

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

## **Inquiry into Teacher Education**

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### **Summary**

This submission details the experiences of a preservice teacher educator (the literature has moved from the term 'trainee' teacher) who has designed and delivered a range of courses for secondary teachers, most recently in the Northern Territory, but previously at the University of SA. She has been researching in the area of teacher education for seven years. She proposes that the courses and units that she teaches are underpinned by social critical and constructivist theories that have been well researched and implemented to support the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework.

Although a small regional university the secondary courses attract applications from all over Australia by being flexible and spending the time developing pathways for the prospective students. Recent additions of a 'generic' stream, a VET stream and a middle schooling stream have been designed to meet the growing need in the community, and the VET stream has been specifically designed to fast-track applicants with trade and industry backgrounds.

The 'cutting edge' approach comes at some cost however, the time and effort is not supported by staff appointments. Although it appears to be difficult to attract staff, when they are employed they are reluctant to teach, preferring research and community projects and spending their time attracting funding to support their research. Preservice teacher education is left to those with the passion, dedication, commitment and belief in the need to prepare quality teachers who want to make a difference in the lives of young people.

The author suggests that those attracted to teaching are older than they used to be and come with a wealth of experience and knowledge. Unfortunately many are unable to complete their study (and many who inquire do not even begin) due to financial obligations. The author strongly recommends substantial scholarships.

The submission concludes that graduates from teacher education courses can be prepared to meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australia's schools but the current turn in the universities where staff are not rewarded for teaching and course coordination but instead for publications and funding, does not augur well for the profession.

**NB The author recommends the use of preservice teacher *education* rather than *training*. The use of the term *training* is counter to the progressive and constructivist view of learning. *How* preservice teachers learn is as important as *what* they learn. It is “about the relationship between what one learns and how one comes to learn it” (Segall, 2002:84).**

## Addressing the Terms of Reference

### 1. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses

We have a wide range of pathways into secondary preservice education at our university. We have worked hard to provide flexible entry and clear course structures identifying the academic and ‘professional’ units that are core and elective. Course guidelines state that two disciplines or ‘learning areas’ need to be prepared with at least one quarter of study in the under-graduate degree to be in a ‘major’ teaching area and one sixth in the ‘minor’ teaching area. Typical combinations at our university are; Math/Science, English/SOSE (Studies of Society and Environment), Health and PE/Science, The ‘Arts’/SOSE, Maths/SOSE, Science/SOSE, Music/SOSE, LOTE (Languages Other Than English)/English, Technology and Design/VET

#### ***Double Degree Programs:***

Generally (but not always) students study in their ‘disciplines’ and gain the content knowledge, skills and understandings of their first degree (BSC, BA, BMUS) over their first four semesters (full time equivalent). In the fifth and sixth semesters they complete their first degree and begin their education units. With only one unit exception these students join the Graduate Diploma students for their final 13 education units, which they complete in their seventh and eight semesters (see Appendix 1 for grids)

#### ***Bachelor of Education (Secondary): (see appendix 4 for grids)***

This is our newest program and was designed to accommodate two government initiatives

1. To offer a fast-tracked entry into teacher education for VET teachers
2. To prepare teachers in middle schooling pedagogies

We expected only around 5 EFTSU (equivalent full time students) in its first year but had over 30 applications and have enrolled more than 20 students with several applications already with us for a mid-year intake. The panel assessed about 10 applications for RPL (recognition of prior learning) in the VET stream, with only 2 gaining the full two years credit, and 5 or 6 others gaining partial credit. It is interesting to note that most of these students have entered the course on a very part-time basis, as they need to remain in the work force due to lifestyle commitments.

***Graduate Diploma in Secondary Education (see grid appendix 2):***

This course was reaccredited for 2003 and entry is dependent on undergraduate (or previous post-graduate) study providing the knowledge, skills and understandings necessary for teaching in two learning areas from Years 7/8 to 10, and at least one senior secondary 'subject'.

Applications come from every state in Australia and from Australian's living overseas. We have 2 or 3 applications each year from international students. Generally post graduate international students hope that once they have completed their qualification they will be able to stay in the country.

