

ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF VICTORIA

AiSV

AISV SUBMISSION TO THE
National Inquiry into
Teacher Education

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The Association of Independent Schools of Victoria Inc.

AISV was established in 1949 to represent, promote the interests of and provide services to Victorian independent schools. More than 97 per cent of all independent schools in Victoria are members of the Association and member schools enrol more than 99 per cent of all independent school students in Victoria. As such, more than 200 schools educating over 100,000 students are members of the Association. As member schools are individual legal entities, the Association is not a system authority but is a non-profit service organisation to its membership. As part of this role, the Association represents the interests of its Member Schools to governments and the community on a wide range of issues.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Inquiry into Teacher Education addresses a significant issue at an important juncture within the teaching profession.

Getting pre-service teacher training right is integral to improving teaching and learning in schools. Teachers enter the workforce with enormous levels of responsibility. We need to ensure that they are prepared and equipped to manage their responsibilities and to continually grow in their profession.

AISV's submission addresses eight of the eleven terms of reference in four sections:

1. Attracting high quality teachers

It is vital that the teaching profession encompasses a range of professionals with various life experiences. Teaching careers should be promoted to school students, university graduates from other fields and mid-career professionals. If we are to attract more high quality teachers, then we need to increase the availability of, and access to, pre-service training.

2. The scope, suitability and delivery of teacher education

The integral elements of pre-service teacher training are not those that can be fully taught in a university lecture theatre. New teachers need to be skilled in specific subject areas, classroom management and in building student-teacher relationships. These expertise need to be developed, over time, through more on-the-job experience.

3. The organisation of teacher training

While a number of independent schools run middle years programs, the current split between primary and secondary education training is not considered detrimental. Schools noted that primary and secondary trained teachers could usually move into middle years programs.

Conversely, schools noted their concerns in relation to training teachers for the early years of learning. Pre-service training in early childhood studies and primary teaching needs to be consolidated to better equip graduate teachers for innovative early learning programs.

4. Resourcing ongoing professional development

While schools value ongoing training for their staff, the financial and management realities of releasing staff for professional development often act as significant deterrents from in-service training. Schools need to be better financially supported to facilitate professional development and to pay for replacement teachers. There also exists a need for more innovative programs where the training occurs "in-house".

AISV's submission provides an independent school-based perspective of the current training process and how well it equips graduates to teach in independent schools. While the AISV submission identifies a number of weaknesses in current pre-service training, it is believed that many of these can be addressed, at least in part, through longer and more frequent periods of practical training in schools.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One: That Governments consider ways in which teachers can encourage students to undertake a teaching career.

Recommendation Two: That an internship model be considered to encourage graduate students from other fields to undertake a teacher training course.

Recommendation Three: That more recognition be directed toward prior learning experiences when attracting mid-career professionals and graduates to the teaching profession.

Recommendation Four: That attractive, and more flexible training options, be offered to attract mid-career professionals into teaching careers.

Recommendation Five: That the registration requirements of the Victorian Institute of Teaching be amended to allow mid-career professionals studying education to commence teaching while training.

Recommendation Six: That more frequent and extended periods of school based training are incorporated into pre-service teaching courses and that these are more thoroughly assessed by universities.

Recommendation Seven: That pre-service teacher training courses encourage students to undertake practical training at a range of schools.

Recommendation Eight: That pre-service teacher training courses require trainee teachers to undertake at least one teaching round in a country-based school.

Recommendation Nine: That pre-service training providers spend more time teaching at schools to re-discover the school environment.

Recommendation Ten: That teacher education is revamped to focus on a broader range of literacy programs.

Recommendation Eleven: That more streamlined arrangements between industry and teaching are developed.

Recommendation Twelve: That “all teacher education programs prepare prospective teachers for the digital age where ICT is an important tool in information and knowledge management and integral to student learning.”¹

Recommendation Thirteen: That the subject ‘learning styles’ (or an equivalent), which incorporates catering for students with special needs, be made a compulsory unit of Victorian teaching courses.

