

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

TO: Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA, A.C.T., 2600.

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SYNOPSIS.

This submission, by a retired teacher and trainer of teachers, is a contribution to the reform of teacher training. It includes content in relation to the 3 areas of:

- a. School-Based Supervision.
- b. Classroom Management Techniques.
- c. Positive Relationship Development.

The selection of trainees and their supervisors gives rise to a brief description of a Bachelor of Education that is quite different from current practice. It also suggests an overhaul of grants and allowances for trainees.

The School-Based Supervision follows from the outline of the new degree program. The claim is that it is more cost effective than current practice.

The Classroom Management Techniques are also selections from larger possibilities. They show how teachers can cope in the classroom by analysing techniques in greater detail.

The Positive Relationship Development stems from the philosophy suggested in the previous sections: trust and respect come from mutually made decisions.

The conclusion places a higher value on education than has been allocated before the information revolution.

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INTRODUCTION

Thirty years ago, in a Report to the administration of State College of Victoria, Hawthorn (ex Technical Teachers' College) on WHY TRADESPEOPLE BECOME TEACHERS, I wrote in my Recommendation:

'...selection procedures should be designed so as to better inform staff of the individual capabilities of each trainee teacher and that (our) Courses be modified, restructured, added to or deleted from so as to cater for these individual differences.

I believe we should ask these vital questions:

What do we want in a trainee?

How can we recruit such trainees?

What should we offer those trainees?

How should we present it to them? ...'

It saddens me that the situation has not changed much over the last 30 years.

What I have to offer in this submission are mere suggestions. I am not an economist nor am I an expert in logistics. Moreover, my suggestions are selections of the sorts of things that need to be done. If I were to produce a comprehensive Course Outline, this submission would become unwieldy. In addition, the time constraint of a 15 April deadline creates too much pressure for my 'retired' brain. Of course, what I attempt to describe could often best be physically demonstrated; I believe that teachers should be practitioners of their own craft. But that input is outside the scope of this submission. I can, however, and with due humility, say that the trainee teachers in my English lectures generally claimed they learned more about General Method of teaching than they did in that subject itself.

For this submission, I will present samples of input for the 3 areas of:

- a. SCHOOL-BASED SUPERVISION OF TEACHING PRACTICE.
- b. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES.
- c. POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT.

a. **SCHOOL-BASED SUPERVISION.**

Before I deal with School-Based Supervision of Trainee Teachers, I will offer some answers to those 4 vital questions that I asked 30 years ago. First: What do we want in a trainee? and How can we recruit such trainees? I suggest that trainee teachers should be more than 'warm and erect', which was the sole criterion that I was given when on my first selection panel in 1965.

Ideally, the trainee should have a very good academic record. The Enter scores for teacher training over the past decade or so have suggested that too many compromises are made. Candidates for Traineeships need to demonstrate, directly or from observation of accredited talent scouts, these sorts of personal characteristics: patience, adaptability – especially to constant change, tolerance – especially of 'fools', persistence, principled behavior, self-discipline – especially in trying circumstances and commitment to doing a better job than their own teachers. In addition, trainees need to have demonstrated that their mentoring abilities are already evident. These could be from positions of captaincy, coach, secretary of teams, clubs or associations. Any leadership courses done and applied by the applicant such as: Certificate of Fitness Instruction, Swimming Teaching, Office Administration, Driver Education, should be sought. People who have skills based on empathy from counselling or peer support or experience as a Teacher's Aide or Integration Aide should be included. These recruits need not come from schools only; they can also be from industry and beyond secondary school.

Recruits could be recommended, nominated and apply according to nationally recognized criteria that talent scouts and candidates have used in a preliminary process. Once the Preliminary Criteria have been met, the Application should be assessed via Interview, and a Detailed Questionnaire based on several short videos of a variety of teaching situations for which the questions are along the lines of: What were the good/bad teaching techniques in Video 1 etc.? The final part of the selection process could be a role-play in which the candidate 'teaches' the

Interview Panel a mutually agreed upon 15 minute lesson.

The place for a level of physical fitness, established according to national criteria, is mandatory. Less certain, but I would also prefer to see a specific purpose stress test given to indicate whether a candidate has the potential to cope with the often emotionally exhausting business of teaching. There needs to be evidence of physical and mental fitness.