Entry is dependant on levels of written and spoken English, competence in ICT and learning area knowledge as assessed by the course coordinator. This is a difficult and time consuming process and other lecturers at the university and teachers in schools are frequently contacted to discuss transcripts. This process may be taken over by an electronic tertiary admissions scheme in the near future. Students with a BSc are usually designated as Science major and Maths minor, though sometimes there is so little maths in their undergraduate degree that we need to accept them as double science. We do not believe they are as 'marketable' as teachers of only science, unless they are able to teach Physics and Chemistry early in their teaching careers. The reality is that most of our neophyte teachers teach in the junior secondary classes when they first leave university.

BA students tend to have undergraduate degrees strong in English Literature, liberal studies or the Social Sciences. The majority of our applicants are best suited to teaching SOSE (Studies of Society and Environment) as an undergraduate degree in Politics, Environmental Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Archaeology, History, Geography, Legal Studies, Business Studies, Economics, Psychology, Environmental Health and Social Work...(and the list goes on) provides the knowledge, skills and understandings for the SOSE teacher. Sometimes the SOSE major has a minor (at least one sixth of their undergraduate degree) in English Literature, Maths or Science, but invariably it is not a strong minor and frequently there are only SOSE units. We do accept a large number of double SOSE students providing their undergraduate units prepare them for teaching popular senior secondary subjects. Psychology is an area where teachers are needed at present, and there is still some call for History, Geography, Cultural Studies, Legal

Studies, and Business Studies in our local senior secondary schools. We try to maintain dialogue with schools so we can advise preservice applicants on their prospects as teachers in particular subject and learning areas. Teachers recognise course offerings in schools are changeable and that they need to develop life-long learning skills.

There are some undergraduate degrees that offer very narrow subject knowledges and do not prepare applicants for entry into teacher preparation courses. Applicants are counselled into studying extra undergraduate units to ensure they have the one-quarter/one sixth background. Sometimes they are supported with enrolment into a BA or BSc to gain the necessary knowledge, and sometimes they are accepted into the Graduate Diploma on the understanding that they will complete the extra units in their teaching areas before they enrol in the methodology or the practicum units. This generally extends their enrolment to 2 years. Bachelor of Business, Bachelor of IT, Bachelor of Fine Art and Bachelor of Music frequently have a very narrow scope and offer limited teaching opportunities. These students usually understand the need to be able to teach a wider range of learning areas.

We have very few applications from students with undergraduate degrees that support the Maths learning areas, and I have evidence to suggest that these students find the academic rigours of the course difficult- there are articles to read, written assignments to prepare, collaborative tasks, orals, reflections, journals, engagement with educational theories and histories and politics that many of the Maths graduates find difficult to engage with. Although not as marked, the Science students also sometimes struggle with the written requirements of the course. Education is really a social science and the knowledge, skills and understandings are language rich and rely on critique, deep interrogation, synthesis and some insight and originality. The higher-level thinking skills in education are more literacy based and less scientific and numerical. Written expression is privileged in the course and even though I deliberately provide a range of tasks with flexibility it is difficult to engage students with a history in more functional, scientific thought. (I have grave concerns for the VET stream preservice teachers- I suspect they deliberately chose trades and apprenticeships because that is where their talents lie and will find it difficult engaging with post graduate level units one or two semesters into their fast-tracked courses. I already have evidence of this and they need extra support that I am not always in a position to give. There is academic support available at the university but with the time demands on our students I know that they prioritise rushing off to work rather than academic support.)

A recent commissioned study by long term and well respected teacher education researcher Kenneth Zeichner and associate into the comparative merits of alternative models of teacher education in the United States highlights the current dilemma. The authors were unable to recommend a definitive model for teacher preparation (Zeichner & Schulte, 2001). They did recommend however that we:

...continue to support multiple pathways into teaching careers and focus on making sure that the components of high quality teacher education are present in all of these rather than attempting to assert the

superiority of any particular model (Zeichner & Schulte, 2001:280).

