

ACE FOCUS GROUP ON TEACHER EDUCATION

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Introductory remarks

Earlier this year the Federal Minister for Education launched a National Inquiry into Teacher Education. This inquiry will have considerable implications for Teacher Education in the Northern Territory and it is imperative that ACE (NT) make a submission. Besides the federal inquiry into Teacher Education, there are also several other developments which need to be considered. These include:

- The inquiry into quality in the Practicum being carried out by NIQTSL which has issued draft guidelines for discussion (NIQTSL 2005). (Available from <http://niqtsl.edu.au/index.html> by going to Projects)
- The Framework for Professional Standards for Teacher Education devised by MYCEETA (2003) which all States and Territories are currently addressing. (Available from <http://www.austcolled.com.au/rand.php?id=209>)
- The review of programs being carried out by The School of Education at CDU. A number of programs require re-accreditation including the Bachelor of Education (both Inservice and Preservice), the Joint Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Science degrees, and the Graduate Diploma in Education. This requires a close consideration of the recommendations included in the Secondary Education Review (CDU/NTDEET 2004).

The time is therefore opportune for the Northern Territory branch of the ACE to hold a focus group on Teacher Education with a view to make a submission to the inquiry reflecting the views of educators within the Northern Territory.

The focus group questions are drawn from the issues identified for discussion in the National Inquiry into Teacher Education, and include a consideration of workplace learning and professional standards.

Complexity and diversity

This focus group has been convened to examine a number of issues concerning the future of Teacher Education in Australia. This is a highly complex task made more difficult because of:

- the multiplicity of client groups and stakeholders which include those involved in Child Care within NT;
- the effects of globalization and the intensification of work both for teachers in the schools and university-based teacher educators;

- the emergence of the risk society and concern over social futures and the management of change;
- the ensuing relationship between education and employment;
- the complexity of local, regional, and national requirements bearing in mind our international obligations;
- different belief systems and cosmologies in the classroom;
- differing conceptions of knowledge giving rise to contested views of the curriculum and course organization, giving rise in turn to
- competing pedagogies;
- confusion over the relationship between teaching and learning;
- the politicizing of education and the increasing desire of neo-rightist and neo-conservative governments to exert political control and limit teachers' autonomy through governmentality;
- the recognition of difference and diversity; and
- the need to optimise choice to address individual needs and learning styles.

Such complexity prevents the emergence of a one-size-fits all solution. There can be no one *right* way although there may well be *better* ways to undertake teacher education depending on the local context and one's definition of 'the good'.

Differing agendas

The situation is made even more complex by the differences in the agendas of the University Faculties and Schools of Education, and those of the schools themselves. These differences remain unresolved in some jurisdictions due in part to a failure to collaborate and accept shared responsibility for teacher education.

Context and situation

Recent research into the socio-cultural aspects of teaching has highlighted the need to take into account the local context in which teaching and learning take place. In common with other small regional universities in Australia, the School of Education at Charles Darwin University has to address a variety of diverse educational contexts: temporal (or historical), spatial and geo-physical, environmental and ecological, intercultural and plural. At the same time it has fought hard to remain connected to, and to influence, the evolution of education at all levels throughout Australia, whilst resisting the way in which higher education in the Northern Territory has been imagined and constructed from outside of the Territory by the southern states.

Distinction between teacher *education* and teacher *training*

It should be noted at the outset that the focus adopted in this ACE inquiry emphasises the need for teacher *education* as distinct from teacher *training*. The Senate Inquiry uses teacher education in the title but then proceeds to use the term teacher training. The latter trivializes teacher preparation. It is associated with functionalist, utilitarian and technicist forms of teaching accompanied by monitorial and traditional industry-based

apprenticeship approaches as distinct from cognitive apprenticeships which can enhance learning. The former incorporates a consideration of 'big picture' issues which relate to socially critical issues and social futures. We will return to this distinction when we focus on the philosophical approaches to be adopted.

The gravity of the situation facing Teacher Education and the schools

All the indicators suggest a lack of confidence in public education and teacher preparation. Unfortunately, much discussion involves tinkering around the edges in an attempt to fix a bankrupt system. Nothing short of a transformation of teacher education and the schools will suffice. This means adopting a completely new paradigm based on transformative learning (Grenfell 2005).

ACE FOCUS GROUP ON TEACHER EDUCATION

1. ENTRY LEVELS

FOCUS QUESTION: What should be the criteria for entry into Teacher Education programs?

Introductory comments and related questions

There has been much comment on the low entry levels of students embarking on Teacher Education courses. Some graduates from Teacher Education courses have been considered practically illiterate or lacking in numeracy.

What should our policy be on entry levels? How can they be strengthening? What would be the effect of raising them considerably? What constitutes adequate literacy and numeracy? Should potential teachers be tested on entry as they are in many United States jurisdictions (Zeichner and Schulte, 2001)? Could a program of Common Units such as that employed at CDU be modified to address these issues? Should students be expected to pursue qualifying courses? Should we adopt a profiling system in conjunction with the schools and employers? Should we be focusing on exit levels rather than entry levels? Should we be addressing coping and coping strategies?

