SUBMISSION TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education was established by the *Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Act 1999* as '. . . an educational institution for the tertiary education of Indigenous people of Australia and the provision of other educational and training programs and courses, and facilities and resources for research and study, and for related purposes'.

The Institute began in the mid 1960s on the outskirts of Darwin as a small annexe of Kormilda College, then a government boarding school for Aboriginal students. The Batchelor annexe provided short programs for Aboriginal teacher aides and assistants in community schools.

Over the 30 years since, the Institute has expanded beyond teacher education to provide a range of professional and para-professional Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education courses to an enrolment of almost 3 000 students. The Institute now specialises in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from across Australia, and especially from remote communities, to develop an Indigenous approach to mainstream disciplines and careers.

Close links between the Institute and the Indigenous communities it serves have led to the development of a 'mixed mode' form of conducting most courses. This 'mixed mode' for course delivery combines community-based study and research, field study and supervised work experience with short, intensive residential workshops at a number of sites, including Batchelor and other regional locations. This model also responds to the lack of infrastructure, funding and staffing resources in many of the Northern Territory's remote communities.

Teacher education, however, remains an important focus for Batchelor Institute and our submission has been prepared from the perspective of a specialist institution with a very strong interest and recognised expertise in the provision of teacher education, at a number of levels, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from remote communities, and also rural and urban areas.

INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. **Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.**

   Teachers who work with Indigenous students require a range of understandings and skills which are not necessarily manifested through the selection criteria generally used for entry to mainstream teacher training courses. At the same time, they also require the skills sought in mainstream teachers, although many potential Indigenous teachers have not had the schooling outcomes required for some of those skills. Batchelor Institute endeavours to

select for teaching courses students who have the potential to attain all these skills and understandings.

Students may enter the education degree courses through one of the following:

- a standard entry requirement of year 12 or equivalent;
- articulation from other courses – Certificate IV in Indigenous Education Work is one pathway;
- enabling and preparation for tertiary studies courses;
- mature-age entry; or
- special entry through the Institute Admissions and Progressions Committee.

Upon application the Institute uses a placement assessment process, which includes interviews and written assessment tasks, to assess all potential students' English literacy levels and suitability for the course. Advanced standing and credit exemption may be granted through the Institute's procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer.
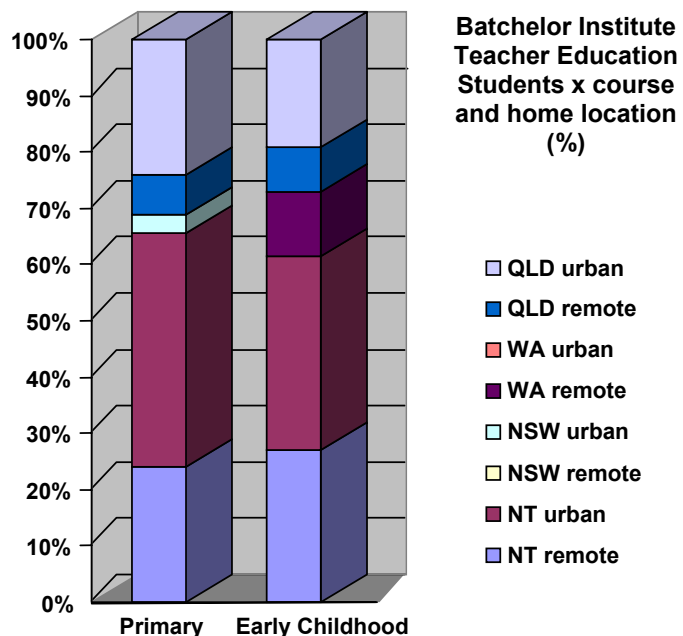
2. **Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.**

The diversity of Indigenous Australians is reflected among the students of Batchelor Institute's teacher education courses. The students include:

- people from rural and remote areas and from metropolitan areas;
- mature age students and school leavers;
- speakers of English as a third, fourth or fifth language and monolingual English speakers;
- people who have had full secondary education and people who have not had access to secondary education, nor a positive primary education experience.

As illustrated at right, the majority of students are from the Northern Territory. Other information related to the chart is:

- all students are Indigenous Australians
- 80% female; 20% male
- 38.2% from remote communities; 61.8% from urban communities
- the home location breakup is 63.6% from NT, 29.1% from Queensland, 5.5% from WA and 1.2% from NSW;
- the course breakup is 52.7% Primary Education and 47.3% Early Childhood Education.