The orienting questions of their study 'How long did they stay in the teaching force? How well were they able to promote student learning? Who are the teachers and where did they teach? and What were the goals of the research and who benefited from the results?' had such varied answers that Zeichner and Schulte concluded with the simple words 'it depends'! (280)

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

I stress that I am only familiar with secondary preservice education. We do attract a range of students and whether they are 'high quality' depends on your ideology and perspective. We attract school leavers with a wide range of TER scores, post-graduate student with Masters and PhD degrees, practising Lawyers, the Crown Prosecutor, successful executives and business leaders looking for a 'sea change' on the one hand and on the other individuals who have volunteered in third world countries or remote indigenous communities, mothers and fathers who have spent many years involved in a range of community activities and bringing up their children (sometimes home-schooling them), people who have travelled the world as freelance writers or photographers, elite sports people, both men and women who have served in the defence services or the police force, people with both physical and mental disabilities who have come to terms (both medically and personally) with their disabilities to the point where they feel they can contribute to the education of our future citizens. All of these people have rich and varied experiences that may help them achieve the role of 'successful teacher'.

However attracting them and keeping them can be quite different. It is a shock to be a student again for those re-entering university after time in the work force, or even those who return for volunteer or freelance work, the cost of just living in Australia, in one place and travelling to university and to schools for practicum can be difficult. I lose up to 20% in the first 6 weeks, and counsel a number of others who do stay and finish but at much cost. We try to be flexible and offer a part-time pathway. We also have a fast tracked pathway (3 semesters fast tracked into two). Unfortunately a large number of students decide on the fast tracked pathway (the equivalent to 60 hours a week, as well as two 5-6 week blocks on prac), then also try to hold down a job! They do not achieve the levels of understanding necessary in many of their units through the sheer pressure of work and lack of time. This is when the pressure is on to 'dumb down the units, to have less contact time, to put everything on "learnline" for electronic contact... and it just wouldn't work, the students would go to their first practicum unprepared and with limited chance of success. The students who do not need to work (they have partners or parents who support them) are the most successful in the fast-tracked course and feedback how much they enjoyed the opportunity to learn, read, research, reflect and teach. I will be recommending that we do not approve the fast tracked version of the course as the

recommended version when it is re-accredited in 2007. Although still available this should not be the 'base course' as it currently is (see grids appendix 2).

**If you want to attract a wide range of passionate, moral, capable and experienced preservice teachers who are committed to making a difference for the citizens of tomorrow they will need to be supported financially while they are studying. If you want to fast track that study or not extend it unduly then you will need to support the students. We do lose a number of students who would have become excellent teachers because they cannot afford to continue in the course. We need to *invest* in the teachers of the future.**

I was attracted to teaching by the 'teaching scholarship' in the 1970's. Huge cohorts of very bright young people entered teaching because that was how they could afford a tertiary education. University scholarships were means tested and less than generous unless your parents were rich enough or motivated to support you (and your three or four siblings in those days before the nuclear families). Teaching scholarships ensured a reasonable income and despite the 'bond' were attractive.

Flexibility in course pathways is important and some external and intensive units do help but I believe that teachers should be prepared with the opportunity to interact with other preservice teachers and with a range of university teacher educators. They should also be able to experience a wide range of teaching styles and lecturers should model the pedagogies they are recommending. I have a list of over 100 pedagogies that I believe we model in the courses; this could not be done if the courses were completely external. There has been considerable pressure to externalise the course, and in fact I prepared an external course, had it approved and even organised the funding to write the external units (about \$5,000 each). Then we found out that our federal grants for external units would only be 60% the funding for internal units, and with all the extra time necessary for working with external students (we had organised contact time to be part of most units in intensive blocks), we decided to cancel the course. There would still be a phone call each week to ask if the course is available externally, and about 10 a week just prior to application deadlines).