Recommendation Fourteen: That universities coordinate networking opportunities for graduates in their first year of teaching.

Recommendation Fifteen: That professional development providers are encouraged to schedule programs during the school holiday periods.

Recommendation Sixteen: That the costs of professional development are more adequately supported by governments.

¹ Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, “Australia’s Teachers: Australia’s Future, Agenda for Action,” Commonwealth of Australia, October 2003, page 35

INTRODUCTION

New Graduates need to be skilled in specific subject areas, classroom management and in developing and maintaining relationships if they are to successfully engage and educate their students. This is no small task.

Getting pre-service teacher training right is integral to improving teaching and learning in schools. We need to ensure that teachers are prepared and equipped to manage their responsibilities and to continually grow in their profession.

The National Inquiry into Teacher Education builds on AISV's responses to the Victorian Inquiry into the Suitability of Current Pre-Service Teacher Training Courses (2004) and the National Review into Teaching and Teacher Education (2003). The following reiterates a number of recommendations made in AISV's earlier submissions to these Inquiries.

AISV will consider the overall emphasis of this Inquiry – the scope, suitability, organisation, resourcing and delivery of teacher training courses – through its response to the series of more specific terms of reference outlined by the Committee. This submission responds to eight of the eleven terms of reference. The remaining terms of reference (three, four and eleven) are more specifically targeted at universities.

In response to terms of reference one and two, section one deals with the question of how to attract high quality teachers. Section two looks at the scope, suitability and delivery of pre-service teacher training in response to terms of reference five, six, seven and eight. Section three examines the organisation of teacher training by examining the split between secondary and primary education training (term of reference nine) while the final section (section four) looks at the issue of resourcing ongoing professional development for teachers (in response to term of reference ten).

What follows is a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of current teacher training courses. Those consulted believed that many of the identified weaknesses could be addressed, at least in part, through longer and more frequent periods of practical training.

Essentially, this submission provides an independent school-based perspective of the current training process and how well it equips graduate teachers for careers in independent schools.

AISV also wishes to acknowledge and support the submission presented by the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA).

1. ATTRACTING HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS

Term of Reference One: Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.

Currently, selection is based upon meeting the academic requirements. There is little consideration of the attributes, skills and competencies of applicants for teacher training courses. Those consulted believed that teaching candidates must enter their pre-service training with strong competencies in literacy and numeracy. For secondary teachers, specialisation in teaching subjects was considered essential. Where the subject being taught was not studied as a teaching method, it was considered that not less than two years of successful undergraduate study in the particular subject was necessary for the teacher to teach competently at senior levels. Concern was expressed with respect to teachers of LOTE with minimal studies in the language. It is considered that, ideally, a LOTE teacher should have studied the language as a secondary student prior to completing a major study in the language in an undergraduate degree.

Apart from the requirements outlined above, there was not strong support for interviews and other selection criteria at the entry point to teacher training courses. A number of school Principals emphasised that they were more interested in the competencies and attributes of persons exiting teaching courses, rather than their competencies and attributes at the point of entry. To schools, a trainee teacher's capacity at the beginning of the degree is not the important factor. One Principal cited the example of a graduate teacher who had commenced a teacher-training course because he had not been accepted into his preferred course. This teacher is an excellent classroom practitioner who is passionate about his vocation.

So while suggestions to include an interview process as one of the selection criteria for entry have been made several times, schools believe that this would not necessarily ensure that all persons undertaking a teacher training course will be suited to a career in teaching. Rather than deter students from the challenge of a teaching degree, the course needs to be structured so that those who discover that they are not suited to teaching can consider alternative career paths and study options prior to progressing too far in their teaching studies. This can partly be achieved through early and ongoing experience in a school environment.

Term of Reference Two: Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

It is vital that the teaching profession encompasses a range of professionals with various life-experiences. Yet there exists a negative perception that teachers do not work in the "real world". In recognising the value of a thriving teaching profession, governments are developing new ways of raising the status of teachers. The Victorian Institute of Teaching (The Institute) is playing an important role in teacher registration and promoting the teaching profession. Similarly, the Federal Government's initiative to represent and serve the profession through the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL) will also go some way in raising the status of teaching as a profession.