If this selection process seems complicated, it should be; Australia can no longer afford so many compromises. My wife's teaching career was begun without any teacher training – not even an observation lesson – and from a background as a nurse and a laboratory technician. As was often the case in the 1960s, she walked off the street into teaching. Nor is it good enough to accept a recruit on the basis of: "Me mum's a teacha!"

This next section, of the background to school-based supervision of trainee teachers, partly covers the other 2 vital questions: What should we offer trainees? and How do we present it to them? Of course, there will probably be the traditional string of Core Subjects such as: General Method, Special Method, Educational Psychology, Contemporary Sociology, Information technology, Institutions and Administration, and Electives. These electives should include: Teaching Literacy and Numeracy, Drawing, Painting, Modelling, Film Appreciation, and Units with subjects opposite to that of the trainee's major subject focus. For example, a Math/Science trainee should choose an Humanities subject and vice versa.

The General Method should cover Units such as: Classroom management, playground management, outdoor roles and strategies, preparation and correction principles, report writing, absent teacher obligations, parent/teacher relationships, collegiate relationships, and catering for individual differences including the gifted and the disadvantaged/remedial.

As well as these, Course Content with the major focus studies or particular subjects chosen for teaching need to be catered for. The old Bachelor Degree

courses such as: Math., Engineering, Visual Arts, General Arts/Humanities, Social Science, Law and Physical Education should continue over the 5 year Degree in Bachelor of Education.

Within the 5 years, the Trainee teacher must complete 500 hours/100 days of Approved Industrial Experience. There should be a minimum of 100 hours/20 days and no more than 150 hours/30 days in any of these kinds of categories: Welfare – assisting case workers, probation officers; Human Relations – dispute resolution, court assistant; Sales assistant; Charity work – Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul; Agriculture – harvesting crops; Hospital – ward cleaning, trolley ‘jockey’; Entertainment – especially front of stage; Council work – planning, waste collection; Conservation – pest control, reforestation; Building and Construction. This Industrial Experience could be spread over the 3 years after starting the training and before the final year.

A Program for Teaching Practice might look like this:

Year 1. Academic studies (Major studies in teaching subjects).

Teaching Practice: 2 x 1 week of directed observations in Teacher Training Schools where Master Teachers are working.

1 x 1 week of non-teaching duties (clerical admin., yard duty, school council meeting, marking out a track etc.).

Total teaching practice = 3 weeks.

Year 2. Academic studies (Major studies etc.).

Teaching Practice: 1 x 1 week of directed observations.

(commensurate with 2nd year. E.g. Question technique per se.)

1 x 1 week of non-classroom duties.

1 x 1 week of 30 minutes teaching each day and supervised by Master Teachers.

Total teaching practice = 3 weeks.

Year 3. Academic studies (Major studies etc.).

½ Semester/10 weeks of Accredited Industrial Experience.

Teaching Practice: ½ Semester/10 weeks of 1 day per week in school with Master Teachers supervising 1 hour of teaching in the morning and afternoon of each day.

Total teaching practice = 2 weeks

Year 4. Academic studies.

½ Semester/10 weeks of Industrial Experience.

½ Semester/10 weeks teaching Practice of 2 days per week in schools with supervised teaching of 2 hours in each morning and 1 hour in each afternoon.

Total Teaching Practice = 4 weeks.

Year 5. Academic Studies.

2 days per week in the Teachers' Training College for 30 weeks.

3 days per week in schools with supervised teaching of 4 hours teaching per day.

Total Teaching Practice = 18 weeks.

The remaining 10 weeks are to be in 'College for Final Evaluation of Trainee Teachers and application for positions.

Total Teaching Practice for the 5 years = 30 weeks.

This proposed Bachelor of Education is not easy to enter or complete. Three strands of activities produce ever-changing responsibilities and no suggestion of a cloistered hearth. Even the teaching practice is more demanding than programs of the past. Consequently, and to further enhance the status of the teaching profession, adequate remuneration must be made. This matter is for the economists to calculate, and it will have widespread implications for existing teachers, but I believe monetary assistance will contribute to the best outcomes. Accordingly, I suggest that:

- a. The fees incurred at the training institution should be paid for.
- b. Additionally, there should be a \$500 grant for prescribed texts and journal subscriptions each year.