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

As mentioned above the cost of living is the main reason for attrition from the graduate diploma course. It is about 20% if you add those who leave before census date. Those who leave for academic or cultural reasons are as low as one or two a year. Many, and this has been increasingly the case, drop back to part time and do the Graduate Diploma course over 2 or 3 years, and take 5 or 6 years to do the degree course. Others (some of them are those who like to work the system, though there are some genuine cases) seek access and equity counselling and work through the course at their own rate causing considerable extra work for lecturers. It is good to be flexible but most difficult when you are **always** understaffed and spread very thin. Teaching in teacher education units is not popular with academics in the 'school of education', many of whom concentrate on their

own research, sell out their teaching and marking and avoid the onerous roles of coordination which tends to take your work load to 70-80 hours a week.

The double degree course attrition is about 60%, but all of these have left before they begin their teaching units. I do not recall losing one student once they began the teaching units, though sometimes they take longer than the two years to complete them. They seem to find the professional units much more demanding in terms of time than their undergraduate units, and frequently find attendance at lectures, arriving on time and meeting deadlines as onerous compared with their degree units. We do not have exams in the school of education but have an 80% attendance and participation guideline.

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

The 'Dip Ed Year' is notoriously unpopular with academics Australia wide. The students can be very 'stuck' in their belief system and quite resistant to change. Many are quite resentful initially that they should even need to do this 'professional' year because they have been successful elsewhere and expect that they know it all already. It is even harder when there is so little time to get to know them.

I was employed (I thought) to lecture in Health and Physical Education, Sports Science and some Science Education. When I arrived I was immediately given the coordination of the Graduate Diploma in Secondary Education (and would also have been coordinating the two double degree courses had this not been questioned at Faculty Executive), as well as a lecturing load in two schools and an external unit that needed to be written. So I inherited about 30 Grad Dip students half way through their course with no support or explanation. Starting at the same time as me was a seconded teacher who had never worked in a university before and had little idea of what his role was to be (this was a newly introduced arrangement). Semester 2 was about to start so we didn't have time for questions (and no one was around anyway as it was mid-semester break), so did the best we could (as teacher do). I worked 80 hours a week and I suspect John worked much longer hours than he had expected. The Head of School was the only one who had any idea of what had previously transpired in the grad dip secondary, and she was so busy that I tried not to ask too many questions. She was always the other one in her office on Saturdays and Sundays, and she was still there some nights when I left in the dark, or there when I arrived in the dark in the mornings.

So we struggled on and got to the end of the year. Unfortunately this was the last year of the course, it had been recredited and the new course was quite different. The units were called "Teaching and Learning", "Productive Education", "Transformative Education", "Practicum", "EAL for Inclusion", rather than the traditional Foundations of Teaching A, B and C. and it was a school priority to integrate Indigenous Education and ICT in all units. No one was even able to tell me where the names had come from and the summary on file was suitably vague- so I researched as best I could in the contemporary literature and John and I put together a course, I taught all of the new units in first semester, the continuing unit on Adolescent Development was taught by another lecturer, and John taught all but one of the methodologies, a previous lecturer continued

with the English methodology. In second semester a linguist was employed part-time to develop and to teach EAL for Inclusion, the Adolescent Development lecturer taught Assessment for Adolescent learners, and I covered all the others. Numbers were up because we were offering more flexible methodologies (we introduced a 'generic' methods unit for Drama, Dance, Music, Fine Art (the Arts) teachers and even offered some LOTE (Languages Other Than English) and Outdoor Education places. We also decided to trial some double SOSE (Studies of Society and Environment) opportunities. We worked long and hard and requested more staff on many occasions but to no avail. John had to return to the schools after his 18-month secondment and was replaced by another secondment. In the meantime the school had employed new staff who were supposed to help me with the coordinating load. This never really happened and the new staff seemed to have a quite different view about their plans, and this did not include the thankless tasks of coordination, teaching and marking! Fortunately the seconded teacher was focused, enthusiast and passionate about teaching so we survived another year with large numbers and little support. Half way through the year we lost our supportive (though exhausted) Head of School and as I write, 9 months later she has still not yet been replaced. Despite an Acting Head of School being appointed (the competition was not great, we all knew how hard the previous Head of School had worked and no one wanted the job), various responsibilities now fell on my shoulders so there was even more to do including guiding our new course (Bachelor of Education with VET, Middle School and General Streams) to the advertising stage then assessing all applications and chairing the panel for RPL (recognition of prior learning). That meant I had all of the applications for two complicated courses to assess during the Christmas break, and still no staff to help me!

