Catholic Education

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

COORDINATION\CURRENT YEAR\EXECUTIVE\HELEN O'BRIEN\INQUIRIES\LTR RE INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION APR 05.DOC

Ms Janet Holmes
Inquiry Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Holmes

RE: NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

Catholic Education South Australia appreciates the opportunity to submit a response (attached) to the House of Representatives Standing Committee's Inquiry into Teacher Education in Australia.

Please refer any questions to Ms Monica Williams at the Catholic Education Office on (08) 8301 6834 or email monica.williams@ceo.adl.catholic.edu.au.

I wish the committee well with its important work.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

HELEN O'BRIEN
ACTING DIRECTOR

15 April 2005

ATTACH.

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

Introduction

The teaching profession makes a significant contribution to the well-being of young people and the health of society. The Catholic sector in South Australia views teachers as professionals who contribute to Australian society and therefore, the careful selection, training and ongoing professional development of teachers is essential for the learning and wellbeing of our students. To realise the very best learning opportunities for students, graduate teachers need to be passionate about education and see teaching as a ministry. These new teachers should be energised by their belief that their work will make a difference to lives of the young people they teach and their own life long love of learning.

Catholic Education SA (CESA) is an important contributor to the ongoing development of teachers in S.A. and makes a significant financial contribution to ensure that this occurs. It is our belief that the best teachers are reflective practitioners and that this capacity ought to be specifically nurtured or developed within pre-service courses.

As teaching is fundamentally linked to the relationship between teacher and learner, trainee teachers need to have a deep capacity to be relational with their students, with the families of their students and other members of the school community. These fruitful relationships require capacity within the emotional intelligence domain. Graduate teachers in the Catholic sector have an additional responsibility in supporting young people in the development of their faith and religious knowledge. Fundamental to this, for teachers, is an awareness of and commitment to their own faith journey.

Inquiry into Teacher Education

CESA makes the following responses:

a.) **The criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses ought to include a police check and students who are:**

- passionate about their own learning, with a great capacity to learn

- well educated as evidenced by a high Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) or equivalent. It is important to resist any movement to reduce the TER entrance scores for teacher training courses, but rather to increase the professional status of teaching to make it an attractive option for those with significant capacity.

b.) **The criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members ought to include:**

- a deep understanding of contemporary pedagogy and a capacity to contribute to the discourse on pedagogy through both a school perspective or academic perspectives

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

- an understanding of the breadth of pedagogies with a focus on constructivism

- pre-service programs that model the pedagogy being promoted and specifically constructivism

- an exploration of concepts of productive pedagogies

- opportunities for students to learn to be to be critically reflective teacher practitioners and that these opportunities are deeply embedded in the teacher training courses

- opportunities for trainee teachers to synthesize philosophy and practice into new meaning making

- a stronger emphasis in teacher pre-service courses on the relational aspect of teaching, how to work productively in a learning team/s, how to teach collaboratively, how to identify and develop a professional relationship with a mentor, how to work collaboratively with student support services and how to develop effective relationships with parents

- a stronger emphasis on emotional intelligence

- preparation of trainee teachers to be able to articulate the pedagogy that underpins their professional practice

- an exploration of ethical issues, particularly those that relate to the key educational issues of the day

- opportunities to critically analyse the forces that enable access to learning and consider how teachers and school leadership can make educational decisions for the common good

- an understanding that students come to school with a range of complex skills and understandings on which teachers can draw, creating contexts that support diversity and difference and improve outcomes for all students.

d.) **The interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines ought to include:**

- an excellent understanding of pedagogy as this is fundamental to teacher preparation. This requires development across the teacher training course as opposed to being confined within a limited number of units of pedagogy

- promoting and expanding the number of teacher training courses that offer specific disciplines, (i.e. languages, music, drama), and model within those disciplines the appropriate pedagogies and methodologies

e.) The preparation of primary and secondary teachers to:

1. **teach literacy and numeracy ought to include;**

- all trainee teachers being required to do a foundational course in both literacy and numeracy so that they develop strong conceptual understandings of what it is to be literate and numerate

- literacy being integrated into the key learning areas of pre-service courses through;

    - developing a broad and contemporary view of literacy that is embedded in the learning area and encompasses a deep knowledge of appropriate literacy pedagogies

    - a definition of literacy that reflects a broad and contemporary view of literacy such as the one cited below from the recent review of literacy education in Queensland:

        Literacy is the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print and multimedia.[1]

    - modelling purposeful and meaningful literacy engagement with a range of real texts including multimodal

    - providing primary and secondary trainee teachers with a repertoire of literacy practices that is flexible and adapts to the changing literacy needs of the students

    - developing a wide range of pedagogical practices that meet the different dispositions that children from a range of diverse backgrounds bring to school. Current research by Thomson[2] and research funded by the Australian Research Council by Comber and Kamler[3] has found that pedagogical practices that connect children's home literacies to school literacies significantly improve outcomes for students, particularly those students identified as most at risk.