- c. Next, although not intended to feed and clothe the trainee, but to reduce the impingement that part-time employment so often has on a tertiary student, there should be a small allowance to assist in meeting living expenses. This allowance could start at \$100 per week in the 1st year of the 'degree and rise by \$50 per week each year to become \$300 per week in the final year.

Anxiety about the draw on the public purse can be reduced in two ways. First, the stringent selection process should minimize the 'drop out' rate. Secondly, should the trainee drop out during the 'degree, moneys paid for the grant of fees and texts, must be repaid for each of the years that the trainee was in the 'degree; this would provide some 'stick'. After all, the 'carrot' of the grant and the allowance in the first place is very generous and self-interest on the trainee's part would discourage 'dropping out'. Moreover, the graduate would be obliged to teach, in any system, for 5 successive years. If they don't meet their obligation, the same sort of penalty will be incurred. E.g. Only 3 years teaching means 2 years of grant to be repaid.

Once the Trainee has completed their Bachelor of Education, they should be able to look forward to continual professional development.

Again, I will not provide details of particular programs; rather, I will suggest a broad outline with sequential facilitation. I envisage 8 stages through which the qualified teacher must move and which will also mitigate the all too frequent 'burn out' of teachers. As well, this outline is intended to maintain the vigor of youth without discarding the experience of senior service.

STAGE 1. At the end of 1st year post graduation, the teacher should complete 1 week at the end of each Semester in evaluating his/her teaching and with a Master Teacher.

STAGE 2. At the end of 6 years, the teacher should complete 1 week each Term of a refresher course – based on mutually notified needs and wants – in the 4 areas of: Special Method, General Method, Educational Psychology, Information Technology.

STAGE 3. At the end of 11 years, teachers are to do an exchange in division from Primary to Secondary and vice versa, or overseas. This exchange is to be prepared for by 2 weeks In-service at the end of the previous year. The exchange benefits are to be evaluated in the final week of each semester.

STAGE 4. At the end of 16 years, teachers are to do a compulsory post graduation specialized course, on full pay, of 1 day a week in areas from: Administration, Gifted students, Disadvantaged students, Distance education or Units related to their teaching areas.

STAGE 5. At the end of 21 years, teachers to do a major research project. An allowance of ½ a day per week is to be made by the teacher's school for this project and the project should be functional for that school.

STAGE 6. At the end of 26 years, teachers are to have their school commitment reduced by .2 to .8 of full- time.

STAGE 7. At the end of 31 years, teachers are to have their school commitment reduced by a further .2 to .6 of full-time.

STAGE 8. At the end of 36 years, teachers are to have their school commitment reduced by a further .2 to .4 of full-time.

Clearly, from this quite prescriptive program, there arises the question of who should be involved in Supervising Trainee Teachers. In an attempt to answer this question, I offer the following descriptions:

1. Classroom teachers, who have completed 6 years teaching, could be nominated by their peers. These teachers would be appointed to the position of Master Teacher as a result of mutual decisions involving: the nominated teacher, the school administration, 2 members of the teacher training institution. This supervisor is nominated; he/she does not apply for the position.
2. Classroom teachers, who have completed 11 years teaching, and who have completed their exchange teaching requirement, can

be applicants for the role of supervisor/Master Teacher. The application should be considered by the school administration and one member of the teacher training institution.

3. Classroom teachers, who have completed 16 years teaching, and who have completed their post graduation specialization, can be applicants for the role of supervisor/Master Teacher. The application should be considered by the school administration and one member of the teacher training institution.
4. Classroom teachers who have completed 21 years teaching, and who have completed their research project, can apply for the role of supervisor/Master Teacher. The application should be considered by the school administration and one member of the teacher training institution.
5. Teachers' College staff, who are based at the school for 2 days and at the 'College for 2 days with lecturing and tutorial duties, can be jointly appointed to Master Teacher position by the teacher registration body and 2 members of the teacher training institution. The 5th day for this person would be spent doing preparation, correction and other clerical tasks such as lesson evaluations.

