

**SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES INQUIRY
INTO TEACHER EDUCATION
by
THE BOARD OF TEACHER REGISTRATION, QUEENSLAND.**

Introduction

The Board of Teacher Registration¹ is a Queensland statutory authority. Its roles and functions under the *Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988* are to:

- establish, operate and keep under review an efficient and equitable system of teacher registration;
- confer and collaborate with teacher educators, and the education and wider communities, to ensure that teachers are prepared to meet the educational challenges of the future;
- liaise with registering authorities in Australia and elsewhere to share best practice, align standards of qualifications and of good character required for teaching, and protect and enhance the status of the teaching profession.

While the Board is very interested in making submissions to major inquiries into education – and particularly to those relating directly to teacher education and professional standards for teachers – we feel somewhat dismayed that yet another inquiry is being conducted into teacher education when so many important findings and recommendations from the numerous inquiries held over the past two decades are yet to be implemented by Government. We do not expect that findings from this Inquiry will vary significantly from information about teacher education which has already been collected.

We would also question the use of the term ‘teacher training’ within the present Inquiry’s terms of reference. This concept is truly outdated and implies a mechanistic approach to teacher preparation which is very much at odds with current understandings of teaching as a profession. We believe it is important to distinguish between professional education and ‘training’. The current demands placed on schooling systems by virtue of our rapidly changing world mean that the practice of teaching is increasingly complex and highly contextualised. The sub-professional undertones of a term such as ‘training’ do not do justice to the scope of teachers’ professional and civic responsibilities.

Today’s teachers are expected to provide a foundation for life in our new, complex and uncertain economic and social environments. They must help students develop the skills and knowledge for the ‘knowledge economy’ and lifelong learning. They are asked to do this within a context of intellectual challenge and in ways that connect student work to the world outside the classroom. This is no mean feat in itself; but in addition to this there are increasing pressures on schools and teachers to provide high levels of social and emotional support to students – and, sometimes, to students’ families.

¹ Following a review of the BTR in 2004, the authority will be renamed the ‘Queensland College of Teachers’ from 2006. The full report of the Review is available from the interim website: www.btr.qld.edu.au/interimqtc.htm

In the view of the Board, teacher education is a continuum which moves from preservice preparation, through induction, into ongoing professional learning that will satisfy the needs and interests of individual teachers and the systems in which they work. The purpose of preservice preparation is to lay the solid foundation of knowledge, skills and attitudes upon which graduate teachers can build layers of expertise over the course of their professional lives. Graduate teachers cannot be expected to have the same levels of skill and expertise as those who have been in the profession for a number of years. This point is well taken up in *An Ethic of Care – Effective Programmes for Beginning Teachers Report* (DEST, 2002), a report which acknowledges the critical importance of having well structured and adequately resourced induction programs in schools for graduate teachers.

Context of the Current Inquiry

This latest inquiry into teacher education at the national level continues an ongoing tradition of examining teacher education, particularly since 1980. The current inquiry has exactly the same title (National Inquiry into Teacher Education) as the last major national inquiry which reported in 1980 (NITE, also referred to as the ‘Auchmuty’ inquiry). In addition, the terms of reference of the current inquiry are not very different from the earlier ones, especially in relation to: selection for teacher education; the composition of preservice teacher education; the nature and provision of professional development; and the roles and responsibilities of the teacher education institutions. NITE was the most extensive report to date, and was also produced under a coalition government.

While a number of the areas outlined in the recommendations from the 1980 review have, over time, been addressed (such as four years of initial preparation, the professional studies component of preservice programs, the crucial role of the practicum, a national advisory body in teacher education, accreditation of institutions (now through program accreditation)), other areas have not progressed to such an extent (selection, induction, research into teacher education, resources for ongoing professional development, staffing in teacher education). There would be concern if the current inquiry failed to recognise the changes that have occurred during this time. Much of the action which has occurred, as indicated above, has been at the state and local levels.

