, and expert professional judgement is always informed by both deep and extensive professional knowledge and also the kind of personal understanding that comes from experience.

Academic learning is often contrasted with learning from experience, whereas each is essential to the other in an essentially vocational preparation program. Universities teach professional knowledge very well, and also contribute to learning from experience is that one doesn't learn from just having the experience, one learns from understanding the experience one has had. That involves high level intellectual skills, such as those of documentation, analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

⁵ Note that this is not to support a competency-based approach to teacher education: as this submission emphasises, teaching is also an intellectual process, and a sound theoretical understanding has always been essential (though not sufficient) to excellence in practice.

Such skills are acquired through developing the intellect rather than learning how things are routinely done; universities are best equipped to teach the former, schools the latter, but neither can be done effectively without their being closely linked in content (what's to be learned), context (time and place), and community (students, school and university staff working together as a learning-teaching team).

So why aren't such practices the norm? Learning from experience requires 1:1 and small group mentoring, which Schools of Education are not funded to do, and school teachers are not given the time or training to mentor student teachers or work with universities.

4 Not enough time

So do universities adequately develop their skills students' abilities to learn from experience? In my opinion, there is far too little provision for teaching them: not only is it too expensive, but there is simply too much to do in too short a time. Even though a university such as Murdoch extends the 2-semester DipEd year by 7 weeks, students still only receive 22 weeks formal university study.

One cannot help wondering at the priorities that provide vets with a full 2 years high level postgraduate clinical learning, whilst many teachers are supposed in just one year to learn enough about teaching to ensure that the effect that they have on our young people's lives is maximally beneficial. Who amongst us does not have teachers to thank or call to account for who and what we are today?

Even the 4-year full-time teaching qualification is inadequate: it's exactly the same amount of time that is deemed necessary for plumbers and spray painters to qualify in their trades.

And one has to bear in mind that 4-year B.Ed students spend less than 2 of those years studying teaching *per se*. The result is that many students are qualified without their having taken specialist courses on the teaching of reading or student behaviour management, for instance.

Why is it that when teaching is now such practically and intellectually demanding work, that we imagine we can equip students for it in the same amount of time as was deemed necessary 70 years ago?

Universities are often criticised for the quality of their graduating teachers, but they do not choose to deny teacher education students access to key understandings and experiences necessary to their work: the fact is that time and financial constraints mean that they are not allowed to give them much of what they need to know and be able to do.

It is a serious misjudgement to blame universities for the difficulties faced by beginning teachers when they are denied the resources necessary to meet the high standards demanded. Rather, the fact that in only 264 hours class time, universities manage to

prepare students to survive their first year of teaching and enable them to go on to become proficient professionals, is a considerable feat that should be acknowledged and rewarded.

5 Expert practice also requires academic knowledge and skills

Returning to the matter of professional judgement in teaching, the key characteristic of a profession (as opposed to a trade) is making and taking responsibility for expert judgements that seriously affect the well-being of others within a largely unsupervised sphere of care.

Judgement is necessary in finding an answer when –

- there is more than one good answer (and we need to choose the best);
- it's never happened before, so we don't have a good answer (so we need to invent one);
- we don't know if it's a good answer till we've done it (when it's too late to undo it or to try another);
- we have a dilemma (doing one thing excludes another, and both can have negative side effects).
- what we do with one person affects another (and what's good for one person is bad for another)
- there's a lot at stake (teachers do make a huge difference to people's lives).

All these situations arise many times in many ways in teaching. For instance –

- a 'simple' matter of management: *John's talking again when he should be working silently. Should I tell him to stop (and break the other students' concentration), and if so, what is the best way to do it?*
- an everyday concern with motivation: *How can I best interest these students in learning about the Australian system of government?*
- a routine matter of diagnosis: *Why is this child having such difficulty in learning the graphophonic correspondences of digraphs?* and remediation: *What must I do to help him overcome his difficulty?*
- a regular 'pastoral' problem: *Jane was looking really unkept this morning, and these days she always seems to be angry about something. Her work's fallen off and she's upset most of her friends too. Should I do something about it now?*

... and so on.

The sphere of care is exceptionally wide in teaching, and nothing is as simple as it may seem to an outsider. In fact, teachers often pre-emptively solve such problems so effectively that no one else realises there was a problem, nor just how skilled and knowledgeable they are.