    - an excellent understanding of the pedagogies and methodologies that enable the explicit teaching of particular skills and knowledge to scaffold the literacy learning of students

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[1] Luke, A. Freebody, P. and Land, R. (2000) *Literate Futures: review of literacy education,* Education Queensland, Brisbane, pg 20

[2] Thomson, P. (2002) *Schooling the rust-belt kids: making a difference in changing times.* Allen and Unwin

[3] Comber, B. and Kamler, B. (2004) "Getting Out of Deficit: Pedagogies of reconnection". *Teaching Education,* Vol. 15, No 3, September 2004.

- numeracy, in pre-service teacher training courses ought to include;

    - opportunities for more research to better inform how students use mathematical skills in settings other than school mathematics classes, and the extent and nature of the relationships between students' mathematics knowledge and their capacity to use mathematics in context.[4]

    - developing a broad and contemporary view of numeracy that is embedded in the learning area and encompasses a deep knowledge of appropriate numeracy pedagogies.

    - providing primary and secondary trainee teachers with a repertoire of numeracy practices that is flexible and adapts to the changing numeracy needs and contexts of the students' learning. Current research indicates that teacher demonstration and student practice of skills as the dominant pedagogy limit students' ability to use mathematics in other contexts.[5]

    - emphasising the importance of pedagogies and methodologies that are collaborative because this social interaction provides opportunities for students to clarify and solve problems.[6]

    - strong conceptual understandings of mathematical principles embedded in the learning area so that teachers understand where a child is developmentally and what learning opportunities they need to move to the next conceptual level

    - mini action research projects incorporating a case study of a small group of students with different learning needs. This will provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to program for students' individual numeracy conceptual development through the collection and analysis of student work. Reflections based on this analysis will inform action plans to further develop numeracy understandings.

2. **teach vocational education courses ought to include;**

- an understanding of vocational education, its place within the broader curriculum and its importance for all students

- an acknowledgement that all subjects have a vocational orientation and that vocational learning authenticates learning and complements constructivist approaches to learning

- an understanding of VET curriculum and assessment processes

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[4] Numeracy across the curriculum, 2004, pg vii, funded under the Australian Government's Numeracy Research and Development Initiative

[5] Numeracy across the curriculum, 2004, pg viii, funded under the Australian Government's Numeracy Research and Development Initiative

[6] Numeracy across the curriculum, 2004, pg viii, funded under the Australian Government's Numeracy Research and Development Initiative

- a placement in industry so that trainee teachers of VET, (in particular trainee teachers in Technical Studies, Home Economics and Agricultural Science) broaden their teaching options and gain a useful appreciation of the environments that their students will experience

- modelling methodologies that are based on enterprise and employability skills so that trainee teachers will become more proficient in generating engaging and relevant learning experiences that foster life skills

- an understanding in VET teacher training of career and transition planning; and strategies to integrate this across learning areas

3. **effectively manage classrooms ought to include;**

- a focus on developing an understanding of internal pyschologies which are underpinned by the belief that students who have greater self awareness can be better supported to self manage their own behaviour and direct their own learning

- understanding the pedagogies and methodologies that meet the learning needs of the students, and based on that knowledge, organise a learning environment and classroom management that optimises the learning opportunities of students and caters for individual difference

- an excellent understanding of the pedagogies and methodologies that develop collaborative learning, group skills and community and personal responsibility that lead toward self determination and independence

- modelling and the explicit teaching of human development and social skills embedded across the learning areas

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment with strategies to monitor and manage students' behaviour, particularly those in need of support

4. **successfully use information technology ought to include;**

- integrating information technology across the learning areas into the teaching, learning and assessment of learning. Scaffolding the deconstruction and construction of multimodal texts through the explicit teaching and assessment of the information technology component of the learning outcome.

- providing opportunities for participation in online activities with links to learning outcomes

5. **deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families ought to include;**

- an understanding of the issues involved in bullying and harassment, the current research and approaches to reducing bullying and

harassment and the key elements involved in a whole school approach

- strategies to create a culture in the classroom and school where bullying and disruptive behaviour are not options

- an opportunity to explore the social construction of families and the labels applied to families, like functional or dysfunctional and most importantly how as teachers they will need to construct successful partnerships with all families

- an understanding of attitudes and behaviours that are inclusive of families who are marginalised by ethnicity, religion, socio economic status or other circumstances to promote the best outcomes for the learners from those families

- an understanding that disruptive behaviour is most often an issue of relevance, contemporary pedagogy, power relationships in the classroom and individual and social responsibility. The importance of student engagement is critical to solving disruptive behaviour.