Contributions from the group:

- **Need to identify the qualities that are essential to becoming a teacher.**
- **The convenor cited recent work carried out by V Mohan-Ram which suggests over three quarters of students on entry, lack basic Mathematical skills. In language teaching, work by Dr Jennifer Rennie and Dr Helen Harper at CDU suggests few if any students understand the grammatical system of English.**

- **One participant preferred 'the harder word, competencies'. 'There is something to be said for what people already have competence in'. The group agreed the major issue was the validation of these competencies.**
- **There was little support for testing as introduced overseas although several participants suggested some form of psychological or aptitude testing should be re-introduced. 'A two hour viva might be worthwhile.' 'The profession must not be brought down to the lowest common denominator of need'.**
- **There was little enthusiasm for the suggestion that the profession be more closely associated with selection procedures and developing student profiles. Some participants believed there was more at stake than just basic literacy and numeracy.**
- **'Days of blaming the product on those below us, have gone.' Blame was 'not on the agenda'. The majority saw it as a question of putting support structures in place. 'Once the students have got in above the bar, the University must ensure they have the skills.'**
- **Danger of becoming too 'precieux'. There are so many ways of teaching. What do we want to share in the way of attributes and qualities?**
- **Different pathways and different attitudes. One participant suggested using the concept of portfolio entry which has been adopted by the University of South Australia in an attempt to overcome low retention rates. Working with lower socio-economic groups and poor oral literacy skills, the overall exit rate was found to be as good if not better.**

2. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

FOCUS QUESTION: Should the provisions for RPL be liberalized to include recognition for community service and to make it easier for people from other relevant professions to enter teaching?

Introductory comments and related questions

Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future supports intensive and accelerated teacher education pathways for those seeking to enter science, technology and mathematics teaching from other relevant professions. (DEST 2003, Action 22, p23).

Efforts to provide for those who have had extensive experience in a particular trade or industry and are contemplating a career change, have not been supported in the NT, where the schools operate in an environment of stultifying regulations and restrictive staffing policies. The current proposals for the extension of middle schooling and a

liberalized approach to RPL contained in the Secondary Education Review (NTDEET/CDU, 2004) could create a number of opportunities for those with relevant practical experience gained elsewhere to move into teaching.

Contributions from the group

- **There were strongly felt objections to the privileging of science, technology and mathematics.**
- **The BEd secondary program at CDU already makes provision for people with a trade to move across into teaching. This flexibility is less evident at the primary level.**
- **Some questioned the presupposition behind the questions. Did provisions for RPL need liberalizing? The group generally felt that the profession should resist any diminution of standards.**
- **One participant felt that the question couldn't be addressed unless question 9, dealing with the philosophy of education, was dealt with first. Our philosophy should underpin our practice in this area.**
- **Question arose because of the general perception that the Universities made it too difficult to obtain RPL, and were simply exercising their power and authority.**
- **Some participants asked why the insistence on liberalizing RPL? Was it due to an impending shortage of teachers? 'Is this any reason for lowering standards? Do we just bow down to political imperatives?'**
- **The way RPL was structured in the Universities gave distinct advantages to those with the required cultural capital. The problem concerns those who 'don't know how to put it together'.**
- **There was a need for published criteria and greater transparency. 'There are other professions out there that have those models in place, if we want to take them on.'**
- **We should concentrate on generic outcomes, rather than a body of knowledge. The example of a hairdresser put forward. Such a person possessed particular form of professional knowledge, practical knowledge and professional values which should be acknowledged.**
- **Failure to demonstrate recent and relevant study was often cited as a way of blocking RPL.**

3. IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENT INTAKE

FOCUS QUESTION: How can we attract high quality students into our courses, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences?

Introductory comments and related questions

There are a number of factors that deter young people from undertaking teacher education courses. These include:

- The self-serving, intimidatory rhetoric from politicians, bureaucrats, and university academics surrounding quality and excellence.
- The pedestrian nature of much of the students' own classroom experience in their 12 year apprenticeship in outmoded schools.
- The alienation, disengagement and apathy experienced by many young people, and the lack of respect accorded to them by their teachers. (Smyth et al 2000)
- The managerialist model adopted by many jurisdictions, which has undermined the humanistic, humanitarian and communitarian efforts of many dedicated teachers.
- The irrelevance of much curriculum content and the failure to engage with community to make learning authentic, relevant and challenging. (Thompson 2002)
- The nineteenth century attitudes to knowledge, control and authority exhibited by the Universities themselves.

With reference to the inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds, the CDU experience suggests that in the case of Indigenous students, the number of applicants increases, and attrition is reduced, where there are committed staff who:

- are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent themselves
- act as positive role models;
- are expert at boundary crossing;
- engage students in culturally appropriate pedagogy;
- have high expectation; and
- can provide social support through mentoring programs, the creation home rooms and group-based activities,

The provision of scholarships and other forms of financial assistance by NTDEET for students willing to teach in rural and remote areas, can also boost enrolment. However, a fully-fledged internship program, whereby students are actually paid as interns in the

final two years of the course; protocols are drawn up which are binding upon Education Departments and employers to ensure the provision of proper resources, housing and supervision; and excessive HECS fees are rebated, would contribute significantly to increased enrolment. (See *Draft Guidelines for Quality in the Practicum*, NIQTSL, 2005 in which all of these ideas are canvassed).

How do we ensure that prospective teachers of science, technology and mathematics be offered incentives, including payment of their HECS debt, housing assistance, scholarships, and/or paid internships, to qualify as teachers in those fields and to take up teaching appointments as suggested in *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future* (DEST 2003, Action 13, p19)?