The following looks at other ways to encourage both students and mid-career professionals into teaching.

Attracting students to teaching

It is often teachers who inspire students to become teachers, simply through their own approach to teaching. Anecdotal information suggests that many teachers actively discourage students and their own children from pursuing careers in teaching. Teachers not promoting, or not speaking positively about, their profession does not serve the profession well. As the majority of students select their first career during their final years of secondary schooling, there is a possibility that some students who would make excellent teachers are dissuaded from contemplating teaching as a career choice. It has long been recognised that teachers potentially have enormous influence over their students. The effect of teachers' views about teaching and their students' career choices deserves to be explored as part of a broader strategy to encourage more young people into teaching.

There also needs to be more attention toward directing aspiring teachers into particular subject areas. For example, while there exists an abundance of SOSE teachers, there is a shortage of Mathematics and Information Technology teachers.

Recommendation One: That Governments consider ways in which teachers can encourage students to undertake a teaching career.

A teaching career should also be promoted to university graduates from other fields. These individuals bring with them expert knowledge in specific subject areas and add to the range of talents and expertise within the teaching profession. Unfortunately, anecdotal information from practising teachers and principals indicates that some teacher graduates view teacher training (after the completion of an undergraduate degree) as a year to be endured rather than a year that prepares them for the classroom. Incentives such as payment during the year or years of pre-service training may assist with the promotion of teaching as a career choice for graduates from other fields.

Recommendation Two: That an internship model be considered to encourage graduate students from other fields to undertake a teacher training course.

Attracting mid-career professionals to teaching

Many mid-career professionals offer a wealth of experience to schools and students. This is of particular importance in fast developing areas such as science and technology where recent practical experience provides valuable insights for students. In these cases, the practical experience may be more relevant than earlier academic qualifications.

One school involved in AISV's consultations noted that three out of four of the graduate teachers employed this year have worked in other industries prior to undertaking a teaching degree. One teacher had experience as a builder, another had worked in eco-tourism and another had been involved in outdoor education. Each of these graduates commenced their first teaching position in their late twenties and has successfully adapted specific industry knowledge and life-experience to their new

role. The value of these individual experiences has been obvious to the school. Yet many mid-career professionals find the 12-month pre-service education requirement an insurmountable obstacle to entering the teaching profession. While the lack of income is a significant deterrent to those considering career change, this can be overcome through incentives such as scholarships, salary arrangements or paid internships.

Rigid adherence to formal qualification requirements may hinder the recruitment of mid-career professionals to a career in teaching. While academic qualifications remain very important, a more flexible approach is required if we are to successfully attract more mid-career professionals into the teaching profession. A system that recognises prior learning, experiences and skills is needed in order to facilitate the entry of mid-career professionals into teaching. The fast tracking of pre-service education programs, which would allow mid-career and other professionals to commence teaching within a shorter timeframe must be considered.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that mid-career professionals entering the teaching profession need less support than others who have no work experience. In many cases, an intensive school induction process and subsequent professional development to supplement initial learning would suffice. Additional, school-based teacher-to-teacher mentoring programs would, in some cases, meet the needs of beginning teachers. If mentoring is considered to enhance the experiences of new teachers, then a funded program may assist with developing a culture of mentoring in schools. A paid internship arrangement where teaching candidates receive on-the-job training would also be a positive avenue to increasing the number of mid-career professionals who make the move to teaching.

If pre-service education courses continue to be the only option for aspiring teachers, then these need to be more readily available in the evening or on weekends. This arrangement would enable mid-career professionals and other graduates to continue working until they are qualified to enter the teaching profession. For those juggling employment and training, school experience requirements also need to be flexible. For example, the school experience component should be offered as part of an internship, such as the one offered by the University of Melbourne, but with a financial incentive.

