

Points made by AHISA members re entering the Teaching Profession as a later career, especially considering the barriers encountered when doing this

gathered at Dr Brendan Nelson's request

Introduction

This request was made when the dearth of male teachers in primary schools was considered as part of the Inquiry into Boys' Education. However the question was widened to consider any people who wish to become a teacher at a later stage in their career. The question was placed on HeadNet (a closed mailing list for the 280 Heads who are AHISA members) and DepNet (a closed mailing list for 250 senior Deputies in our schools). Information was also gathered from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) a leading educational association in the United States. The following points and comments, as they relate to mature people, have been summarised from these sources.

Criticism of Teacher Training Courses

- Formal education studies can be very disappointing, as they seldom give recognition for any prior learning
- Technology is rarely integrated into the learning process, in fact computer technology as it applies to teaching and learning is mostly ignored
- It is a pity to put mature motivated people through a tedious full-scale Dip. Ed.
- The method sessions can be useful, but even these are of limited use if the person has some teaching experience
- There needs to be a flexible approach in giving the best advice to our more mature beginning teachers, rather than leaving them with a sense of starting all over again
- Part-time, including evening courses would suit mature people, who could cope with the extra study while doing an internship at a school or some other part-time work
- There is a need for teacher training institutions to offer purpose-designed courses for highly motivated mature age students
- There should be accelerated courses for those who have already mastered the content to be taught.
- More time in schools and less time in the teacher training institution is probably what is required
- Flexibility is the key.

Practical Problems for mature-aged Students entering Teacher Training.

- For those who have done the overseas exploring, tried a number of careers and are now dedicated to study and want to teach, there is the difficulty of financial hardship while studying. Some independent schools can offer full board and lodging in return for Boarding House duties. However with fewer people being able to afford boarding fees for their children, the number of places in Boarding Houses is diminishing and hence the number of supervisors needed is also diminishing.
- To combat the financial difficulty while studying, the opportunity of a paid internship may be feasible. Intending teachers learn more about teaching actually doing it in a school than they ever do taking a Dip. Ed.
- Credit has to be given for prior experience or studying
- In some states, protection (industrial realities) requires full certification for permanent entry (e.g. registration of teachers in Victoria) There may have to be changes to the registration criteria, perhaps a special category for mature-aged people with the ability to teach, may need to be developed.

Rapid Change of Teaching Styles and Student Centred Learning

- The styles of interaction in the classrooms of today are quite different from those of a generation earlier. Someone who is “people-skilled” will pick that up quickly, but some people coming into teaching late may find the cultural changes difficult to master.
- Contemporary approaches to assessment, strategies for collaborative learning and teaching and working in teams in the school environment are examples of some areas that would have to be mastered by these beginning teachers
- To students of today, technology is a given. Mature-aged people who are technologically literate will have more chance of succeeding in today’s and tomorrow’s schools especially if they understand the use of technology across the curriculum.
- The use of good mentors for a short internship would probably be the best way of bringing these people up to speed in these areas of teaching and learning.

To Increase the Number of mature-aged People entering the Profession

- The profession needs to be promoted positively, especially in the media
- Salaries need to be negotiable. Heads of independent schools have much more opportunity to use their discretion in this area. (There are many wonderful men and women who would make wonderful teachers and would love to make the change and do it, but some of them could not afford the drop in salary!)
- Credit has to be given for prior experience. (Again independent school are better at this)
- Some schools are considering offering a scholarship scheme to support quality men interested in teacher training, having them complete their Prac. Teaching periods in that particular school and then guaranteeing them a job offer on

successful completion of their course. This initiative has developed because of the shortage of male teachers in the primary school. However it could be extended to both men and women.

- Mature-aged first-year-out teachers are considered real finds by many of our members – they bring to the profession all the qualities wanted from a young teacher, - enthusiasm, energy, fresh vision, - but have in addition - wisdom, hindsight and maturity
- The desirability of good mature-aged beginning teachers is an important issue. This fact should be made known to intending teachers and indeed to the general community
- Incentives need to be offered to interested people, especially those experienced in content areas where there is, or will be, a shortage of teachers

The Qualities that mature-aged People can bring to the Profession

- Maturity, assurance, confidence and competence
- Organizational abilities, especially the ability to meet deadlines
- Years of experience in the world of work
- A good grasp of the world and its ways
- A real interest in young people, experience with working with young people in community groups
- A passion to make a difference for young people
- Parenting experiences
- Pleasant, relaxed style –a sense of humour
- A sense of what shape the teaching career could take for them
- Extended technology (including various sorts of multi-media) experience
- An understanding of how schools of today operate
- Not relying on personal experience of 30+ years ago
- An understanding of modern educational theories
- Varied backgrounds to enrich our schools

The Difficulties that mature-aged People can bring to the Profession

- Personal quirks
- Fixity of ideas
- Little understanding or knowledge of the youth of today
- Lack of communication skills
- Lack of understanding of modern educational ideas and theories, and how modern schools operate
- Sense of tiredness
- Sense of failure
- A narrowness of knowledge
- Not willing to listen to or work with colleagues
- Little understanding of technology

Information from America via ASCD.

There are real moves to encourage people to take up teaching as a second career. Often there are successful career people who really want to make a difference by helping young people with their education. Some of these can afford to return to university and take full-time courses. Others may need financial assistance.

There are moves in some states to alter the conditions for those wishing to teach. Much of this is happening because there is a shortage of teachers in the US.

- The Massachusetts State Board of Education has approved new teaching licence standards that will allow non-educators to become teachers without having an education qualification. They must have a degree in the subject they teach or pass a performance test
- The number of second-career teachers in Ohio has grown in the last several years. People who make the switch to teaching cite quality of life, downsizing and the growing prestige of the teaching profession as reasons for changing careers. Some universities are now offering special degree and certification programs for careers changes
- Please read attached newspaper article.

Conclusion

To attract suitable people to take up teaching as a later career

- More appropriate teaching training courses need to be prepared and offered (the inclusion of practitioners from schools on the curriculum committees for these courses would be of great benefit) Adult learning skills would need to be incorporated into these courses.
- Some financial incentive or support is required
- More time in schools with a good mentoring system is seen as most effective for these people. Excellent mentors need to be identified within these schools and some remuneration given to them while they pro-actively mentor beginning mature-aged teachers)
- Changes to the regulations may be needed to treat them as a special category especially if they have excellent command of the content required in the areas where there is or will be a shortage of teachers.
- The appreciation of parents of the appointment of mature men and women – they often prefer experience to the lack of it.

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