Contributions from the group:

This question was not specifically addressed. There appeared to be resistance to any idea that the schools may be in some way responsible for the quality of the student intake. The factors laid out above were said to be written in 'unhelpful and emotional language' and the accompanying research ignored. The convenor explained that these issues tend to be 'non-discussables' and had to be brought out into the open.

4. COLLABORATION WITH NTDEET, THE TEACHER REGISTRATION BOARD, CHILDREN'S SERVICES, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

FOCUS QUESTION: How can collaboration between CDU and other agencies and departments be improved?

Strong, enduring and close links between schools and Teacher Education institutions are rare in Australia (Lovatt, 2003). What can be done to improve collaboration in the Northern Territory? Before we can begin to answer that question we need to determine the meaning of collaboration here. In what ways do the agendas of the Universities and the schools differ? How can we change the current top-down hierarchical consultation model such as that existing between NTDEET and School of Education in which 'liaison' is perceived by some staff as keeping abreast of developments to maintain their own political position? How can we build an ethos? How can we ensure the presence of bottom-up, generative models? Collaboration and the acceptance of shared responsibility is required at all levels: course design and delivery; continuing professional learning; and workplace learning and the practicum. How can we provide for seamless movement between schools and University? How do we ensure constant maintenance and updating? How can we improve credibility?

Contributions from the group.

- **A lot of work has been undertaken in this area. Collaboration was more cohesive and extended than previously, but still patchy.**

- **How can the progress be maintained? Organised on short term basis.**
- **The MOU between NTDEET and the University was welcomed, but 'classroom teachers not aware of the structures and therefore can't work with this.'**
- **Participants stressed the importance of seconding of teachers with the express purpose of building closer relationships. This was currently working exceptionally well but such secondments need to be given more time for liaison and not be expected to acquire full time teaching load.**
- **A number of participants asked what we were collaborating on? The sharing of resources, the sharing of professional knowledge and expertise, the sharing responsibility for the prac? Difficulties were mentioned where the collaborating teacher's assessment was over-ridden or not acted upon.**
- **In fact we were not just talking about participation, but collaboration at all levels 'with teachers driving the process and engaging and telling us how they think teacher education should be undertaken'. For some participants it all boiled down to a question of ownership and input. Collaboration is hard to quantify, but it must include element of professional learning.**
- **Collaboration can only be based upon equitable, open, two-way communication. There need to be forums for people to have their say and raise the countenance of teaching. For example the transformative education conference at CDU at the end of the final secondary practicum, contributing to forums such as the ACE forums, and working with national bodies on curriculum projects such as citizenship education, and developing contacts at the grass-roots level.**
- **The group recommended continuation of professional support for collaboration with management of public and private bodies through the MOU at all levels, but should address issues of the availability of expertise and resources, and deal with intellectual property concerns.**
- **The Commonwealth should also broker relationships between Teacher Registration Authorities, the Universities and other providers of preservice education.**
- **Closer collaboration with Principals' Association was called for. Role of principal is crucial. DEET has no way of ensuring, for example that**

practicum initiatives are taken up. We need to be developing relationships with those who are 'quite passionate about teaching'.

5. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

FOCUS QUESTION: What are the implications for the adoption of professional standards within the Northern Territory?

It is generally believed that the Beginning Teacher Competencies have outlived their usefulness. However what some see as their greatest deficiencies such as the lack of specificity and the degree of overlap, others see as ensuring divergence, promoting reflectivity, and overcoming fragmentation.

The criticisms of the Beginning Teacher Competencies in the MCEETYA Framework are misplaced. The criticisms are ideologically conceived and treat the Beginning Teacher Competencies as if they were VET-type competencies. The MCEETYA Framework claims that 'defining teachers' work through competencies, not only deskilled teachers, but also reinforced teachers' practices as reproductive of schooling rather than transformative' and that 'competencies have the potential to fragment, technicise, and decontextualise teachers' work' as well as 'restrict teachers' professional growth rather than transform and extend it'. (MYCEETYA 2003, p2)

In the hands of skilled teacher educators both within the schools and the universities, the Beginning Teacher Competencies formed the basis for reflective discussion and action learning. Whitty's work on which the taskforce relies, was carried out with a very different set of VET-type competencies. The National Framework undertakes no comparative analysis between the proposed standards and the competencies. For example, the description of professional relationships on p11 says little more than the former competency. 'Teachers are to value opportunities to actively engage with other members of the profession to enhance the learning of their students'. 'They work productively with colleagues and other professionals to enhance the learning of their students...' The collaborative reports produced by cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers demonstrate the diverse ways in which this occurred at CDU. They are redolent with the 'trust, respect and confidence' which imbue the professional standards. In fact, the criticisms of the competencies offered by collaborating schools was (1) 'You cannot ensure that all the competencies will be met', and (2) 'The competencies are not specific enough. They give the student too much room to manoeuvre'.

Professional standards should underpin all work in Teacher Education and provide the basis for collaborative work with the schools. We believe we know a great deal about what makes a good school and what constitutes teaching excellence. However the desired outcomes are *politically* defined according to the framework adopted, and the way the standards are interpreted. For this reason, the central question should be who will have ownership of Professional Standards?