Salary arrangements for mid-career professionals also need to be reconsidered if we are to successfully attract more people with prior experience into teaching. Their earlier experience in a particular profession presents enormous advantages to students and schools and should be appreciated as such. Salary arrangements that simply recognise the number of years served in the teaching profession fail to value (and financially remunerate) the attributes of people considering a mid-career change to the teaching profession. The recruitment process and salary arrangements must assess prior learning.

Recommendation Three: That more recognition be directed toward prior learning experiences when attracting mid-career professionals and graduates to the teaching profession.

Recommendation Four: That attractive, and more flexible training options, be offered to attract mid-career professionals into teaching careers.

Recommendation Five: That the registration requirements of the Victorian Institute of Teaching be amended to allow mid-career professionals studying education to commence teaching while training.

2. THE SCOPE, SUITABILITY AND DELIVERY OF TEACHER EDUCATION

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

AISV's consultations with schools highlighted that the main flaw in current pre-service teacher training involves insufficient practical experience for both training teachers and lecturers. These are explored in more detail below.

More frequent and longer blocks of practical experience

Anecdotal evidence from Member Schools has reinforced the belief that the links between theoretical and practical training need to be strengthened. To facilitate this, there needs to be greater coordination and communication between training institutions and schools. Teaching is multi-faceted, requiring subject discipline and generic teaching skills, including thinking skills, classroom management strategies, pastoral care skills, information technology skills and administrative skills, to name a few.

The opportunity to build a student-teacher relationship is also particularly important. By spending an extended period in the classroom, trainee teachers have an opportunity to experience the cycle of school life and understand the day-to-day experience of teaching. Unfortunately, one recent graduate expressed the opinion that the current teaching course did little to improve a potential teacher's capacity to relate to students. He noted the importance of a personality that instinctively builds relationships and doubted whether someone without this natural ability would be able to develop it during the pre-service teacher-training program. The best way to learn this is to see it in action: to observe experienced teachers and obtain practical experience, under guidance, by being involved with a class of students.

A number of independent schools have specifically noted their preference for the five-week teaching blocks coordinated by some of the training institutions. This was considered advantageous because of its capacity to engage the trainee teacher in a school environment, to experience continuity of learning and as an opportunity to build relationships with students. These extended blocks also provide a forum in which to reinforce day-to-day learning and to experiment with different teaching styles.

It is, therefore, desirable to offer as much practical experience as possible. For example, The University of Melbourne offers an internship program as part of its Bachelor of Teaching. While this opportunity is obviously an ideal way to gain practical experience in relating to students, current arrangements act as a disincentive.

Interns “volunteer” their time to teach for four days of the week, attend university for the fifth day and, therefore, need to undertake paid employment on weekends. If we are to encourage more practical experience, then we need to offer incentives so that this experience is attractive and accessible to trainee teachers. We also need to ensure that these teachers are adequately assessed. One graduate teacher who recently completed an internship noted that a university-based assessor visited his classroom for one class out of his 45-day tenure. In his experience, this assessment unfairly comprised 50 per cent of his result for the internship.

Recommendation Six: That more frequent and extended periods of school based training are incorporated into pre-service teaching courses and that these are more thoroughly assessed by universities.

It is also important that teachers experience a range of school environments as part of their training. Trainee teachers need to understand where their teaching style is best suited. This is a particularly relevant factor for those considering employment in the independent schools sector. While the diversity of the sector offers great choice and opportunity for teachers, it is important that they understand the differences between schools. The more practical experience they undertake in a range of schools, the better they will be able to understand which environment will best complement and support their teaching style.

Recommendation Seven: That pre-service teacher training courses encourage students to undertake practical training at a range of schools.

Students should also be required to undertake at least one teaching round in a rural or regional school. Universities need to encourage and support country teaching rounds in order to ensure that their graduates have a broad pre-service training experience and are equipped to teach in a range of environments. Furthermore, universities must be prepared to support their students while on country teaching rounds. One country-based independent school noted that, even when a trainee teacher is placed with its school, the universities are not prepared to visit the school to provide support to, and assess, the trainee teacher.