I've been working on this for some years, so I've appended a couple of examples of teacher professional judgements (Appendix 1). One of these shows how a teacher's lack of time, understanding and ability to analyse an incident had undesired negative effects on the students concerned, and another how a teacher's lack of time, understanding

and ability to analyse an incident resulted in his considerable expertise and skill going unnoticed and unrewarded.

The point is that one kind of expertise is required to act routinely, and a very different kind of expertise is required to understand, evaluate and learn from one's actions when things don't go right or one's faced with a new situation.

To make and improve their professional judgements, teachers need both extensive practical experience and sound intellectual understanding; each may have to be taught and learned differently, but they must both be taught and learned in the same workplace-based context, and combine in an on-going career-long professional development process that must start in the undergraduate years⁶.

⁶ It makes little sense to conceptualise and administer pre- and in-service teacher professional development as two separate activities as we tend to do at present. There are, and need to be, differences between the two, of course, but it's more important to construct and implement a continuous and career-long teacher development process from a pre-service to leading advanced skills teacher. Teaching needs to become a learning profession, but one of the problems of the current split is that when they qualify teachers can cease to regard themselves as learners. In this regard I have also attached a draft copy of what such a conceptualisation of teacher professional development might look like (Appendix 2)

Some recommendations

- 1 The *Relative Funding Model* needs to be adjusted to improve staff-student ratios in university Schools of Education sufficiently to enable staff to mentor students individually and in small groups in partnership with teacher-mentors.
- 2 The initial teaching qualification should be a 5 year Master of Teaching program having the following features:
 - 2a Students should –
 - 1 be based in groups in schools, and present in schools throughout the school year;
 - 2 be released for training and study 2–3 days/week throughout the school year;
 - 3 be paid as assistant teachers for the days when not on study/training release;
 - 4 work in at least 2 different schools.
 - 2b Teacher-mentors should –
 - 1 be taking or have completed a Masters degree in teacher-mentoring;
 - 2 be released from their regular teaching to mentor trainees, beginning, and in-service teachers;
 - 3 help their students to prepare, implement and evaluate their teaching, and facilitate an action learning circle for their mentees;
 - 4 contribute to the on-campus teaching of student and in-service teachers.
 - 2c University academics should –
 - 1 be qualified and experienced school teachers;
 - 2 spend at least 30 days/year in schools;
 - 3 work in partnerships with teacher-mentors to document, analyse and explain the teaching and learning processes and outcomes of the teaching of both the mentees and mentors;
 - 4 take responsibility for information management processes to disseminate the knowledge gained (from 2b3).
- 3 The first year of teaching should be a mentored internship with at least 1/5 release for further study (based on the internees ' duties and experiences in their schools).

If (2) is not implemented, then (3) must provide for at least 2/5 teaching release for mentored learning from experience.
- 4 An evaluative review of teacher education qualifications that tells us what graduates find most helpful and why. It should use qualitative and quantitative methods and cover
 - a the content in terms of academic and practical knowledge and skill learning;
 - b the quality of the teaching in terms of staff, materials and the learning context.

Students should be surveyed before graduation and at the end of their first and third years of teaching.

Appendix 1

THE ANALYSIS OF TWO EXAMPLES OF TEACHING, ILLUSTRATING THE CONTRIBUTION ANALYTICAL SKILLS CAN MAKE TO THE UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVEMENT OF PRACTICE.

These examples demonstrate –

- the value of working on teachers' in-school experience in teacher professional development
- the way in which collaboration between university academics and practising teachers enable their different skills, knowledge and experience to come together to facilitate everyone learning from experience
- how the process enables school teachers to improve their educational understanding and teaching practices, and the academic to gain material to use in his teaching of both pre- and in-service teachers.

If we are to adequately prepare our teachers for the kind of work that teaching in the 21st century has become, then we need to create initial and in-service teacher professional development courses that are based on this kind of teaching and learning.

Incident #1: Slut!⁷

I have been waiting outside the deputy principal's office for more than ten minutes. There's a fair amount of shouting and screaming going on inside. Eventually two fifteen year old girls jostle out into the corridor, one visibly bearing the marks of nails across her cheek, the other with her dress torn. The Deputy Principal is looking tired and frustrated.

"Having a nice day, then?" I say with a sympathetic grin.

"You cannot imagine what these girls are like," he says. "They had a real fight and just because one called the other a slut. I was trying to get them to see about 'sticks and stones', but it's a waste of time. They won't listen. All that emotion and aggro just because they call each other names. They get so worked up about such unbelievably trivial things. It drives me crackers".