In addition we need to ask:

What is the place of subject content knowledge and professional or pedagogical content knowledge? How can we accommodate the competing demands of professional associations and subject specialists? How do we make theory accessible, so that its practical applications contribute to improved teaching and learning?

Contributions from the group

This question was not explicitly addressed but professional standards were cited in addressing a number of other questions. The importance of professional standards was endorsed by all present. One member of the group summed this up as follows: Preservice teacher learning outcomes must drive practicum conversations and experiences. These are currently being further developed in conjunction with the NT Professional Standards for Teachers. Stakeholders from the entire education community are involved in this process, which is convened by the Director of the Teachers' Registration Board. Before graduation, preservice teachers reflect on each of the learning outcomes and provide evidence of demonstration of each outcome. This is done through portfolio, narrative, critical incident journals and oral presentations. Evaluation of the learning journey models authentic assessment principles and provides opportunities to contextualise outcomes to suit the range of experiences affected by remote, indigenous, independent, large and small urban and middle schools.

6. THE CONCEPT OF 'TEACHER READY' (DEST 2005)

FOCUS QUESTION: Is it possible to speak of getting a student 'teacher ready' (DEST 2005)?

Introductory comments and related questions

We need to be clear what we mean by the term 'teacher ready'. For some, 'teacher-ready' implies a deficit model which is not consistent with the new paradigm. The assumption is that problems faced by neophyte teachers rest with the neophyte teacher, and are the result of teacher preparation processes. Doreen Rorrison and Iolanthe Sutton at CDU argue that we need instead to be talking of teacher receptivity or teacher responsiveness, and to take into account the out-dated nature of the schools themselves, the restrictive practices encountered there, and the managerialist emphasis which negates so much professional work.

Fenstermacher (1990), cited in Zeichner and Schulte (2001), claims it is not possible to assess the true impact of teacher education on teachers until after the beginning years of teaching. He suggests that the earliest this can be done is between 3 and 5 years after

completion by which time, in the Australian context, a large percentage will have left the profession, anyway.

Contributions from the group

This is the question that attracted the greatest interest.

- **The President of the Principals Association introduced a Secondary Principals Association study (2005) which suggests there are a number of challenges new teachers are not prepared for, particularly dealing with parents.**
- **The general feeling of the group was that 'you can never produce a student who is teacher ready in all areas'. The way preservice teachers are introduced to the profession produces 'an overstimulation of the senses. They are shocked at the continual onslaught, day after day'. It was agreed that you cannot prepare people for some things. An experienced teacher who had been teaching for thirty years recently had a parent beat up his partner in her office. 'How do you prepare somebody for that?'**
- **Nevertheless, it was thought we had to try to prepare people mentally for the reality.**
- **One participant believed there was a need for training in conflict resolution. This is already part of Professional Communication course in many Universities and forms the basis of case studies and simulations at CDU..**
- **Another participant thought the move towards professional standards will move us away from a preoccupation with 'teacher ready'.**
- **There are areas where we would expect teachers to be teacher ready such as literacy teaching and ESL. There are instances however in rural and remote schools where new teachers are unable to get started. They feel totally unprepared. They cannot get the assistance of other staff because they are all overstretched and just too busy. This is where some of the complaints come from. Teaching staff feel let down, because they don't have the time to do any repair work.**
- **The schools need to accept joint responsibility for the preparation of teachers. Many collaborating teachers do not undertake any real mentoring at all. They just want another pair of hands in the class. That is not to say there are not 'many brilliant teachers who do undertake it' but 'there are people doing prac who have a negative effect on a skills**

model'. (The issue of mentoring is addressed again in response to question 14 workplace learning and quality in the practicum.)

- **Many saw the development of the teacher as a continuum and considered 'teacher ready' a misnomer. Effective teaching takes a number of years of retraining and redevelopment.**
- **Some participants saw the need for achieving a balance between teacher ready and teacher receptivity.**
- **It was agreed that there was a need to map the process of what occurs from University to schools more closely. At present this remains a very ad hoc process with little attempt at liaison. Teacher readiness is interesting in this context because 'you are still looking at stuff that was done 10 years ago. People haven't moved on, so what are you getting them ready for?'**
- **Do some institutions do it better than others? Some evidence to suggest there is increased student satisfaction overall. Australian Association of Secondary School Principals expressed high levels of satisfaction with new teachers.**
- **The potential contribution of the professional associations was raised. Some associations would welcome much more involvement.**
- **Time Magazine cited. 75% of recent Australian teachers don't have a mentor. The article suggested there did not appear to be any follow through or no recognition of a continuum. There as 'no time set to carry teachers forward'. This was where we needed portfolios to follow teacher through. Digital portfolios might assist here such as those being trialled at CDU.**
- **There was a need for restructuring in the schools so that mentoring not viewed as an extra load. Team-teaching can be employed but you still need to pay teachers that extra money.**
- **One area where novice teachers not particularly well prepared is leadership. One teacher is on record as saying 'A lot of what I did I would have preferred three years after I started.' This referred to challenging accepted practice and changing hierarchical structures.**

7. TEACHER RETENTION AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

FOCUS QUESTION: What can be done to stem attrition from teacher education courses and enhance the overall retention of teachers?

Attrition rates at CDU stretching back to the time of Darwin Community College and the Darwin Institute of Technology days, have always been unacceptably high. For every 100 students commencing in the Bachelor of Education, we would expect to graduate less than 40 after four years, the majority leaving at the end of their first year.