Batchelor Institute Teacher Education Students x course and home location (%)

Legend:
- QLD urban
- QLD remote
- WA urban
- WA remote
- NSW urban
- NSW remote
- NT urban
- NT remote

In the Institute's experience, the enrolment of high quality students in teacher education courses is affected by competition of other higher paid industry areas. This is similar to the experience of other teacher training institutions and other jurisdictions, and measures to address this could involve bursaries, cadetships, scholarships and improved career pathways for teachers, including para-professionals. The nub of the 'attractiveness' lies in the career aspects of teaching and, therefore, measures such as bursaries and scholarships require joint implementation by potential employers and higher education institutions.

3. Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition.

While Batchelor Institute's attrition rates from teacher education courses fall within national benchmarks, the reasons for attrition are frequently as a result of health, travel requirements, family and cultural impacts rather than inability to meet the course challenges.

Attrition rates are higher in the first year of a student's course, and factors influencing the overall attrition rate include:
- family, employment and community commitments;
- applications for admission which are not followed through with enrolments;
- difficulties associated with remoteness and communications technologies;
- changes to exit pointes and course levels, e.g. from advanced diploma to degree level; and
- for some students, counselling out of their course.

4. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members.

Qualifications, skill levels and experience of lecturing staff need to be of a high standard and, in particular, need to reflect high levels of competence at the school experience level. For lecturers at Batchelor Institute, cross-cultural awareness and sensitivities, and the capacity to work effectively in cross-cultural contexts are paramount. Thus, high level qualifications such as doctorates, while useful, cannot be the most important factors in determining a person's suitability as a staff member. However, a staff member with a Doctorate and the relevant cultural knowledge and skills is a major advantage to both the Institute and students.

The number of people seeking the opportunities and experience of working with an Indigenous tertiary institution is a positive indicator for the future. However, this is balanced by the disincentive to high quality potential staff that results from the differential between the remuneration scales at tertiary level and the higher government department and school levels.

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.

Pedagogical Principles of Batchelor Institute teacher training courses
The following description is based on the course handbook.

Both Ways Model of Education

There is no simple dichotomy between what constitutes Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge and culture. It is not an either/or relationship; and the concept of a dichotomy denies the dynamic nature of culture and denies Indigenous people the opportunity to appropriate knowledge for their own purposes, thereby making it Indigenous knowledge.

There is substantial internal diversity between Indigenous people and groups, expressed in the variety of languages, activities, patterns of social relationships and world views. Similarly, non-Indigenous knowledge and culture is not homogenous or uniform. It is therefore unrealistic to attempt to force strict boundaries between things, actions or activities by unequivocally labelling them as Indigenous or non-Indigenous—to do this is to risk reifying culture. It is misleading to consider the relationship between what is Indigenous and non-Indigenous in terms of separate linguistic or cultural domains when, in reality, much of what happens in contemporary situations is interactive and interrelated.

However, despite some difference of opinion, Indigenous people and their organisations do differentiate on the basis of agreement reached among themselves. Essentially the point made is that Indigenous people and their communities, knowledge and culture are distinctive. Their maintenance and development is a matter for Indigenous people themselves to determine. This should be actively respected by non-Indigenous people. The Federal Government supports this position and has a policy that concedes the right of Indigenous people to self determination.

If the education courses at Batchelor Institute are to become sites of transformations that acknowledge and recognise the legitimate right of Indigenous people to determine the nature of educational experiences and expected outcomes, the curriculum needs to acknowledge the ways these two societies and systems interact within the educational context and of the courses and to ensure an appropriate balance of power between the two.

Both Ways education must be considered from the point of view of the children. It is important therefore, that children are not presented with views that conflict with their own cultural perspective. This is a stage when notions of identity are being formulated and it is possible if presented with ideas that are too different from their own experiences, young children will only become confused and experience cultural dissonance.

General Principles

Graduates should be equipped to assist in the overall development of their communities, both through their work as Indigenous classroom teachers and as skilled and informed community members. Their understanding of those issues, perceived by them to be of concern to contemporary Indigenous communities, should be enhanced through intellectual interaction while in the course.

As adult learners, through the negotiation of their curriculum, students should be able to influence their program of study with the perspectives, interests and needs that they bring from their communities and cultures. To ensure that the program maintains this responsiveness, a commitment is made to improve the means through which consultation with Indigenous communities and organisations occurs. The students have regular access to schools in their own and other Indigenous communities, which is expected to keep the Institute staff informed about the educational aspirations and expectations of those communities. Students from urban contexts are also undertaking Teacher Education studies

in increasing numbers at Batchelor Institute. The course provides opportunities for these students through contact with urban-based schools.

