

Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training

Inquiry into Teacher Education

Brief comments submitted by Tabor College Adelaide in relation to the Terms of Reference

Tabor College Adelaide's comments have been inserted as dot points.

1. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.
 - We recommend that the importance of using of holistic entry criteria be explored, as TER (or similar) scores alone cannot be expected to indicate which applicants are likely to complete teaching courses or to become good teachers.
2. Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
 - We agree that it is very important to explore whether the students attracted into teacher training courses have suitably diverse backgrounds and experiences to serve the needs of school children in an optimal manner.
3. Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition.
 - We would consider that the following would be useful areas for the inquiry to include:
 - (1) the relationship between attrition and sense of direction towards teaching and other relevant factors at time of entry into a teaching course;
 - (2) the relationship between attrition and entry TER scores; and
 - (3) the relationship between attrition rate and financial pressures, e.g. comparison between full-fee paying and Commonwealth supported students at public and private institutions.
4. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members.
 - It would be useful, also, to consider other factors that may contribute to high quality faculty performance in training teaching students.
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.
 - In addition it would be useful to:
 - (1) examine the relationship between underlying educational philosophy and success of graduates as teachers, i.e. graduate outcomes; and
 - (2) explore the extent to which underlying educational philosophy is integrated into the content, structure, delivery methods, and assessment and evaluation methods of courses and how this impacts graduate teachers
6. Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.
 - Meaningful academic interaction and relationships between teacher training faculties and other faculties is important in raising respect for teacher education programs and also for their graduates.
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 and disruptive students and 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, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.
 - These are all very important areas for consideration. It is most important to examine how well teacher-training courses equip graduate teachers in relation to all of the above necessary practical areas. There appear to be some major differences and weaknesses in some of these areas in some programs.
 - A failure to produce teaching graduates who are adequately trained in the above areas will have a significant and negative impact on the standard of education achieved in Australian schools and therefore on the next generation who will lead this nation. It will also have a major negative impact on how Australian education is viewed in the international arena.
8. Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.
- This is a most important area to explore - good and sufficient teacher training practicum placements in schools are a vital part of teacher training courses. The adequacy of arrangements and support offered in such placements is an important area for review. To become successful teachers, student teachers need a very high quality of supervision, mentoring and support in their practicum placements.
9. Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training.
- This is another worthwhile area to explore, particularly with the relative lack of curriculum, educational and pedagogical training required in some secondary teacher training programs compared with that required for primary teachers.
10. Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.
- This is an important factor to consider in looking at the profile of the teaching profession and teacher attrition rates.
11. Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.
- The adequacy of funding for teacher education courses offered by private non-university higher education providers is also an important area to consider. A small number of Commonwealth supported places have been made available for private institutions for the 2005-2008 period, however the majority of teacher trainees in these institutions are full-fee-paying and the institutions receive no payments or income for these students apart from fee payments (directly or through the FEE-HELP system). Private non-university teacher training higher education providers do not have access to any form of government funding apart from the Commonwealth Grant Scheme payments for their few students who are Commonwealth supported. These institutions therefore get no additional support for practicum placements and no block grants etc. Their need is acute compared with that of funded universities. This is an area that needs to be explored in the interest of equity.

In South Australia, for instance, the Tabor College Adelaide Field Experience Coordinator is Chair of the South Australian Practicum Partnership, a group that includes representation from the three State universities and Tabor College Adelaide and organises the allocation of primary schools in the Adelaide metropolitan area for student teacher practicum placements. Tabor College Adelaide maintains the State database record of these practicum placement allocations for all members of the Practicum Partnership and the Tabor College

Adelaide Field Experience Coordinator is the South Australian coordinator for the National Association of Field Experience Administrators (NAFEA). However, Tabor College Adelaide, as a private Higher Education Provider, receives no practicum support funding at all.

The Inquiry should make reference to current research, to developments and practices from other countries as well as to the practices of other professions in preparing and training people to enter their profession.

- We agree with this approach.

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