In the NT, many students decide after the introductory Field Experience unit in the Bachelor of Education that precedes the first practicum, that teaching is not for them. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they are appalled by the intensification of teachers' work, the poor community support, inexperienced and over-demanding middle management, unavailability of essential resources such as classroom programs, and pedagogies and methodologies which have not changed since they themselves were in schools.

Intending students get the message that they are entering an undervalued profession. What it means to be a teacher is reinforced in all kinds of subtle ways. Moreover, some cooperating teachers see preservice teacher as coming into the school with/as a problem, rather than as a new member of the community who is unsure and requires guidance and assistance.

A bigger problem is attrition from the profession itself after the first three years. It appears that successive governments have been highly successful in convincing young people that there is no such thing as a job for life, and that they need to be more self-reliant, flexible, adaptable and entrepreneurial. Many resist the separation of conception from execution and the undermining of their professional autonomy, the disregard of their professional judgement, poorly introduced and threatening accountability procedures, the regime of testing which has reduced teaching in some schools to three and a half days (testing on Friday, return of test on Monday mornings followed by 'rehearsal' of test items and coaching on the test), the lack of transparency, and the lack of opportunities for professional learning.

In this regard, Milburn, writing in the *The Age* (Monday 18 April 2005), reports on a DEST study into professional development programs offered under the Commonwealth's Quality Teacher Program. Not surprisingly, given the old-fashioned 'delivery' model adopted, such courses were generally found to be ineffectual.

Contributions from the group. This question was not explicitly addressed.

8. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

FOCUS QUESTIONS: How can the professional learning of teachers be improved?

Factors to consider here include:

- how the Universities can become more fully involved in partnership agreements to improve the delivery of continuing professional education;
- how the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers in the workplace could be improved;
- whether closer involvement of the Universities in follow-up, induction and the provision of ongoing professional learning might help to reduce low teacher retention; and
- what role the professional associations such as The Early Childhood Association can play working in collaboration with the Universities.

Contributions from the group. This question was not explicitly addressed.

9. THE PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHER EDUCATION

FOCUS QUESTION: What is the philosophy on which teacher education programs should be based to meet the complex and diverse situation outlined above?

Currently the predominant philosophy is based on a constructivist epistemology in many universities. This has considerable implications for the type of teacher education curriculum embraced and the pedagogies developed.

What are the limitations of a constructivist epistemology? Constructivism by itself is only of limited application. It needs to be developed in association with critical pedagogy which gives primacy to social justice and equity issues and practical morality. Our aim should be to produce interventionist, activist, transformative teachers who address 'big picture' issues, who provide leadership and develop social capital through communities of learners.

Contributions from the group

- **The group adopted a highly pragmatic notion of philosophy. In general, participants were not interested in taking it beyond broad, general, attitudinal considerations. People were more closely concerned with motivational aspects related to the valuing of knowledge. Some spoke of the love of knowledge and the desire to share as sufficient in themselves. 'There's no need to go further into constructivism or fundamentalism'. We should 'adopt the Dalai Lama approach', said one participant. Teaching is a giving profession. We need to immerse ourselves in it. We need to be able to empathise and want to work collaboratively. 'Teachers are continually moving between the Cartesian and the utilitarian, that's the reality'.**

- **Philosophy involves the way in which teachers respond to complexity and diversity. It involves the weaving of a whole range of pedagogies as Alan Luke says. The need is for university staff to model best pedagogical practice.**
- **The convenor spoke about transformative learning as a 'philosophy'. He felt that simply moving around the edges, adjusting little bits of the paradigm, was not satisfactory and can't carry us through. Someone else asked 'Well, has it been changing? We are still slowly, slip-sliding away. The kids still sit in boxes and still face the front too much of the time. Much more fundamental change is necessary. We can move the boxes to circles and engage in networking, but that's not sufficient. The perception of the group was that the federal position on education contributed to the problem. 'The problem is we have a federal government which is pushing the other way, that wants us to stay in the boxes.'**
- **Teachers were now facilitators rather than educators or teachers. Students are involved in their own programs, helping students to become better learners. They have to 'help the person to become critically aware of own ability, attitudes, assumptions and challenges'.**

10. THE TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

FOCUS QUESTION: What should a renewed teacher education curriculum look like?

In attending to this question we need to determine how finely detailed the curriculum should it be. How should it relate to the Curriculum Standards and Framework documents introduced by State and Territory Departments of Education? Which model should we choose?

For many teacher educators the continuing use of the term curriculum causes unease. They see it as negotiated, adjustable, responsive, process-orientated, and reflexive, not something which is prescriptive, impositional, coercive, restrictive, content-based and transmission orientated. They wish to maintain the distinction between knowledge and information, knowledge management and knowledge creation, performance and understanding, and reproductive and productive knowledge.

There are a number of models to choose from. These include:

- Site-Based Teacher Education (Adopted by NTU for Primary Teacher Education from an approach introduced at Victoria University of Technology)
- The Knowledge-Based Curriculum (The Wollongong Model. Kiggins, 1991)
- A Communities of Thinkers Model. (Harpaz, 2003)

- Transformative Knowledge-Based Learning Communities (Grenfell, 2005 in preparation)

Common features of these models include: community-based, not classroom-based education; provision for workplace learning; mentoring systems and social support; communities of learners employing problem-based and collaborative learning; self-directed learning; computer-mediated learning and blended learning; redefined roles for university-based teacher educators; and a focus on productive education, transformative learning, and integrative learning.