The requirement that all trainee teachers undertake at least one teaching round in a country school might also encourage students to consider teaching in a rural or regional environment. While there are initiatives to encourage graduate teachers to work in country government schools (such as the \$900 payment for graduate teachers who move to the country to teach in government schools) a number of independent schools have noted their difficulty in recruiting new teachers.

Recommendation Eight: That pre-service teacher training courses require trainee teachers to undertake at least one teaching round in a country-based school.

Back to school experience for training providers

Classrooms are changing rapidly as a result of technological advancements. Therefore, it is imperative that those who coordinate and deliver pre-service teacher training understand the contemporary classroom. Those consulted as part of AISV’s research for this submission emphasised the need for a mandatory arrangement whereby university lecturers teach in a school at least once every two years in order to

rediscover the ever-changing school environment. To ensure that this arrangement is honoured, it should form a component of the teacher educator's performance review.

Recommendation Nine: That pre-service training providers spend more time teaching at schools to re-discover the school environment.

Despite these concerns, there seemed to be a level of agreement that teaching graduates are quite well trained. One principal specifically noted that candidates for a position at his school had come along to their interviews equipped with folios demonstrating excellent work. According to his experience, current graduates are better trained than those he interviewed in the 1980s and 1990s.

Term of Reference Six: Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.

A number of schools noted their interest in applicants for teaching positions who have first completed an undergraduate degree in their area of interest and then completed a graduate Diploma of Education. In these cases, it is considered that the teaching graduate holds specific knowledge in his or her area of interest and is well qualified to inspire students.

Those consulted also noted that the Victorian accreditation arrangements require teaching graduates to specialise in two areas of discipline. This is not necessarily required in other States. In the cases where a trainee teacher has demonstrated a commitment to a particular subject area through his or her education, the demand that a teacher have two areas of focus may act as an unnecessary deterrent to continuing with a teaching degree.

Term of Reference Seven: Examine the preparation of primary and secondary graduates.

A teaching graduate begins his or her career with a similar level of responsibility to a teacher who has been teaching for many years. It is vital that pre-service teacher training equips graduates with a broad education covering curriculum development, student behaviour management and an understanding of school management and governance. The following investigates the specific areas mentioned in the terms of reference.

i) Teach literacy and numeracy

AISV issued a survey to Member Schools to inform its submission to the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy. In response to the survey question, "Are you satisfied with pre-service teacher training, including the level of practical teaching experience, in equipping graduate teachers to teach reading?" Member Schools cited their concern that graduates are not taught a range of literacy programs. As stated in AISV's submission, independent schools employ a variety of literacy programs. The survey responses sent a clear message that, in general, teaching graduates do not have the necessary training to implement their school's particular literacy program.

Some schools also noted that graduates did not have a strong understanding of "how to teach", as demonstrated by the quote below:

“I have found that most graduate teachers have only a very basic understanding of the practicalities of teaching reading. They are often quite knowledgeable with the theory, but not on how to establish where a child is at and placing them with an appropriate reader, using running records, helping children who are struggling, employing a variety of classroom strategies, etc.”

Time and again the suggestion that graduate teachers are lacking in practical experience was highlighted in the survey responses. Even those who stated they were “satisfied” with current teacher training in literacy noted concerns regarding the need for more practicum. As part of its submission to the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, AISV recommended that teacher training incorporates a broader range of literacy approaches and more time training in schools. Part of this recommendation is reiterated in this submission.

Recommendation Ten: That teacher education is revamped to focus on a broader range of literacy programs.

ii) Teach vocational education courses

Those with specific industry experience bring a wide array of insights to vocational education courses. Many principals of independent schools have highlighted the valuable contributions made by those with industry experience. Unfortunately, schools are limited in their ability to employ such professionals, as few have permission to teach.

The capacity to recruit teachers with industry experience would further enhance our teaching profession’s capacity to respond to the challenges of the 21st century and may go some way in addressing the current gender imbalance within the profession. By enabling those with industry experience to move between professions, we would also open up opportunities for those who might not otherwise consider teaching.