Like everyone else, we tend to judge everything from our point of view, but it's impossible to 'decentre' if we don't realise there is another point of view and how things look from there. And that is what seemed to me to be happening here.

One has to assume that these girls would not risk physical pain, humiliation from their peers, and punishment from teachers for no reason. To fight like that must mean that something important was happening. As this was not the point of view of the deputy

⁷ From: Tripp, D.H (1998) Educational theory and critical incidents, in Down, B. et al (eds.) *Teachers as researchers: reclaiming professional knowledge*. Perth: Murdoch University Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development.

principal, the students must have been working from quite a different set of premises to his. Behind the deputy principal's point of view, lies the fact that he'd much rather such fights didn't happen. One way to try to stop them occurring is to make the participants consider them to be unnecessary. Hence his invocation of 'sticks and stones'.

But although adults often pretend to children that name calling doesn't matter, they actually recognise how important it is, because, as with all proverbs, 'sticks and stones may break your bones' has its exact opposite in 'the pen is mightier than the sword'. And because the truth is that adults get so upset about an insult that they will sometimes go so far as to kill each other over it, we have institutionalised ways of handling them through the courts with the defamation laws. But these still do not stop insults destroying personal, institutional and community relationships, as these girls know perfectly well from television's reflection of our cultural norms.

In our current adult culture we don't inevitably react extremely and/or violently to every insult; it depends on the insult, who insults and is insulted, when, where, why and after what the insult occurs, . . . and so on. So the difference does not lie in differences between adult and adolescent behaviour as such, but in the kind of insult and situation to which anyone in a particular culture would respond by fighting.

Here the deputy principal was using a two pronged approach: he was trying to tell them that one should not fight over name calling, and also trying to get the students to categorise use of the insult 'slut' as not worth fighting over. As is so often the case when adults deny common adult forms of behaviour to children, ambiguity occurs: the fact that he thinks it not "worth" fighting over is a valid view, reveals the untruth of the idea that people do not fight over insults.

Apart from that, there is another reason why the girls were not to be persuaded of the pointlessness of their fight. In their culture, the appellation 'slut', if it sticks, is a very serious matter because it means that the girl is promiscuous. As my fourteen year old daughter matter of factly observed when I asked her about this: *'Well, if she's a slut she won't get a proper boyfriend. (Why?) Because boys'll only go out with her when they want . . . well, you know . . . when they want a slut.'* That's very serious, especially in a small community. And as with all social constructions, it doesn't much matter whether the category is 'true' or not, if it is thought to be true the effects are just as real as if it were.

In this sense, the girl who was insulted had to defend her reputation. One situation in which a girl would be likely to be called a slut is when she begins going out with another girl's boyfriend, as frequently and naturally happens in adolescence. The situation is therefore common and unavoidable in as much as a displaced girl would use the term both because it would be a real revenge if she could make it stick, and because it might help her to get her boyfriend back again. Looked at in that way, such name calling is, for adolescents, much more worth fighting over than many of the insults about which adults choose to fight.

What then could and should the deputy principal do? The answer is, of course, that, It depends, depends on the participants, context, and so on. All that one can suggest is

that it is better in all sorts of ways, even if the girls' behaviour has to be punished, that they know that their motives are at least understood and taken seriously. In this regard, it is the teacher's lack of knowledge of the differences between his and his learners' cultures which causes a problem, not only for him, but for his learners also. If we don't understand the nature of a culture we cannot know when we're being dysfunctionally culturally adultocentric.

A more general point I would draw from this example are that although deputy principals do continually meet such problems, they do not appear to be given the kind of professional development that provides the kind of understandings that enable them to deal with their clients most effectively. Perhaps one reason for this is that, again so far as I know, there is no easily available and continually updated research literature that describes and explains the teenage norms that give rise to incidents such as this one.

I therefore see this incident as yet another example of the way in which teachers are so badly positioned professionally. This deputy principal is expected to maintain discipline in the school, and will be blamed if things go wrong, but he neither has access to a body of relevant expert information to draw on, nor does he have the kind of (anthropological/ sociological) analytic expertise that would enable him to act in an interpretive fashion about such a situation. Without this knowledge and expertise, he cannot achieve her goal of persuading the girls to adopt the culture he is expected to represent.

It is important to recognise how the academic study has contributed to this analysis. Theories of culture have been developed in anthropology, sociology and social psychology, but the main message is that any conflict between people who are members of different groups will almost certainly have a cultural dimension, and knowing this cues us to look at the cultural aspects of a practical professional problem such as the above.