The Dawkins reviews of the late 1980s and early 1990s represented the next major examination of teacher education after NITE. With the offering of teacher education in universities, there was an emphasis on the status of teacher education – and a move away from ‘training’ to ‘education’, in order to better prepare future Australians for their roles in the knowledge economy. The areas for examination listed for the ‘Ebbeck’ inquiry (1990) – *Teacher Education in Australia* – are not very different from those listed for the current inquiry and include: the quality and quantity of teacher supply; the structure of the teaching career; the role of continuing education, funding in higher education; and changes in schools. These areas were also the focus of State inquiries into teacher education in the 1970s and 1980s. Another report in 1990 – the ‘Ramsey’ report – *The Shape of Teacher Education: some proposals* – attempted to shift the power base back to the employing authorities, and offered a distinct ‘training’ role for the teacher education institutions. This was further emphasised in *Teacher Education: A Discussion Paper* (DEET, 1992) with its

reconstruction of teacher education as teacher 'training' and its focus on teachers as 'competent practitioners'.

The 1998 Adey report – *Preparing a Profession: Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project* – recommended standards for the teaching profession as a framework for future planning. However, since then, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland have developed their own sets of standards (sometimes there are even different standards by different organisations within the one state), although most of the current standards have taken account of the agreed national standards framework. In addition, there have been other reviews of aspects of teacher education, particularly in the last few years, including a review of science, technology and mathematics teaching and the current review of preservice preparation for literacy teaching.

What has happened in the inquiry process during this time is a to-ing and fro-ing of who is responsible for reform in teacher education. In general, there has been an ongoing attempt to pull to the centre particular desired priorities for teacher education while at the same time pushing to the states, universities and local authorities, the roles of implementing and resourcing these areas. The main questions concern who is in control of the reform agenda and what are the roles of the different players. What has not disappeared in the last 25 years through all the inquiries is the search for teaching to be accepted as a profession. The cycle of unresolved issues remains. We may need to question why this is the case, why there is not more support for teacher reform or adequate funding to address areas of concern. All of the inquiries since 1980, to a greater or lesser extent, have continued the cycle of ongoing themes: the need to recruit applicants of high quality; the desirable length and content of teacher education programs; the importance of the practicum and the need for improved practice teaching supervision; a continued press for national development; and a standardised framework for teacher education. The current inquiry takes place in a context of 'standardisation' with respect to reporting, curriculum, the starting age for schooling, literacy and numeracy standards, national testing, an Australian certificate of education, and national control of universities.

This inquiry presents a comprehensive set of Terms of Reference. However, there is no accompanying discussion paper, which limits the nature of the dialogue with stakeholders. While ultimate control of the reform agenda may rest with the Australian Government, implementation needs to be mindful of the complexities of Australian federalism and the mediating roles of all the other players if the cycle of unresolved issues is to be overcome.

Teacher Education in Queensland

The content, delivery and outcomes of teacher education programs are of major interest and concern to the Board of Teacher Registration, because of the legal and procedural requirements set out in the governing Act. **Teacher education programs in Queensland must be approved by the Board if graduates of the programs are to be granted teacher registration in this state.**

To assist universities, the Board published its first *Guidelines on the Acceptability of Teacher Education Programs for Teacher Registration Purposes* in 1990. The

Guidelines were the result of extensive consultation by the Board and its Professional Education Committee, and in the following decade were regularly updated in the light of emerging trends and issues in education. Unique in Australia, they provided a model for later attempts to develop national teacher education guidelines.

In 2002, following consultations as part of the Board's 'Fresh Look' into teacher education and teacher registration, the *Guidelines* were replaced by *Professional Standards for Graduates and Guidelines for Preservice Teacher Education Programs* (referred to as the *Standards and Guidelines*). This document covers three areas:

- professional standards for graduates of teacher education programs, defining attributes considered necessary for effective beginning teachers (see Appendix 1);
- mandatory program components, to enable programs to be accepted by the Board; and
- guidelines on program consultation and acceptance.

The Professional Standards for Graduates contained within the *Standards and Guidelines* cover five key areas, each consisting of sub-components, and all of which are required to be addressed in preservice programs. The broad areas cover: professional and discipline knowledge bases; literacy and numeracy; engaging learners and creating intellectually challenging learning environments; professional relationships and ethical practice; and ongoing professional learning and reflection.

The full *Standards and Guidelines* document is available on the Board's website www.btr.qld.edu.au.

The Board of Teacher Registration program accreditation processes already in place, with their emphasis on collaboration, reflect the strong partnership that exists in Queensland teacher education. The shift in 2002 to a standards-based approach to teacher preparation has been welcomed in this state and held up as a model elsewhere in Australia and internationally. We firmly believe that the accreditation of teacher education programs is a matter for individual states and territories and can see little if any value in additional layers of regulation.