Industry contains a wealth of knowledge and practical experience that school students can and should benefit from. Schools should be encouraged to recognise the skills and perspectives of those outside the profession and value their ability to bring new approaches and ideas into the school context. Some of the partnerships developed through the Vocational Education and Training (VET) program have proven the worth of these arrangements. These partnerships should be enhanced to ensure the swift exchange of ideas and insights.

Similarly, the education sector would benefit from professionals who move between teaching and industry-based employment. This arrangement allows the teacher to maintain their practical knowledge and equips them with real-life experiences to share with students. The Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education recognised both the advantages and disadvantages of a movement between school and industry based employment. The following quote is taken from the Review’s “Agenda for Action”:

“Movement between jobs in schools and jobs in other organisations is a positive feature of the contemporary Australian labour market and should be encouraged. The wealth of experiences shared can only enrich schools

and lead to better appreciations in the wider community of the importance and challenges of teaching. The Review Committee acknowledges and welcomes the increasing trend for people to move in and out of teaching over their working lives. However, too many high calibre teachers leave teaching in the first five years of their teaching careers.”²

Better management of these arrangements, with incentives that encourage people to return from industry to teaching, would alleviate some of the disadvantages to this approach.

Recommendation Eleven: That more streamlined arrangements between industry and teaching are developed.

iii) Effectively manage classrooms

In order to be successful teachers, graduates must possess an ability to manage the classroom. This involves a high degree of multi-tasking, behavioural management and authority. While the principals we consulted noted that graduates tend to enter the profession with a theoretical understanding of how to manage a classroom, this has not been adequately reinforced through practical experience. As discussed earlier in this submission, additional experience in the classroom would ensure that graduates are better equipped to manage students.

iv) Successfully use information technology

Ability, and experience in, technology is pivotal if we are to equip our teachers for the challenges of the 21st century. Technology is also a vital mechanism for innovative teaching and learning strategies. Pre-service training needs to better focus on the opportunities presented by advancing technology and in-service training is required to ensure that these skills are updated. With this in mind, AISV strongly supports recommendation 31 of the Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education:

Recommendation Twelve: That “all teacher education programs prepare prospective teachers for the digital age where ICT is an important tool in information and knowledge management and integral to student learning.”³

v) Deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families

The independent schools sector commits very strongly to the belief that education is a partnership between parents and schools. As the family’s role in society has changed over time, schools have adapted their programs to the needs of their students and families. For example, a number of schools now run breakfast programs, before/after-school care programs and holiday programs, etc.

This changing role for schools has been recognized by other school sectors. A report commissioned by the Catholic Education Commission Victoria, *The Welfare Needs of Victorian Catholic Schools*, stated that, “As levels of social capital have diminished, schools have increasingly become the central point of community connection available for many families. This can place an increased burden on the schools as the

² Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, page 24

³ Ibid, page 35

remaining universal institution with direct access to children and families”⁴. Whether teaching in the independent, government or Catholic school sectors, graduate teachers need to be prepared for challenges posed by an ever-evolving society.

No amount of theoretical knowledge can adequately prepare teaching graduates for this aspect of their role. Teacher education needs to make them aware of this added dimension to their role, as well as provide extended opportunities to train in schools.

vi) Deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities

Just as it is important that trainee teachers experience a range of school environments, they should also have an opportunity to teach students with a range of needs. While only a small portion of teachers will choose to specialise in the area of special needs education, all teachers need to know how to manage students with disabilities integrated into the classroom. It is a particularly relevant issue for the independent education sector because of the enormous growth of students with disabilities attending independent schools. The number of independent school students eligible for State Support Services funding has increased by more than 250 per cent since 1995.

In order for students with disabilities to receive the best education practicable, teachers need to be trained to engage these students. Pre-service training also needs to involve instruction on how to work with a teacher aide, how to conduct team meetings with the parent, teacher aide, and any specialists and, importantly, how to manage this amidst the day-to-day demands of teaching.