A further question is how the following should be addressed:

- identity issues,
- intercultural awareness, and
- teacher research.

Contributions from the group

- **Although this question was not focused on directly a number of approaches were referred to in the closing discussion including the incorporation of action learning, the development of communication skills, 'brain knowledge' and the cultivation of a sense of humour.**

11. GENERIC UNITS/SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

FOCUS QUESTIONS:

Is it possible to introduce a more generic approach which gets rid of, or blurs, the distinction between the levels- ECE, Primary, Middle Schooling, VET, Secondary - and does away with subject boundaries?

If the levels are maintained, should potential students be expected to study in two or three adjacent levels?

Much Teacher Education suffers from the unitization and packaging of knowledge for transmission. This is the result of traditional discipline-based views of knowledge held in place by knowledge constitutive interests, and the persistence of out-moded 'modernist' conceptions based on a foundational approach. This leads to the separatist processes associated with atomistic thinking by which knowledge is classified, compartmentalised and categorized. This finds expression in two ways (1) across levels such as ECE; Primary; Middle Schooling; Secondary; VET and (2) across specialisms, whether these are ESL, special needs, ICT, or careers education and counselling.

Can we find a way to transform the current situation? For example should we give

primacy to the Inner Child in the Essential Learnings and use the 'subject' areas to achieve the outcomes for the creative, constructivist, collaborative, communicative child with a greater focus on resiliency, self-efficacy and values education?

Contributions from the group

- **An Early Childhood specialist suggested we could learn from Early Childhood which is 'always at the bottom of the ladder'. In Scandinavia students learn to be teachers first and work across all age groups although some specialisms and knowledge base retained.**
- **Some participants stuck to the view that teachers are born and not made. 'Good teachers are good teachers. They can take up any content area.'**
- **Someone else argued that 'there may be these prodigies out there but ... the idea of a born teacher and learning to teach by teaching is something that I can't subscribe to because you are using kids as a vehicle by which you might or might not succeed.'**

12. AREAS OF CONCERN IN THE PREPARATION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TEACHING GRADUATES.

FOCUS QUESTION: How should the special areas of concern in the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates be addressed?

The Senate Inquiry (Government of Australia, 2005) identified the following areas for discussion:

The teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Vocational Education Courses.

Teach vocational education courses.

Effectively classroom management.

The successful use of ICT. The Victorian Inquiry into Teacher Training (Parliament of Victoria 2005) heard that:

- ICT linkages between teacher education faculties and school systems are under-developed;
- ICT resources and applications within teacher education has not kept pace with developments in the schools sector;

- Linkages between education faculties and developers of ICT products are not strong enough; and
- Experiences of pre-service teachers in ICT instruction during pre-service teacher education vary considerably in breadth and quality. (pxxiv)

To what extent would the Victorian situation be considered true of the NT?

In many institutions there is no agreed policy for the introduction of Computer-Mediated Learning (CML) or web-based learning, and where courses are delivered online the potential of the medium is underexploited. For example, there has been only limited take-up of multimedia and hypermedia approaches. The ground-breaking work of the CUSTD project headed by Dr Brian Devlin at CDU, which encompassed simulation activity, problem-based learning and role play, has not been systematically exploited. Practicum courses only make limited use of authentic material obtained by videoing classroom interaction, thus devaluing much of the collective knowledge and understanding produced at the work-place.

Contributions from the group. This area was not fully explored. Comment tended to focus on ICT.

- **Considerable progress in this area (ICT). A mapping exercise had been undertaken by DEET looking at CDU courses and identifying where ICT understandings could be delivered with involvement of DEET. This covers every aspect of the curriculum and students choose what to put in their portfolios.**
- **New Certificate of Education ICT specialization has been devised with support of NTDEET.**
- **One of the problems is the limited amount of research undertaken into computer mediated learning at the school level. One participant cited instances where some institutions were closing their doors and not allowing research to be undertaken.**
- **Lack of congruency. Student coming out of primary into secondary who actually using FLASH, but don't get to do technology until Year 10 in some schools.**
- **Some good example of peer-to-peer learning in this area were cited.**

Dealing with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families.

Dealing with children with special needs and/or disabilities.

Dealing with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related departments. At CDU, The Bachelor of Education retains a School-Community Research project intended to stimulate teacher research. The project was originally taught as part of the final in-school practicum. However, because of opposition from practicing teachers who claimed it interfered with what the students should be doing (i.e. taking their classes), the Teacher Researcher unit is now taught separately, but with access to schools provided. The SCRП is meant to be carried out with the support of the school board to which the students report back in joint meetings of the Board and the school staff. This brings students into contact with a much wider range of issues.

13. PEDAGOGY

FOCUS QUESTION: What pedagogy is best suited to Teacher Education?

In considering the pedagogy to be adopted, the relationship between teaching and learning needs to be understood and clarified. Too many current reports such as *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future* (DEST 2003) and the Secondary Review in the NT (*Future Directions*, CDU/NTDEET 2004) assume a direct, causal connection. This is because the managerialist approach adopted, neglects the person at the centre of education.