Also, it is the knowledge of what cultures are and how they operate which enables us to recognise a cultural conflict when we see one, then how to investigate and understand it, and thence how to deal with it. It was access to the sociological theory of sub-cultures which gave me, an academic, an insight into the situation which could lead to a better practice than that then being used by the far more experienced and able school teacher.

Incident #2: Settling Down 2⁸

A teacher enters a very noisy classroom to start the lesson.

Teacher *Rick is that you making all the noise?*

Rick *No Sir!*

Teacher *Well then, who is making all the noise?*

⁸ Tripp, David. H. (1993:4-6) *Critical Incidents in Teaching: The Development of Professional Judgement*, London and New York: Routledge.

The class noise subsides as students take interest in the conversation between the teacher and Rick. Silence. The teacher looks round all areas of the classroom.

As with any skill, something a beginner finds very difficult is effortless to the real expert. ... [this] very experienced teacher walked into the classroom and immediately singled out an individual. Experienced teachers have a large repertoire of such techniques for subduing noisy classes. This one works by turning attention towards a particular and therefore limited interaction of which the teacher is in control. And, though it's only actually transacted between the teacher and a single pupil, the event becomes a focus for the whole class whose attention remains on the teacher when he or she terminates the exchange. The teacher controls the event, and thereby controls the class.

But does employing the technique as expertly mean that [the teacher] is a professional, or rather merely a thoroughly competent practitioner? Being able to do something and knowing how one does it are two different aspects of being professional about something. Understanding what it is one does and how one does it, however, involves a different aspect of professionalism: it is a matter of being intellectually expert about expert practice. It is in learning from experience that these two come together: one does, and one thinks about how and what one is doing. So although most people become expert practitioners through actually doing the job, skilled professional teaching is also an intellectual matter.

For most teachers the intellectual side of their expert performance consists of two kinds of reflection: evaluation (*'Did it work? What else could/should I have done? How could I do it better?'*), and wisdom (*There is more to discipline than merely maintaining it: how the pupils feel about being disciplined affects how they will respond next time*). These ideas are a kind of craft knowledge, some of which is included in teachers' pre-service education, but is more often transmitted by experts to novices as on-the-job advice.

... a teacher who was acting reflectively would not only observe whether silence was achieved or not, but would also consider the way s/he had handled the pupil's feelings and whether to accept an uninvited answer because it was a useful one.

... Reflective teaching is therefore essential to a professional approach to practice. But in all the major professions there's another intellectual ingredient of practice: being able to explain and thereby justify what one does through a more knowledgeable, rigorous, and academic analysis.

[The 3-lines of dialogue above was extracted from] ... a lesson transcript made for part of an assignment in a higher degree course in education. The teacher brought it to me saying he'd recorded a lesson, but couldn't think of anything to say about it 'as nothing in particular had happened'. This suggests that although the teacher is expert in what he does (he is so experienced a practitioner, in fact, that he takes his skill totally for granted), but he is not professional in the sense of possessing an understanding of how he has done it, nor does he possess the means of gaining that understanding. One kind

of expertise is required to make a lesson happen, and a very different kind of expertise and knowledge to diagnose what actually went on in it.

Many teachers have learned to use the 'single interaction' technique of subduing a whole class, but few could provide more than the basic explanation of how it worked that I've already given. Academic skills, however, are very powerful tools which, when applied to apparently simple practices, yield some interesting insights. So let's have another look at the analysis of incident #2 in a slightly more academic fashion to see what really happened.

A common form of analysis is to examine the language used, but few teachers are taught to do this in their professional education. Here the teacher began by saying, "*Rick, is that you making all the noise?*" [showing that] ... this teacher knows who to pick on and what his name is ...

But more interesting is the fact that the teacher seems to have said something rather silly: he was asking a single boy if he was solely responsible for what was obviously a whole class noise. Why should the teacher do that? By asserting something that was patently untrue, the teacher was actually providing a let-out for the pupil: it was a nonsensical accusation which the pupil could sensibly and legitimately deny, even if he were a prominent noise maker, because a single pupil could only contribute to whole class noise, not make it alone.

Thus the teacher, whilst calling attention to the noise Rick was making, actually made Rick appear more rational and sensible than the teacher who was disciplining him. The accusation had the same effect as if it had been true, but because it quite clearly wasn't, the teacher did not then have to admonish or punish the pupil. The teacher then deliberately continued to assert that there must be one person making all the noise ("*Well then, who is making all the noise?*") which, with his gaze directed at everyone in the room, told the others that he was about to pick on someone else, so they all stopped talking and sat down.