Teaching/learning Strategies

Small-Group Work

Learning is seen as a cooperative process in which students act as agents for the production of new knowledge through their interaction with others. For this reason, workshops move between large and small group work. Teaching/learning strategies include:

- problem-solving approaches;
- small-group learning;
- individual and group tasks and projects;
- whole-group presentations, lecturers, seminars;
- site visits;
- guest speakers; and
- professional practice.

Student contact time and expectations of independent work

Instead of the 15 – 20 hours of face-to-face contact plus an assumed additional 20 hours of reading that a student might do in a mainstream institution, a Batchelor Institute student might expect 20 – 30 hours per week at work with direct access to a staff member, with an expectation of between 10 – 20 additional hours in independent work.

The nature of Workshops as key 'moments' in the course

Workshops are intensive blocks of class time, usually 25 – 30 hours per week plus at least two evening sessions, and are usually of one or two weeks duration. They may be held in a community for students in one program, in a community with students participating from several programs ('regional workshops') or for all students at a central location, often at a Batchelor Institute Campus. Workshops also enable staff to work as a team.

Workshops unfold from a general topic posed as an issue with the introductory day organised around a number of focus questions. Often these organisers are drawn from the outcomes of previous workshops or the tasks which have arisen from them. There is a non-negotiable core that staff members bring to the workshop, a body of information and theory which they believe students must work through. Some of this non-negotiable material will be presented to introduce the workshop while the balance may be presented as it develops, often in response to student-directed inquiry. The workshop process typically involves a series of steps which could include:

shared experience, focus questions, initial responses, sharpened questioning which defines a problem,

planning the investigation,

investigation,

report/presentation/practical teaching/publication,

definition of ongoing problems/tasks for students to work on before the next workshop, and

specific requirements of those tasks made explicit.

This approach also provides the greatest opportunity for students to introduce their own relevant knowledge and experience into the teaching–learning process in accordance with the principles of operating a Both Ways course.

Problem-Posing/Problem-Solving Approaches to Learning

Teaching–learning situations are constructed to allow the possibility of problem-solving, conflict resolution and the management of difficult issues.

The identification of appropriate 'shared-experiences' by the lecturer as a starting point for studying problems and issues, encourages a problematic orientation relevant to the real life situations faced by students and their communities. The process of clarifying problems and identifying related issues and strategies for action enables students to articulate their perceptions and encourages them to move on to new learning.

The advantage of this approach is that students are motivated to learn because of the relevance of what they are studying and experiencing. Using this approach, students are encouraged to find ways to overcome difficulties related to education and schooling in their communities.

Assessment and Evaluation

Appropriate Assessment Strategies

Experience in the delivery of the courses over a number of years has demonstrated the need for an approach to assessment that can accommodate a wide range of student educational biographies, and community needs and aspirations.

Non-competitive assessment strategies complement the curriculum orientation and teaching strategies outlined above and involve criterion-referencing and descriptive reporting. Criteria for assessment derive from the intended learning outcomes of each course unit. These are made explicit to the student when workshop, practicum and community research tasks are being developed.

Much of the course is built around such tasks, arising from the general structure provided by units in the course, that are related to the specific circumstances faced by students in the different school–community contexts. To that extent the course is experimental, and developmental and seeks to maintain a responsiveness to the concerns, interests and aspirations of both the students and their communities.

Regular moderation of the work of students studying in the various programs within any year level take place at review and planning meetings of lecturing staff that are held each semester. As part of course review mechanisms and self improvement processes, staff undertake an assessment audit to ensure the development of complexity of the requirements of assessment tasks as students proceed through the course.

Assessment statements provide detailed descriptive reports that indicate whether a student has met the specified criteria for each part of the course. This includes detail about the quality of work and/or the level of performance attained by the student. These reports are a crucial part of the ongoing dialogue between staff and students. When a student is failing to

meet requirements the descriptive report is an important mechanism to provide advice and critical feedback.

Within such a framework the normally expected range of achievement and performance, from failure to meet requirements through to notions of excellence, are naturally incorporated. The final outcome of this process is expressed in terms of graded passes and the relevant result entered on the academic record. Attendance and participation are essential requirements for successful completion of units in this course.

Action Research/Continuing Course Evaluation

Action research is a systematic way of improving practice by determining a need for improvement, planning a specific action to be undertaken, implementing it in the appropriate setting, observing and collecting evidence about what happened and reflecting on and evaluating the effects of, the planned action. Students increasingly use action research as a technique for evaluating their own teaching over the four years of the course.