Wenger (1998) is particularly helpful in this regard. He reminds us that:

- Instruction does not *cause* learning.
- Teaching and learning are not mirror images of each other.
- Instruction merely creates another context in which learning can take place.
- Much learning takes place without teaching and much teaching takes place without learning. How lecturers can expeditiously exploit informal and non-formal learning is vital to the profession.
- Teaching and learning are not bound by direct cause and effect relationships, but one of resources and negotiation. Learning is an ongoing emergent process and teaching is only one of its many structuring resources.

Wenger (1998) ends by asking: How then can we ensure minimalist teaching yet maximise learning and negotiation of meaning?

The pedagogy which best ensures professional growth and development of intending teachers incorporates minimalist teaching and maximal learning. Minimalist teaching places the responsibility for learning back in the hands of the learners. It is characterized by Problem-Based Learning, investigative and inquiry-based learning, transformative projects, dialogue and connectivity, self-reflexivity and action learning, the enhancement of meta-learning and metacognition; and computer-mediated learning and blended learning. Such an approach is embedded within a critical pedagogy which involves contestation and confrontation, rigorous critique, and deconstruction.

At CDU, the incorporation of transformative education into the new Bachelor of Education and Graduate Diploma of Education courses, together with the recommendations for the progressive introduction of the Middle Years of Schooling across the Northern Territory contained in *Future Directions*, will have considerable implications for the pedagogy adopted within the School of Education. The School will need to model transformative education within a context of Middle Schooling. This will necessitate considerable modification to our current pedagogy.

Contributions from the group.

- **The group tended to discuss pedagogy in schools rather than the approach adopted by the Universities.**
- **There was some support for a transformative approach. 'Transformative learning helps a person become more critically aware and look critically at practice and find ways of coping with conflict situations. It raises the consciousness level and leads to new means of dealing with situation.'**
- **It was recognized that 'the pace of schools has picked up so much that students are left grappling with it. This situation calls for deep structural and pedagogical change. This is the only way we will get success.' 'In the old days we had no doubt but now with a changing world, it is difficult to do that. We used to be able to ensure that students had enough knowledge to return to, but nowadays some knowledge is already outdated, so it may be impossible to produce a teacher ready teacher.'**
- **The form of the paradigm is being shifted by the students in schools regardless of us. We are well behind the eight ball. We need to move fairly quickly or we will be in deep trouble.**
- **The group acknowledged that the facilitator role was very important. It was argued that schools want someone who can teach across two or three subjects. Small schools in rural situations need to work with a wide range of people and government bodies. 'We can't teach all that students need to know.' Teachers therefore become brokers, dealing with VET, RTOs, etc. They become negotiators, to use their services. This view was challenged on the grounds that the brokerage idea militates against establishment of relationships which enables student to learn best. 'The teacher has something that young people want. It's about recognising students as people.' Others felt that this was 'romanticising' the situation to some extent. The way technology has gone means we have to adopt a different role but there will 'always essentially be an essential pedagogical role'.**

- **One participant held up the Small Schools Movement and the Coalition of Essential Schools as providing new models of schooling. It was claimed that these had better success than traditional schools but the criteria for success were not discussed.**
- **Suggests diversity of the system. Teacher doesn't do all the teaching. No longer the traditional knowledge giver.**
- **More research required about what is happening in the classroom. Need the evidence. Can't extrapolate from Scandinavian schools. Different set of cultural variables. Obscures the data.**
- **Fair to say teachers always walked the tightrope between innovation, forward thinking and futures, and ... and survived it.**
- **Pedagogy has to be flexible. Cannot offer prescriptions. Need to take context into account. Need pedagogy for the future.**
- **Some participants sounded a cautionary note, pointing out that people can resist any move towards more integrated and self-directed learning. 'The kids don't like it. They want the teacher to tell them what to do!' Parents were also seen as an important influence. 'They can support or drive the schools or can take their kids out.'**
- **The fact remains that some students work in disengaged communities, with third generation unemployment. Tying the curriculum to specialist areas does not guarantee employment. Some urban schools in South Australia are offering courses without separate subjects. The outcomes in Framework are mapped back to activities. They might have partnership with a housing trust for example. We have to think in terms of teams and team-teaching. The use of on-line teaching employing exemplary teachers for particularly lessons needs to be employed.**

14. WORKPLACE LEARNING

FOCUS GROUP: How can we ensure the provision of opportunities for increased workplace learning and make better use of participating schools?

The School of Education has always held that extended workplace learning is essential to the preparation of intending teachers, and was one of the first in the country to introduce a School-Based (or Site-Based) Teacher Education program. However, there were a number of impediments to the effective working of SBTE including:

- The failure of the Department of Education to fully embrace the approach. Although some financial support for an initial inservice to introduce the new approach was received from the Department through the far-sighted understanding of Dr Terry Quong, school-based teacher education never became a substantive part of the Department's professional development program which itself became subject to a number of budget cuts.
- The demise of the Standing Committee on the Practicum as a result of (1) the intensification of work amongst teachers and difficulties in providing teacher relief; (2) the failure of the then School of Health and Education to find ways of involving teachers more closely in the delivery of the practicum; and (3) dispersal of effort amongst University staff which created difficulties in driving the process.
- The length of the In-School Semester was gradually reduced because the cost of supervising the Practicum proved too great. The insistence on payment for the training of preservice teachers by cooperating teachers has cost the profession dearly.
- The School-Community Research Project which was a central part of the program was never fully integrated into the In-School semester. It continues to be thought of as an unnecessary add-on which gets in the way of core business, that is, actual classroom teaching and an extra pair of hands to help out in the classroom, instead of a key element in community-based teacher education.