Teachers and training institution staff who are appointed to the role of supervisor are to be classified as Master Teachers. Such an appellation should not be given for mere length of service.

Given the detailed background of those who supervise trainee teachers, and taking into account the sequence of observation and practice of the trainee, the benefits of School-Based Supervision should be obvious. The trainee can have problems dealt with in an on-going way via the weekly contact with the Master Teacher. The supervisor can identify problems immediately they occur and prepare

solutions in conjunction with the trainee and not too far after the event. Moreover, the trainee has regular opportunity to observe and learn from the best in the Master Teacher. This sort of relationship engenders more of a collegiate support approach than the often indifferent, defensive or competitive manner of the trainee and other staff. Certainly, that sense of common purpose was both my experience and pleasure when I used the school-based technique in 1975.

I believe that 'one-off' visits from the 'College supervisor, a la Superman, are artificial to the point of misuse of resources. Additionally, to have the trainee supervised only by one or two classroom teachers gives that trainee only one or two perspectives; it could even conflict with the 'College expectations. The trainee is then busy serving several masters and not developing his/her own teaching personality.

The current systems, whereby trainees do 2 – 4 week 'rounds' at a school, even with graded increase in observation and teaching obligations, is too piecemeal. It limits the trainee's experience and benefits. Even when a trainee is visited by a 'College supervisor, their lack of familiarity with the trainee's context and the school's ethos, practice and context, means that the trainee's benefits are further limited.

Whoever does the supervision, it should be done according to common criteria plus particular modification according to that context. These criteria should be graded commensurate with the trainee's experience. For instance, a final year trainee would be expected to have ticks in all the columns that list the details of the likes of: appropriate teaching content and skills, classroom management techniques, supervision of individual work, effective use of voice as a teaching tool, achieving lesson objectives, generating excitement for the subject, etc. The novice would have minimal ticks...

As well as this attempt to objectively assess the trainee's performance, there should be scope for the supervisor to subjectively assess. Occasionally, some teachers present an indefinable or charismatic quality. It might be in their smile, their gesture,

their voice, or simply their skill in questioning technique. These teachers are able to inspire, but one doesn't necessarily see the artifice of their art. And teaching should be an art.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES.

I have known teachers who, the moment they walked into a classroom, caused the class to erupt into the beginnings of unruliness. Equally, I have known teachers who could function in such a way that their presence was not apparent and yet the class was operating productively. What are the things that create these differences? What allows some teachers to not need to spend time disciplining a class? What are the mechanics of classroom management?

Apart from sound selection for teacher training and the contributions of the teacher's own personality, I believe that there are quite specific classroom management techniques that can be learned. For example, very few teachers, lecturers or public speakers, for that matter, understand the difference between 'upstage' and 'downstage' and, all too frequently, they 'close' their face to the audience. Picture this: the teacher/lecturer/speaker is in front of a chalkboard/whiteboard/screen and refers to something on that 'board/screen. Inevitably, they reach across their body with the 'pointer'/arm and almost speak to that 'board/screen instead of to the audience. Not only are they partially turning their back to the audience and making themselves difficult to be heard, they are also being quite rude. Unless they have an unusual swivel head, the 'face-to-face' or 'eye contact' is broken. The value of whatever is said is diminished by the discourtesy.

Next, and to demonstrate that the voice as a teaching tool can be overused, I used to pretend to have a sore throat and consequent voice loss; I would run a class entirely by mime. This focused the students' attention as they made an effort to understand, and also consider my predicament. Again, this technique stressed the value of 'eye contact'. That is, the direct seeing with my eyes of the individuals' eyes or looking directly at the eyes of others is 'eye contact'. I used to practise a particular pattern with this 'eye contact' when teaching/lecturing. My pattern was: centre front, left back, right front, right back, left front and so on in the same sequence. Each teacher must develop their own style, and the centre, left and right etc. will depend

on where they are in the room – side, front, back – but a systematic pattern of eye contact is an essential classroom management technique.