**So why is it so difficult getting staff?** Guidelines for employing new staff stress the preference for a doctorate, and base selection on publications and ability to attract grants. When we want lecturers to lecture and work with students and they think they are employed to apply for grants, research and publish, a level of resentment is set up. When people are working 70 hours a week and not getting an opportunity to research and publish themselves, and staff arrived who refuse to help out with coordination, further resentment follows. Some people are exploited in the system and others achieve very little except for themselves and those in leadership roles are generally just too snowed under to do anything about it. Meanwhile the 'workers' burn out and leave, and the whole cycle starts again – if you can employ good staff! Our university allegedly has the lowest paid academics in Australia, so how would we attract good staff?

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

My own research answers this question in part. I have reviewed the vast contemporary literature on teacher education and have prepared my first chapter for my PhD entitled



“Suspect Traditions; Striking Back”. This is currently being prepared for publication so is not available for publishing as part of the inquiry. It is a thoroughly researched, synthesised and reviewed position paper on the purpose of education and current views on teacher education and the practicum. My PhD working title is “Co-constructing Classroom Learning During the Preservice Practicum”, so you can see the units and courses that I teach are well informed by research and the teacher education literature. I have a bibliography of over 250 books and peer-reviewed articles.

The teaching methods, course structure and methods of assessment and evaluation have also been carefully researched and prepared. The practicum assessment is provided to preservice teachers and school based mentors in a booklet (appendix 3), and the seconded teacher and I currently have a grant from NTDEET (Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training) to workshop with mentor teachers to ensure high quality support and guidance for preservice teachers on practicum. The grant pays for relief teachers in schools while the mentor teachers attend the workshops. My time (and the seconded teachers time) in preparation, running the workshops and evaluation, is good will. It appears to me that in teacher education so much is expected to be good will, both from the schools perspective where they accept preservice teachers for practicum placement, and from the teacher educators perspective.

The units I teach are supported by a study guide (I am trialling this on "learnline" this year), booklet of readings carefully selected to support the course outcomes and a text produced by our own Australian Curriculum Corporation. Assessment procedures are varied and carefully designed to prevent plagiarism and support the highest level of academic integrity. There are collaborative tasks, ICT tasks, portfolios, critical incident journals, reflective activities, self assessment, group assessment, narrative, critique, rubrics, carefully designed and published mark sheets and unit outlines published on "learnline" as well as handed to students at the first lecture. Although there is some lecture time using PowerPoint presentations and overhead transparencies there are also tutorials with discussion topics, group tasks and reciprocal teaching in group work. I attempt to model a wide range of pedagogies in each session and we frequently list them on the white board at the end of the session to highlight the range of teaching pedagogies that can be used. Next session I plan to concentrate on questioning techniques and list the variety of different questioning techniques at the end of the tutorial. I recommend to the lecturers in the course that they continually attempt to model good pedagogy.

The course is underpinned by social critical and constructivist theories. This is consistent with the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework. Student centred learning and outcomes focused curriculum drive the preparation of classroom activities and the teaching/learning dialectic. Connected life-long learning and meaningful, purposeful, enjoyable and just concepts underpin the planning for teaching/learning. Productive (knowledge creation) and positive classroom relationships drive the management of the classroom learning environment. Collaborative and cross-curricular attitudes are encouraged. High expectations and continuous feedback and evaluation support the student achievement of learning area outcomes.

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

I use guest speakers wherever possible to support my program. The “Education and the Law” lecture is conducted by the School of Law and I frequently work with lecturers in Indigenous Education, ICT and Special Needs from the university and Curriculum Services Branch present a session on the curriculum framework each semester. When they are available I also invite guest speakers from the student support team and career advisors from NTDEET (Northern territory Department of Employment, Education and Training).