It is clear therefore, that the transformation of Teacher Education can only be carried out with the full support and involvement of NTDEET, both at an official level through agreed protocols, and at a more informal, personal level through individual contacts and teaming. Boundary spanning is already taking place in some areas, noticeably in Middle Schooling, Mentoring programs, Science and Mathematics Teaching in rural and remote communities, TQP and Frameworks for Teaching.

Issues involved include:

- The need to identify alternative sites for the practicum so that teacher education is more community-based and service orientated.
- The need to ensure provision of in-school experience in a range of settings, *including rural communities*. (See *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future?* DEST 2003, Activity 13, p19).
- The need to provide incentives to ensure that the Universities and intending teachers are given assistance to undertake practical experience in schools with significant cohorts of Indigenous students, and take up teaching appointments in schools with predominantly Indigenous enrolments as recommended in *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future?* (DEST 2003, Action 18, p22). The

small number of scholarships instituted by NTDEET to assist preservice teachers to undertake a rural and remote practicum is a step in the right direction.

- Selection of suitable mentors and ways of providing professional support for mentors involved in workplace learning.
- Transformation of evaluation and assessment procedures as part of the improvement in Professional Standards to include such activities as electronic portfolios currently being trialed at CDU by Dr Phil Keys, collaborative reporting, and PowerPoint presentations to School Councils and Staff Meetings
- Obtaining greater congruence between University courses and the classroom.
- Maintaining a focus on teacher research through School-Community Research Projects.

Contributions from the group.

A number of the issues raised here were dealt with in under collaboration (question 4). Discussion focused on mentoring, possibly of the current research being undertaken into that area by several of the participants.

- **The group was told that mentoring of preservice teachers is currently being advanced by the strategic development of professional learning for mentors of both preservice and neophyte teachers.**
- **Negotiation and advocacy are the strengths of the CDU courses. Preservice teachers are encouraged to design their own assessment tasks to meet the learning outcomes. They are also provided with the opportunity to write their own assessment criteria and recommend a result. Preservice teachers are encouraged to work in groups and with a range of partners, including teachers in schools and preservice teachers in a university in Holland, to ensure that their own rich educational experiences can inform their future teaching. The 'culminating project' which includes a transformative education conference presented by the preservice teachers for school based teachers and teacher educators is a highly valued aspect of the course.**

15. STAFFING AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

FOCUS QUESTION: What are the staffing and resource implications of the proposals recommended by focus group for the improvement of Teacher Education?

Some considerations under this head include:

Policy and planning. In contemplating the transformation of Teacher Education, do we design the best possible program and then look for resources as in the approach to precincts and middle schooling adopted in The Secondary Review, or should we be looking at pragmatic considerations and current financial limitations at each stage of the review?

Teaching and research. Should all Universities be expected to undertake research? (See *Building University Diversity*, DEST, 2005, para 3.22). Whilst in theory, staff can apply for promotion on the grounds of either research and scholarship, teaching, community service or administration, invariably teaching is discounted as can be seen from the fact that many staff in the universities, including those recently appointed, possess no tertiary level teaching qualification. Staff selection and promotion is dependent on research-earning capability.

Working conditions and promotion criteria for University-Based Teacher Educators. Currently, employment conditions and promotional prospects in Schools of Education in small regional Universities are some of the worst in the country, and lecturers' salaries have fallen below what senior teachers and middle level executives earn in the schools. This makes a mockery of the rhetoric surrounding the quality of teacher education.

Staff teaching on the Practicum. It is significant that the draft NQITSL guidelines on quality in the practicum recommend that Teacher Education Institutions recognize that:

due to their special clinical responsibilities, practicum staff members have professional duties and skills that differ from those of other academics, and takes these into account in recruitment, academic recognition and promotion procedures. (NQITSL 2005, para 2.2.4, p6)

Future staffing needs. How should new Education faculty members be selected? Is there a need for staffing profiles and protocols, linked to development plans? Protocols for University staff should ensure provision for collegiate discussion, collaborative projects, and professional development opportunities to promote the development of knowledge, skills and understandings.

Changes to the way the practicum is financed. A direct budget line required to prevent universities from diverting monies to other less successful areas not meeting their targets. According to the Australian Technology Network which comprises five leading Universities, the government's recent rejection of indexation funding will only adversely affect the funding universities will have available to contribute to the practicum. (See Guy Healy writing in the *Campus Review* Vol 15(16) 27 April 2005)

Improved architecture. Universities such as the CDU teach in outmoded buildings, unsuited to the requirements of schools in the 21st century. The architecture of the Education Building and the resources available does not make it easy to encourage the adoption of a genuine Middle Schooling approach that enhances the ethos of a

community of learners. With the renewed interest in the Palmerston Secondary School precinct and DEST proposals for a technical high school, the time may now be opportune to re-examine the original proposal for the School to move to Palmerston.

Better use of existing education facilities. For example, perhaps greater use of Lighthouse schools, and those with recognised success in particular curriculum areas.

Contributions from the group.

Time did not permit us to draw together the staffing and resource implications of some of the proposals presented above.

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