6. **deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities ought to include;**

- effective pedagogy that is inclusive of all learners

- an excellent understanding of the philosophy of inclusion and the pedagogies and methodologies that support inclusion. The 2002 Senate Enquiry into Students with Disabilities recommended devising and implementing inclusion strategies for teachers to improve outcomes for students with special needs and/or other disabilities.[7]

- inclusive strategies that are embedded across the learning areas of pre-service teacher training and modelled in pre-service courses

- a mandatory unit on the education of atypical students (including students with a disability and gifted students), to familiarise trainee teachers with classroom methods appropriate for students across the spectrum of ability.[8]

- opportunities to independently research, identify and implement specific strategies to maximise the learning opportunities for students with specific disabilities

- pre-service training that includes skills in working collaboratively in classrooms with ESOs, para professionals, occupational therapists and others

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[7] Senate Enquiry into Students with Disabilities, 2002, pg 45

[8] Recommendation from Senate Enquiry into Students with Disabilities, 2002, pg 80

7. **achieve accreditation ought to include;**

- practicum teaching being a major component of the pre-service teacher training course so that theory and practice are closely linked

- maximising the learning opportunities of the practicum teaching by careful selection of the supervising teacher through an accreditation process that could be linked to teacher standards

f.) deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments ought to include:

- the ongoing development of skills that build fruitful relationships within the school community and other professional networks

- the opportunity to explore trends in education and an understanding of the political dimension of education so that pre-service teachers can think critically about education as a social construct

g.) the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers ought to include:

- improving the quality of the practicum to raise the standard of initial teacher preparation across Australia [9]

- more partnerships between universities and schools focussed on research and these are essential for the development of innovative school cultures that nurture our young teachers

- building on the existing partnerships between schools and universities and the role they both play to continue to train teachers beyond graduation. The Catholic sector values its existing partnerships with universities and other stakeholders and is committed to the further development of these relationships.

- more emphasis on the role of leadership in leading a culture of learning in the school community, including the professional learning of trainee and graduate teachers

- pre-service teacher training to occur where possible in lighthouse schools where professional discourse about contemporary pedagogy and curriculum is embedded in the professional practice. A stronger relationship between schools and universities will allow for the identification and support of these lighthouse schools.

- selecting supervising teachers who are noted for their leadership in contemporary pedagogy and curriculum and whenever possible selecting these teacher leaders from lighthouse schools

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[9] National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, 4.3.05

- providing time for supervising teachers, pre-service teachers and graduate teachers to reflect on their practice and engage in professional discourse

h.) the current split between primary and secondary education:

- has often resulted in different pedagogical practices between primary and secondary schools. In primary schools teachers are often likely to focus on the learner and then tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of the learner. In a secondary context it is often likely that the curriculum is central and this is not in the best interests of the secondary learners. The secondary retention rates across the nation require us to rethink our pedagogical practices in secondary schools and build on the contructivist model widely practiced in primary contexts.

- is a pedagogical question. There is a movement in South Australia to question what is primary and what is secondary.

- has pedagogical implications for teachers of any learning area who move between primary and secondary contexts, in particular specialist teachers who often teach across campuses

i.) the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce needs to ensure there are greater opportunities for:

- universities and sectors to provide PD for teachers and the potential for this is more likely to be realised if universities and sectors furthered existing partnerships

- mentoring between early and later career teachers to provide opportunities for professional discourse to build capacity in newly trained teachers and to reinvigorate later career teachers. This has been supported by research by Comber and Kamler.[10]

- expanding opportunities for school based action research linked to universities where teachers and/or leaders in school communities inquire into their school practice mentored by university based academics. Through this professional practice, reflective practice becomes embedded in the work of teaching.

- improving the status of the teaching profession. There is a movement across the nation to define more clearly teacher standards to improve the professional status of teachers and teaching. The role of a professional mentor for teacher trainees or graduate teachers could be part of the professional standards. The professional mentor would be an

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[10] Teachers investigate unequal outcomes in literacy: Cross generational perspectives is a research project awarded to Barbara Comber (University of South Australia) and Barbara Kamler (Deakin University, Victoria) funded by the Australian Research Council 2002-2004. Research findings from this project appears in a number of articles including Boyer, I. Maney, B. Kamler, B. and Comber B. (2004). Reciprocal mentoring across generations: Sustaining development for English teachers. *English Teaching: practice and Critique.* September, 2004, Vol 4 No 3.

outstanding teacher, a recognised leader in contemporary pedagogy and curriculum innovation.

- expanding the number of 'teacher friendly' courses that enable teachers to engage in current research and literature at university level while working as practising teachers. This combination of theory and practice allows the transfer of knowledge into classroom practice. This supports work by Darling-Hammond who says that investment in a well educated and committed teacher workforce will result in the best educational outcomes for students of the 21st century. [11]

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[11] Darling-Hammond, L. (1996). The quiet revolution rethinking professional development. *Educational Leadership*; March 1996, Vol 53, Issue 6. Education Perspectives on educating for social change, Westport: Bergin & Garvey, pp. 139-152.