It is important to note that a number of independent special schools have raised their concerns in finding appropriately trained teachers to manage special needs children. In an earlier submission to the Productivity Commission’s Inquiry into the Disability Discrimination Act, AISV quoted the concerns of Ms Dianne Penkethman, the Principal of The Currajong School. Currajong is the largest service provider in Victoria for students aged between five and thirteen with social, emotional and behavioural disorders. Despite Ms Penkethman’s efforts in requesting student teacher placements, they only received one student teacher placement between 1997 and 2002. This is in contrast to the three student placements they hosted in 1994, five in 1995 and one in 1996.

A number of schools have reiterated Ms Penkethman’s concerns, suggesting that graduate teachers are not receiving the necessary training to teach students with disabilities. This lack of emphasis on special needs students also confines the opportunities for trainee teachers to realise their interest and potential in a career with students who have specific educational needs. In New South Wales teaching courses, graduates are required to have incorporated some special needs training into their degree. At present, this arrangement is not mandatory in Victoria but would better equip trainee teachers for the variety of learning needs they will confront in the classroom.

⁴ Helen Cahill, Professor Johanna Wyn, Dr Graeme Smith, *The Welfare Needs of Victorian Catholic Schools*, A report prepared by the Australian Youth Research Centre, The University of Melbourne, for the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, May 2004, p 5

Recommendation Thirteen: That the subject 'learning styles' (or an equivalent), which incorporates catering for students with special needs, be made a compulsory unit of Victorian teaching courses.

vii) Achieve accreditation

Those consulted emphatically noted that trainee teachers are very well prepared for accreditation. They also noted, however, that a national registration process is required to enable teaching staff to move interstate without having to be re-registered with a different authority.

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

Independent schools want their graduate teachers to understand how the school operates. Beyond their teaching load, graduates require a greater understanding of the day-to-day operations of a school. Feedback from schools indicates that this is currently lacking in pre-service training. Schools, therefore, take the responsibility to cover these issues as part of their induction program.

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

Schools play an important role in pre-service training by enabling, and contributing to, teaching rounds. Schools also recognise their responsibility when it comes to developing the skills of their new teachers. The multi-faceted nature of teaching is such that it generally cannot be mastered during the pre-service teacher education course or during the first year of teaching.

Schools and universities need to be able to work together in delivering pre-service training. This can be achieved quite simply, as in the case of Ballarat University, where teachers from local schools speak to students completing their Bachelor of Education. This allows an avenue to share experiences and to establish strong connections between training institutions and schools. Yet there seems to exist a sentiment that it is the university's role to place the student, with the school taking responsibility from that point. One school noted that there were issues with the placement of a trainee teacher and yet it took the university two weeks to visit the trainee teacher at the school and to provide a solution. Teacher educators and school-based teachers need to work together to ensure that the trainee teacher gains access to relevant school-based training.

Early in their careers, teachers, like any professionals, need significant support and mentoring in the work environment. The Institute requires that provisionally registered teachers be mentored. Schools often extend these formal arrangements further, for example, one school ensures that the mentor is present when the new teacher conducts parent/teacher interviews. The mentor is, therefore, available to provide assistance or advice where needed.

Currently, most of the support to beginning teachers is provided by schools. There is very little external professional development that is specifically focused toward the needs of beginning teachers. Support is also needed in the form of networks and

professional development. Universities may be able to coordinate networking opportunities for graduates during their first year in the teaching profession.

Recommendation Fourteen: That universities coordinate networking opportunities for graduates in their first year of teaching.

3. THE ORGANISATION OF TEACHER TRAINING

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

While a number of independent schools run middle years programs, the current split between primary and secondary training is not considered detrimental to teacher education. Schools noted that teachers with generalist primary or secondary training easily move into the middle-years programs.

Conversely, there was a strong suggestion that pre-service training is not equipping teachers for the innovations in programs for the early years of schooling. Independent schools coordinate a number of Early Years Programs involving students aged between three and five years. These programs are based on a range of different philosophical approaches to education, such as the Reggio Emilia approach. Graduate teachers need to, at least, have a broad understanding of each approach.

The current division between the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) also cause some difficulties for independent schools operating early learning programs. If we are to fully explore the school-based opportunities for early learning, then it would be preferable for pre-schools and kindergartens to operate under the auspices of the Department of Education and Training.