Most of my contact with faculty at the university is during the application process when I assess the possible teaching areas from applicants’ transcripts. I also invite other lecturers to the meetings I run during O week to help students plan their study pathway. Very few seem to have time to attend.

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

- a. Teach literacy and numeracy**  
This is a school strategic plan focus. All lecturers are encouraged to be aware of the discourse. Methodology lecturers are required to address literacy and numeracy.
- b. Teach vocational education courses**  
We have designed the new course to fast track those with a background in industry or the trades so they can major in VET. There is a lecture entitled VET in Schools during semester 2 to increase the awareness of other preservice teachers.
- c. Effectively manage classrooms**  
This is a complex and frequently misrepresented area. We concentrate on developing positive relationships in the classroom and discuss and practice a range of strategies that might be used by some teachers in some situations. Preservice teachers need to use their practicum experiences to trial what works for them. We are more interested in providing pedagogies and learning environments that engage students and connect them to learning that interests and empowers them. Interested and connected students learn well in class.
- d. Successfully use IT**  
Information Communication Technology is a School of Education focus. We ensure our preservice teachers have a high level of skill in the use of ICT and can also plan a learning environment where students can develop ICT skills. They are also encouraged to use ICT to facilitate content knowledge and essential learnings. Unfortunately we appointed an ICT specialist but he didn’t stay long and hasn’t been replaced.
- e. Deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families**  
Conflict Resolution techniques and personal plans for dealing with critical incidents are a focus of the course work and the practicum. Bullying is

discussed and school bullying intervention plans are critiqued. Last year I invited students for a local school to speak to the lecture about how they had surveyed the school about bullying and then helped administration develop a proactive plan for student and teacher behaviour.

**f. Deal with students with special needs and/or disabilities**

As discussed above- one 90 minute lecture.

**g. Achieve accreditation**

Currently if a student completes all of the units with a pass (or university policy allows up to 3 PC (Pass Conceded) which is actually a fail but on appeal the Dean can award a PC because other work has been satisfactory and preservice teacher would be greatly disadvantaged by a fail) then they receive the documentation which allows them to apply for registration as a teacher. Even when it is the professional opinion of several teacher educators that a student has a disposition or attitude not suited to working with children, passing his/her university units guarantees an accreditation. There is a researcher in the US who has recently published recommending an alternative assessment plan that I have recently introduced to a working committee in the NT who are looking at a Teacher Standards Framework (Raths & Lyman; 2003). The authors contend that the concept of incompetence is not sufficiently clear and attempt to spell out some indicators of incompetence. They explain that there is an unavoidable conflict of interest with the confluence of formative and summative judgements and the pressures on all of those involved in teacher education lead to complex uncertainties as to who has the responsibility of deciding if a preservice teacher is incompetent. The subjective nature of such a decision and its basis in perception add to the difficulty.

Fortunately most preservice teachers who are having difficulty in the classroom listen to their mentors and recognise when the task is beyond their disposition, knowledge, skills and understanding at that point in their lives. Unfortunately there are some who will continually avoid accepting the advice of their mentors and will threaten grievance petitions when their practicum is recommended as unsuccessful. Although we do offer a supplementary practicum if we believe that a different context will allow demonstration of the necessary outcomes, there are times when it appears to be obvious to everyone *but* the preservice teacher that they are not going to be successful in the classroom. We have attempted to produce summative reviews where the language is clear but because the practicum unit result is embedded in a course where the preservice teacher has been successful (or at least has not been failed) in their other units, it is difficult to use the practicum result to fail a student. With so many opportunities to pass evaluation tasks (resubmission, academic support, peer guidance, lecturer guidance) students sometimes slip through with very basic knowledge of fundamental concepts. My experience is anecdotal, but very few lecturers fail students, students generally fail themselves by not submitting work. It could be quite different in faculties that have exams

but the types of concepts and issues covered in the teacher education units do lend themselves to exams- though my course does have a summative assessment that the students have come to call the 'lock-in'. This is a 3-4 hour session where they bring all of the documents, observation sheets, feedback sheets, lesson plans, readings and resources they have collected during the year and answer a series of questions based on the seven course outcomes. Some complain bitterly about this process, but the alternative, a portfolio based assignment after their final practicum, which would extend the year several weeks, is even less attractive. To fail a student at this point means certain appeal and a trail of grievance procedures over the Christmas break. It is most undesirable, and if there is any doubt then it is unlikely that a fail would be registered, usually an incomplete is registered and students will be given more time to meet outcomes.