Without anyone being punished or losing face, the whole class was instantly and effectively silenced, and apparently simply because the teacher structured a false accusation around the word '*all*'. If the approach were informed by craft knowledge it would probably be something like, '*Pick on individuals!*'; and, at a more reflective level, '*The key to good discipline is to maintain it without building resentment and thereby producing further resistance.*' One can only admire the technical expertise of teachers who develop such ways of achieving it.

Such skill is of a level and kind that is much more akin to practice in the major professions such as medicine and law, than it is like that of tradespeople such as carpenters or motor mechanics. It is also important to recognise that all competent teachers possess such skills and experience to perform in classrooms in that way. So why is it that teachers do not have the social status, conditions of work and material rewards of medics and barristers?

One reason is that so few people, even those within the profession (teachers included), are aware of what teachers actually do, or of their impact on their clients. Teachers, like the one in the example above, who display all the qualities of skill and experience as they go about their job in a routine fashion, are in one sense highly professional. But if they are not also able to articulate the specialist conduct knowledge or identify the judgements that underlie what they do, they are in another sense tradespeople rather than professionals.

Appendix 2

4 KINDS OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHER

David Tripp
Murdoch University
Western Australia

In teacher education there is a strong tradition of teaching prescribed content and strategies, an approach to 'teacher training' similar to that of the trades; but in contrast to the trades, teaching is a very 'indeterminate practice' (Pratte, 1986) because it is characterised by the need to determine courses of action in situations where knowledge is too limited for there to be a single or obvious 'right answer'. The current reappearance of the trades training model under the guise of 'teacher competencies', shows how few people outside education realise that teaching is such a very complex interpersonal process that often teachers cannot not just know the one 'right' thing to do, because there is no one right thing to do, so they have to make 'expert guesses' or 'professional judgements' about what they do, when and how they do it.

Everyone agrees that the quality of teaching is a result of what a teacher actually does, and those who would reduce teaching to a set of competencies overlook the fact that it is not possible to specify what a teacher should do in every one of the hundreds of decisions, many of which require professional judgement, they have to make every day. As professional judgement depends upon who a teacher is – their attitudes and values, and what knowledge and experience they are able to draw on – any solely competency approach to teacher training would also have to specify the kind of personal qualities, knowledge and understanding that would lead a teacher to decide on the one best thing to do from a number of possible courses of action. An impossible task, of course.

There are, however, a number of characteristics that would appear to be essential to professional practice as a teacher, some of which are relatively straight-forward matters of competency. I have listed what I regard as the most important aspects of what it is to be a professional teacher in terms of the kind of development that one might expect from a beginning teacher to an expert professional, and in that sense they present a career structure:

- 1 A Pre-Professional should be someone who –
 - a has an eclectic general education;
 - b loves, and is fascinated by, teaching and learning;
 - c is a safe, non-abusive person for learners to be with;
 - d is learning about, and how to learn about, learners and learning.
- 2 A Novice Professional is one who –
 - a is a positively good person for learners to be with;
 - b knows how to learn about learners and learning;

- c can competently manage a limited repertoire of ways of teaching and learning;
 - d knows enough about learning and their learners to make some well-informed and effective professional judgements about most of their learners and many aspects of their learning.
- 3 An Experienced Professional is one who also –
- a can expertly manage an extensive repertoire of teaching and learning strategies;
 - b knows enough about learning and their learners to quickly and accurately make effective professional judgements about all their learners and all aspects of their learning;
 - c has a sound theoretical understanding of current teaching and learning practices;
 - d helps less experienced colleagues to learn about and improve their teaching and learning.
- 4 A Leading Professional is one who also –
- a develops and manages teams of teachers;
 - b designs and develops educational improvements and innovations for other teachers;
 - c contributes to the stock of professional knowledge through published research;
 - d is active in the development of educational policy and regulation of the profession.

All professional teachers should at all times –

- a be positively good people for others, particularly learners, to be with;
- b be learning about learners, learning, and education throughout their career;
- c be able to explain and justify their values and professional practices;
- d have a critical stance towards their profession and professional practice;
- e continually improve their practice through inquiry, experiment and reflection.

Based on:

Tripp, D. (1997) Submission to the Australian Senate Inquiry on the Status of Teaching.