Pedagogical Practices in the Course

Critical Pedagogy

In response to the contexts and student profiles, the course takes a critical pedagogical approach in which:

- lecturers and students share knowledge about their respective cultures and ways of looking at the world;
- students from communities all over the Northern Territory and beyond pool and share knowledge with each other; and
- the 'natural', the 'given', the 'assumed' must be critically examined.

Students are expected to deconstruct knowledge presented, reflect on its truth for them, its usefulness for them and their communities and eventually reconstruct it in ways suitable for their own and their community's purposes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages

Use of the Indigenous languages students bring with them to the course is negotiated with students. The use of a student's home language is encouraged and used when preferred by the student, in small-group work when participants come from the same language group, for text study and for language study. Students' languages are drawn upon to establish comprehension, useful linguistic comparisons or analogies.

6. Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.

Within Batchelor Institute, teacher education course interaction with other discipline areas centres around specialist input to specific content areas, e.g. health specialists' input into health education units. Education students are able to select elective units from other disciplines and there are also common units across all Higher Education courses.

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

(i) teach literacy and numeracy;

All teacher training degree courses include specialist units which focus on literacy, numeracy and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL):

EDC105 Developing Oral Language;

EDC202 Bilingual Education

EDC203 English for Educators

EDC205 ATSIL Languages

EDC206 Teaching Mathematics 1

EDC301 Teaching Mathematics 2

EDC303 Teaching Print Literacy

EDC304 Teaching TESOL

(ii) teach vocational education courses;

Students in the Bachelor of Adult Education (ALBE) focus on teaching vocational education courses in all units across the three years of study. Students who go on to study the Graduate Certificate in Adult Education (ALBE) and the Graduate Diploma in Adult Education (ALBE) maintain the focus on teaching vocational education courses as a backdrop to their continued exploration of teaching Adult learners in the current educational climate.

(iii) effectively manage classrooms;

Batchelor Institute students undertake 21 weeks of practicum and associated practicum workshops in which classroom management structures are addressed in depth (see also parts iv, v and vi following):

EDC101 The Learning Environment (3 week practicum placement)

EDP106 / EDE108 (3 week practicum placement)

EDC204 (3 week practicum placement)

EDP208 (3 week practicum placement)

EDC308 (9 week internship).

(iv) successfully use information technology;

Specialist units focus on information technology and its application in the school setting. The Northern Territory Department of Employment Education and Training's information communications technology networks are a special focus of a demonstration classroom experience and access. Networked student laptops are routinely employed in workshop delivery.

(v) deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;

This is addressed through practicum units and practice, and the units EDC306 Inclusive Education and HSMB303 Life Promotion.

(vi) deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;

Specialist units—EDC104 Physical Education and Health; EDC306 Inclusive Education; and HSMB303 Life Promotion—are offered and the area is also dealt with through practicum.

(vii) achieve accreditation;

Batchelor Institute assists its teacher education students to apply for registration with the Northern Territory Teacher Registration Board.

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

These areas are specifically dealt with in practicum requirements and assessment of relevant units:

EDC103 Community and Beyond

CSS104 Public Communication

EDC201 Issues in Community Development: Cultural Survival, Maintenance & Renewal

EDC207 Western Ideas and Education

EDC308 Internship (9 week placement)

EDC309 Indigenous Pedagogies

EDE211 Developing and Delivering Children's Services

EDE 212 Management and Administration

EDC404 Education and Social Change.

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

Schools and school staff are integral to the preparation of trainee teachers. Practicum placements and internships—vital components of teacher training—rely on schools and their staff. Development and monitoring activities for teacher education courses include representatives from schools and the Northern Territory Department of Employment Education and Training. Institute and school staff regularly visit for observation and discussion with teaching staff in all curriculum areas.

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

Community schools in remote locations by necessity implement middle schooling strategies and operate secondary classes within a primary environment. This promotes philosophical and theoretical debate (not necessarily a bad thing) and leads to strong misconception about authentic secondary schooling.

10. Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.

There is a huge need for qualifications upgrade in the NT to comply with teacher registration requirements. In-service requirements are a continuous need which should be integrated with programs offered through curriculum directorates within Departments of Education. Special courses in educational leadership should be an integral component of in-service offerings.

11. Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.

Current funding cannot meet the demands of providing course delivery that focuses on the individual professional sectors, e.g. Early Childhood, Primary. While enabling economies of scale, collapsing of units into units common across several courses can also create frustration and anxiety in students about the possible dilution or loss of specialist focus.

Funding for practicum supervision is another area of need, and ideally should be increased to a point where the Institute and the provider can work in a close and developing partnership in the training, rather than the 'fly-in fly-out' basis that operates. As a national provider, the Institute's funds are further stretched to visit students across the nation.

VERONICA ARBON
Director
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