**h. Deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.**

On the whole the relationships I have been able to build with administration and staff in schools has been positive and productive. There are the occasional schools where some event in the past has destroyed the opportunity for a valuable relationship and generally I avoid those settings if I can. Sometimes staff change and the partnership is re-established. Sometimes I ask other teacher educators to make contact but invariably if the relationship has been severed it is due to basic philosophical differences or vested interests.

I have been particularly successful in forging partnerships with the independent schools and they have been most keen to use my research and knowledge to present at professional development days. They offer many places for our preservice practicum- frequently offering our preservice teachers jobs before the department schools have even completed their recruitment papers. I have advised the department that this could be a problem in terms of their recruitment but large bureaucracies move slowly.

Our current project with NTDEET is a good example of a partnership that is productive. We are providing professional learning to prospective preservice teacher mentors, supported by the department of education.

I have been invited to represent the university on several working parties for NTDEET and am currently also on a working party for the Teachers Registration Board. We invite department and independent representation on our course advisory panels. We also have a culminating celebration at the end of the course to which we invite mentor teachers, principals and coordinators of preservice teachers in the schools. This is also the prize-

giving event for the course and we also give prizes to mentor teachers and supportive schools.

A recent review of secondary education in the Northern Territory totally ignored our offer of support and information. Although we were finally included as a 'focus' group our treatment by the chair of the report was dismissive and although we prepared a submission pointing out that the issues that they were focusing on in teacher education had already been catered for by the recent changes in our courses, the final report paid no heed to our submission. We tried again during the public consultation to have our voice heard but we got no response to a paper we presented. So our voice is heard at some levels but *totally disregarded* at others. We were not the only group to make this complaint about the Secondary Review. Why is it that educators with 'grounded' knowledge are completely ignored during reviews where 'profile' bureaucrats are intent on making their point!

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

As discussed already we are conducting professional learning for mentor teachers. We also provide a practicum booklet with an explanation of the underpinnings and outcomes of the course, suggested mentoring activities and preservice teacher responsibilities, an interim and summative report and suggested lesson feedback sheet. We also have a seconded teacher working in the course and frequently invite practicing teachers to conduct tutorials and lectures. A practicing teacher also conducts our English methods unit. Our generic method relies on teachers in schools acting as mentors during semester as well as during practicum blocks. We try hard to build partnerships with secondary schools all over the territory, with schools in Nhulunbuy, Jabiru, Batchelor, Katherine and Alice Springs placing our practicum students. We also have a number of students involved in remote practica in indigenous communities in semester 2. This is depended on continuous DEET funding.

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

The primary and secondary cohorts at our university are totally different and our courses are quite different. The only unit they share is the EAL (English an Additional Language) for Inclusion unit. Our current working party on middle schooling has recently discussed this and will be recommending that our middle schooling course overlay both the primary and secondary courses, using units from both. We are however writing two new middle schooling units and will base our middle schooling course on the secondary course where initial emersion in learning areas will provide the content knowledges for the preservice teachers

before they begin the education units. We have recommended three learning areas for middle schooling specialists, though would like to see a great deal more opportunities for integration and cross curricular learning in the middle schooling years.

Unless courses were to be developed that took five years to complete I believe the current split is justified particularly if we overlay the middle schooling course. Lecturers who work with both groups comment frequently how different they are.

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

I am not qualified to comment

**11. Examine the adequacy of funding of teacher training courses by university administration.**

If the lack of staff in our course is any indication then funding is limiting the success of the participants in the course and the university is exploiting some of its staff. The entire employment structure militates against competent, experienced, dedicated and committed teaching by teachers who have recently practiced and with current knowledge.

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***Attachments***

Appendix 1, 2, 3