Comments on Selected Terms of Reference

Term of Reference 1: Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher

training courses

While the Board does take an interest in processes for entry to teacher education programs, we do not believe this to be an area about which we can comment in detail for the purposes of this Inquiry. We are, however, aware of a shift in recent years towards a substantially larger proportion of mature-age and career-change entrants to teacher education programs compared with school-leavers. In some Queensland institutions the proportion is reported to be 50 per cent and higher. This changing demographic is influencing the design of programs.

The Board is also aware of the criticism that is levelled at universities from time to time that the entry requirements for teacher education are not sufficiently high. We believe there is a need for research in this area, looking specifically at whether there are links between specific requirements for entry to teacher education programs (for example, tertiary entrance 'scores')

and the quality of teachers prepared within those programs, both upon graduation and over time.

Term of Reference 3: Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition

There appears to be an underlying assumption here that it is undesirable for students to withdraw from teacher preparation programs. The Board supports attrition from programs where it is the result of students having re-assessed their desire or suitability to teach. Tertiary institutions and co-operating schools have an obligation to inform preservice teachers if they consider them unable to be supported in becoming effective classroom practitioners.

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

The wording of this Term of Reference implies the existence of a single philosophy informing teacher education in Australia. This assumption is far from desirable and should be challenged. In Queensland (and in other states and territories) there is an array of educational research, theory and philosophy underpinning teacher preparation programs. The Board welcomes such diversity and considers it essential to fostering innovation in both classroom teaching and teacher education.

Processes for acceptance of programs by the Board in Queensland require that universities make explicit a program's rationale, provide information about the research on which its design is based, and outline the nature of consultations conducted with the field as part of program development.

Similarly, there are many different approaches taken in the delivery of teacher education programs. In Queensland, universities provide information to the Board about the teaching and learning approaches in a given program; modes of delivery (including the use of technologies); the links between learning experiences and assessment; the contribution to the program of the embedded professional experiences component (which includes supervised teaching practice in schools); and the means by which student attainment of the Board's graduate standards is to be assessed and monitored throughout the program.

As part of continuing acceptance of programs, universities are required to provide annual updates on program implementation (including minor changes), and to inform the Board at other times of major changes made to program content, delivery or assessment.

Term of Reference 7: Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:

- (i) teach literacy and numeracy;***
- (ii) teach vocational education courses;***
- (iii) effectively manage classrooms;***
- (iv) successfully use information technology;***
- (v) deal with bullying, disruptive students, dysfunctional families;***
- (vi) deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;***
- (vii) achieve accreditation; and***
- (viii) deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards etc***

We note that this Term of Reference acknowledges only primary and secondary school teachers. There are also many programs available across Australia for the preparation of

specialist early childhood teachers (to work with children from birth to age eight) and middle years teachers (teaching children aged from approximately 10 to 14 years).

In Queensland, the Professional Standards for Graduates contained within the *Standards and Guidelines* address all areas listed in sub-points (i) to (vi) and (viii) above. Graduates from Queensland programs are required to have demonstrated knowledge and skills in the areas listed, relevant to the age groups for which their program has prepared them. There are additional standards covering the area of literacy. The Queensland graduate standards refer to 'multiliteracies', not just literacy.

One of the challenges facing teacher education is that of integrating key aspects of professional knowledge and skill across an entire program. Areas such as literacy, the use of information technologies, classroom and behaviour management, and inclusive education have all been identified at various times as being most effectively addressed through an integrated approach. Many programs are designed so as to have a particular focus on some (or all) of those areas during practicum.

The Board of Teacher Registration's *Standards and Guidelines* are supplemented by a range of reports in key areas corresponding closely with those listed in this term of reference, such as literacy, working with young adolescents, Indigenous education, and students with special needs. The Guidelines section of the *Standards and Guidelines* requires that preservice programs in Queensland should take these reports into account as well as other current relevant reports and recommendations.

Sub-point (vii) in the list above refers to 'accreditation' for graduates. This is not a term used in Queensland – and, to the best of our knowledge, it is terminology specific to the context of only one Australian State. Graduates of Queensland teacher education programs approved by the Board are eligible for teacher registration.

Term of Reference 8: Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.

It has long been acknowledged that it is desirable for universities and schools to work collaboratively for continuous improvement in teacher education – in preservice preparation and in ongoing professional development. There are many examples from around Australia of teacher education programs in which close cooperation exists between universities and school communities. Many universities also employ practising teachers as sessional or adjunct staff within their teacher education programs.