Such eye contact should not be confused with what is frequently called the 'roving eye'. Gender jokes aside, the 'roving eye' is what the name suggests. Its use is almost continuous during individual supervision. That is, as a teacher is moving around a classroom giving assistance to individual students, the teacher should be placed so that the majority of students are in the teacher's cone of vision so that he/she can do a systematic sweep across the bisectors of that cone. This 'roving eye' finds: boredom, brewing trouble, non-starters, and lack of work being done.

In terms of cone of vision, some explanation is needed. From the teacher's eye, the vision to the point of focus is spread in something of a cone shape. The vision on the periphery is not in sharp focus, but it does allow recognition of activity, be it productive or unproductive. The teacher should always be in a position so that the majority of the class is within that cone of vision. The cone will change as the teacher's position changes. Even when the teacher is cleaning the 'board, maintaining the cone of vision with an open face, and using the upstage hand, the eye contact and courtesy can be maintained.

Cleaning the 'board has its own particular technique. It's not so vital with a whiteboard, but it is essential with a chalkboard. With the upstage hand, and whether talking to the class or not, the 'board should be cleaned/erased with an initial series of vertical strokes/sweeps. These should be followed by a series of horizontal strokes or laying off, as a house painter does. These 'horizontals' can then serve as a guide for the next lines of writing. The beginning teacher can present an unwanted vulnerability by losing the 'horizontal control' with work on the 'board. Nothing brands a teacher more as a novice than the lines sloping up and revealing the teacher as inexperienced and not able to sight the true horizontal. Unless, of course, it's the voice straining over the top of the student din and repeatedly saying 'Right' as an exclamation, question, or a desperate substitute for: 'Listen, people, I'm in charge!'

Perhaps every teacher should study Shakespeare's KING LEAR and learn the advice to Cordelia: 'Ever soft gentle and low; an excellent thing in a (woman) teacher. But really, that is a matter for the Speech lecturers, the Drama department and the Literature elective for the Science trainees. This is not the place for recommendations as to total content for trainee teachers.

These samples of Classroom Management Techniques – differentiation of upstage and downstage actions, mime, eye contact and patterns thereof, cone of vision, 'board cleaning – are related to the teacher's personality. It is the teacher's personality and his/her capacity to develop Positive Relationships that can make classroom management easier and enjoyable for all.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT.

Doubtless, teachers are familiar with certain generalisations or 'truisms' about teaching and teachers: 'you have to love children...', 'preparation is the keynote...', 'remember, you're in charge of what goes on...', 'imagine they're your children...'. Irrespective of these, I include the following comments about what is sometimes known as the affective domain – the getting along with others, especially in terms of feelings.

My outline of a 5 Year Course, and the school-based supervision of trainees, is structured, in part, to provide the opportunity for maturity to occur. Of course, I don't believe that it is finished then and that is why I outlined the teacher's professional life in 5 Year Blocks. But I recall my own initial teacher training, at Primary Teachers' College, when most of the trainees were ex Year 11 only. The 2 Year Course was justified on the basis of allowing time for personality maturation; the content could have been, and was in other contexts, covered in 6 months. My inclusion of compulsory Industrial Experience is also meant to assist the maturity element and the newly qualified teachers achieving an understanding of the feelings and pre-occupations of others, as well as their own. Whatever the teacher's various roles in society are, their students have the same sorts of feelings and needs. It is counter-productive to have a preconception of the students as inferior. They might be fidgety, grubby, smelly, talkative, rude and rebellious, but they are no less human than the teachers. Too many teachers present as experts, as purveyors of knowledge and skills that they believe the students should have, if not must have. And too many teachers come from middle class backgrounds and have little understanding of the values and ethics of others. The child of the unemployed single mum, who has a drug problem of some sort, is rarely going to be amenable to the 'Do what I say, now!'

Trust and respect relationships must be established before any teaching can begin.

How can trust and respect be established? How can these sorts of relationships be maintained? The first and most obvious way is to recognize each student as an

individual. Knowing the students' names, especially their first names, is not just a matter of courtesy, it also shows that the teacher has a preparedness to give of his/her time and effort. From the first lesson with any class, the teacher must learn and know the students' names. It might take the whole lesson, but it is the best start. I've seen so many teachers start a first class by announcing their name, writing it on the 'board and then proceeding with the lesson. The message to the students is clear: 'Sir/Miss' is the only person in the room who matters.