Furthermore, we need to consolidate pre-service training to better equip new teachers for innovative early learning programs. For example, Cycle One in a Montessori school incorporates children aged three, four and five years. In these cases, DHS requires teachers to have a qualification in early childhood studies and The Institute requires teachers to have a primary teaching qualification. Those teaching in a Montessori school are also required to have Montessori training, thus requiring three different qualifications. This creates obvious difficulty when recruiting teachers to teach Cycle One classes. Additional emphasis on the early years as part of the teaching degree would be an effective way of ensuring that graduate teachers are trained to suit a range of learning environments, as would the encouragement of more double degrees in early childhood studies and primary teaching. To be successful, both The Institute and DHS would have to recognise the value of such a degree.

4. RESOURCING ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Term of Reference Ten: Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.

It is very difficult to maintain pace with improvements and changes in technology, teaching styles and general information without the appropriate involvement in professional development activities.

As part of the pre-service training, trainee teachers also need to be informed of the professional development expectations held by schools. Trainee teachers need to be aware that schools will expect them to update and enhance their skills as the learning society evolves. Schools also play a vital role in ensuring that a culture of continued learning becomes an entrenched attitude within the teaching profession.

The Institute's new requirements for teachers have made some progress in emphasising the importance of on-going professional development. The Institute will require evidence of professional development in order to renew teacher registration every five years. This process recognises the need for ongoing learning amongst the teaching profession and concurrently formalises the expectation that teachers are part of a learning community.

While schools value the ongoing training of their staff, the financial and management realities of releasing staff for professional development often act as significant deterrents from in-service training. When sending teachers to professional development, schools must consider the potential impact upon student learning, parental expectations and the difficulties involved in finding suitable replacement teachers. As a result, schools often find it difficult to release teachers for more than three or four days during the school year. This is especially the case for country-based schools where the teacher often needs to travel long distances to attend the training, thus requiring more time away from the school. Schools need to be better financially supported to facilitate professional development.

There also exists a need for more innovative programs where the training occurs "in-house". The Plenty Valley Montessori School recently employed an in-residence consultant over a two-year period to share research findings and talk about best practice with staff. The school found this to be an innovative approach to ongoing professional development, which did not require the school to manage the absence of a teacher while attending professional development at a different venue.

As a further measure to relieve schools of the management issues, professional development should be conducted, in the main, during the students' school holiday periods. AISV conducts some five-day intensive training sessions during school holidays and these are always fully booked.

Recommendation Fifteen: That professional development providers are encouraged to schedule programs during the school holiday periods.

Recommendation Sixteen: That the costs of professional development are more adequately supported by governments.

CONCLUSION

The integral elements of pre-service teacher training are not those that can be fully taught in a university lecture theatre. They need to be developed, over time, through on-the-job experience.

Graduates are entering classrooms with limited practical experience and yet they are, essentially, doing the same job as teachers with many years of experience. In many cases, teachers new to the profession are teaching over 100 students in their first year, as well as interacting with the parents of these students.

Currently, there are inadequate arrangements in place to attract graduates and mid-career professionals into teaching. While this continues, the teaching profession is missing out on the contributions of these talented and experienced individuals. This is especially concerning as we consider predictions of teacher shortages in some subject areas.

If we are to successfully equip our teachers for the challenges of the 21st century, draw more people into teaching and attract more mid-career professionals from other fields, then we need to increase the availability of and access to pre-service training.

To do so, pre-service training needs to be flexible, stimulating and less costly. We need our teachers, whether they are entering the profession early in their career or later, to experience the classroom environment, to know how to converse with students, build relationships with them and stimulate their curiosity. The more experience trainee teachers have in a classroom, the better equipped they will be to manage these areas.

The National Inquiry into Teacher Education addresses a significant issue at an important juncture within the teaching profession. The matters raised in this submission are vital if we are to attract more candidates to teaching, assist those contemplating a teaching career and, ultimately, raise the standard of school education in Victoria and Australia.