The professional experience component of preservice programs takes place, of course, in school settings and requires close cooperation between university and school personnel to operate effectively. Four-year undergraduate programs in Queensland require at least 100 days of professional experiences, of which at least 80 days must be supervised practice in schools. Many programs also include a period of internship (from 4 to 10 weeks in length) in addition to the mandatory 100 days. The vexed issue of payment by universities to teachers for practicum supervision needs to be addressed urgently, as does the related issue of increasing difficulties faced by some universities in securing practicum placements for all their preservice teachers.

Some recent Queensland preservice programs (designed within the past five years) have been developed jointly by university faculty members and school-based practitioners, and have academic components – in addition to the periods of school-based practicum – delivered both on-campus and at school. There are also other forms of partnership involving schools and universities which appear to be operating effectively within Queensland teacher education.

Term of Reference 9: Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training.

As mentioned earlier, there are teacher education programs currently offered in areas other than primary and secondary teaching. Middle Years programs address issues of pedagogy, student engagement and curriculum design that cross the 'boundaries' between primary and secondary schooling. Similarly, specialist early childhood teaching programs focus on the specific learning and developmental characteristics of young children, and the design of learning environments appropriate for these early stages of human development and learning.

There are programs offered in Queensland and elsewhere that address other areas of teacher specialisation, including Special Education.

There has been a move in recent years in Queensland, in both the government and non-government schooling sectors, to establish P-12 schools. This recognises the importance of a seamless curriculum for these years of schooling, and this emphasis is reflected in the teacher education programs currently offered in Queensland.

Appendix 1

Board of Teacher Registration, Queensland

- The Professional Standards -

Graduates will possess and be able to apply professional and disciplinary knowledge bases.

Graduating teachers will exhibit an understanding of learning and teaching within the contexts of rapidly changing environments, and they will be able to utilize this knowledge to engage with curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting of student outcomes. They will be familiar with the creation, application and redevelopment of knowledge relevant to their future teaching roles and specialisations. They will understand the place of transdisciplinary knowledge in the design, implementation and evaluation of learning environments. They will have some understandings of the positioning of education within social, cultural, historical and political contexts and be committed to deepening these understandings over time.

Graduates will possess and be able to apply a range of literacies relevant to their professional roles.

Graduating teachers will exhibit a high level of personal proficiency² in oral and written language and numeracy. They will understand and engage with a range of theories of language, language learning and language pedagogy³. They will be literate in the disciplines appropriate to their professional teaching roles. They will demonstrate communication skills in a range of social and cultural contexts. They will be confident with multiliteracies and proficient in the use of ICT in learning environments.

Graduates will exhibit the skills to create supportive and intellectually challenging learning environments to engage all learners.

Graduating teachers will draw upon pedagogical, curriculum and assessment knowledge and skills to engage all learners. They will use knowledge about learners and learning to create meaningful learning opportunities that lead to desired learning outcomes for individuals and groups. They will be able to design and implement learning opportunities that are socially just and inclusive, and promote higher order thinking and critical inquiry. In designing learning environments, they will acknowledge the diversity of learners' language and socio-cultural realities as well as their diverse abilities and interests, and strive to ensure that learning is supported for all students.

Graduates will understand and participate in relationships that characterise ethical professional practice within and beyond learning communities.

²Graduating teachers from non-English speaking backgrounds should be proficient in English language at the level of 7 on each area of IELTS (International English Language Testing System).

³ See *Literacy in Teacher Education: Standards for Preservice Programs* for expanded coverage of desirable literacy standards for graduates of preservice teacher education programs.

Graduating teachers will commit to their participation in communities of learning and to the importance of relationships and partnerships within these communities. Such relationships include teacher-learner and parent-teacher, and encompass connections with other professional and support staff, community stakeholders and a range of resource people external to the learning organisation. Graduating teachers will be prepared to enter the consultative, collaborative and critical relationships that are embedded in these communities of practice.

Graduates will be committed to reflective practice and ongoing professional renewal.

Graduating teachers will display a positive orientation to personal learning and teaching which foregrounds reflection on practice as an important part of the ongoing development of teacher identity. Such reflections will indicate a growing critical awareness of the multiple and often conflicting meanings within which they operate as they struggle towards increasingly ethical and socially just professional practice. A commitment to professional renewal for self and in communities of colleagues will form part of the graduating teacher's self-image as a lifelong learner.