The next step in developing positive relationships with students (if not colleagues) is to tell them something of yourself. It needs to be something with which they can identify and to which they can respond in kind when you gently explore their identities. It might be where you live (It's a bonus if the teacher lives in the same district as the students – the teacher is perceived less as an outsider.), that you have children of your own, you drive the old FJ ute in the staff car park, or that you really like rap music (God help you!).

This should be followed by a discussion of mutual expectations in terms of behavior and Course content. My own students were given a week-by-week program for the year, but with the proviso that it was subject to negotiated change and with notice. Students do not like teachers who operate on the basis of: 'What did we do last lesson? What are we going to do today?' In this initial declaration of course content, the students should think about it for a week and then be prepared to negotiate change, if they wish. Students need to own the work, even though the teacher guides that possession.

In connexion with behavior, it is best not to reiterate school rules, workshop rules, laboratory rules or classroom rules by long verbal listings. The teacher should offer individual copies of the basic 5 that they believe are fair and leave space for another 5 from the student input. Again, as well as calling for immediate input, a week or so should be allowed for negotiated additions. The rules should be seen and not heard, as well as understood as workable and fair. They should not disadvantage

any ability or background.

Although these sorts of details seem so obvious and banal, they are frequently neglected by Method Lecturers and supervising teachers. They are so ordinary and part of a good teacher's behavior, that they are forgotten or not 'seen'.

Depending on the teacher's specialisation, the immediacy of correction, feedback or positive reinforcement from teachers is a vital contributor to positive relationship development. Because immediacy is the absolute keynote in this interaction, it should be: on-the-spot, in that session, in the next session, or no more than 48 hours later. It is the sort of sequence that I used and when I had a batch of essays on ROMEO AND JULIET to correct. It was hard work, but the dividends that such an approach created were well worth it. Nor did I worry about the pressure that this system created for colleagues; the students are the major reason for the teacher's employment.

The next item, that I believe should be included in this sample of contributions to positive relationship development, is the teacher's role outside the classroom. Perhaps the least interesting, and yet it is one of the most effective, is the task of Yard Duty Supervision. It is when a teacher is on yard duty that so much can be learned about friendship groups, undiscovered skills and abilities, as well as how to defuse disputes. Indeed, the students can learn so much more about the teacher if he/she is prepared to join in activities, when invited. I know that in my initial training years, during the 1950s, I would lose at least one shirt per teaching round; there were no playground tribunals then.

Of course, there are so many other roles that the teacher can fulfil outside the classroom. It might be the netball coach, the hockey umpire or unlocking the chess cupboard; the list is endless. In my own experience, as an Athletics' Coach for 25 years and a Squash Referee for 20 years, my contributions had untold benefits in the classroom. So long as when a teacher fulfils these outside roles that he/she remembers that all are learners, then the positive relationships will always develop.

I cite this example: After 3 years at one school, I had a team of lads who could mark out a 4 lanes athletics track in an afternoon. Perhaps time has been kind and dimmed the memory, but I don't recall having discipline problems.

To learn the rules of the game, whatever the game, is to be a more effective participant. It's the students who are the real winners.

CONCLUSION.

It is clear that I'm something of an idealist. I hold the belief that society must come to value education as its top priority; the survival of our nation depends on education being valued above all other claims on its resources. With education a skilled workforce, an environmentally aware workforce and a workforce that is sensitive to the needs of the individual, the nation and its neighbors and trading partners is a more likely outcome. Education is ultimately the best deterrent to crime, terrorism and war. Inevitably, my idealism will be criticised by administrators, economists and other educators - both retired and current. However, I make no apologies for starting with the ideal; reality always imposes a workable compromise. But I beg the members of the 'Committee, let us begin to reform teacher training so that we achieve more than mere mediocrity. We should be prepared to invest in training teachers to the same extent that we have in order to attain our elite reputation in sport.

Geoff. Holmes. T.P.T.C., B.A., DIP. ED.

(11 years training teachers for Victorian technical schools in the 1960s and 1970s.

14 years teaching in Victorian rural and suburban techs during the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

1 year emergency teaching in rural primary and secondary schools in the 80s.

7 years in a rural secondary school during the 1980s and 90s.)