

A I S S A



ASSOCIATION *of*  
INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOLS *of* SA

22 April 2005

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir or Madam

### **Inquiry into Teacher Education**

Please find attached the Association of Independent Schools of Australia (AISSA) submission to the Inquiry into Teacher Education. The AISSA is a member of the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) and supports the ISCA submission. However, AISSA considers that the significance of this area warrants a separate submission.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on Ph: 08 8179 1402 or Email: [leduffg@ais.sa.edu.au](mailto:leduffg@ais.sa.edu.au) if you wish to discuss this response.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Garry Le Duff'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Garry Le Duff  
Executive Director

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Report to

House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on  
Education and Vocational  
Training

## AISSA Response to the Inquiry into Teacher Education

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission is presented by the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA). AISSA is a member of the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) and has contributed to the ISCA submission.

The AISSA welcomes the opportunity to respond to this Inquiry. However, in line with ISCA, we note the frequency with which inquiries into teacher education and training have taken place in Australia in previous years, with little follow up on the recommendations made.

The consultation process, conducted by AISSA in preparation of this submission, identified a significant concern with regard to the knowledge and skills of graduate teachers from the majority of Universities. For example, it was considered that new graduates do not have an adequate knowledge of school organisational structure. There was also some concern expressed with regard to the depth of subject knowledge of graduate teachers, particularly in senior secondary year levels.

More significantly, a number of member schools indicated that while new graduates have a good knowledge of pedagogy they are in many cases not able to relate this to the practical reality of managing a classroom situation. In short they are unable to actually 'teach a class'. As a consequence, it is necessary for schools to train graduate teachers in some basic areas of classroom management.

AISSA recognises that there are varying levels of satisfaction with individual Universities and, moreover, that teacher education does not finish at the end of a University course – schools play a key role in developing the skills of graduates. However, it is unacceptable that graduate teachers should complete University teacher training without a basic set of key competencies.

The duration of practicum was considered as a key issue in this regard and the need to increase the length of practicum was a key theme across the consultation process. Significant emphasis was placed on the need for practicum to occur in a positive school environment – where teachers and the wider school community were supportive of student teachers – and in a wide variety of schools.

AISSA considers that there needs to be a number of reforms to teacher education and in-service professional development programs. It is essential that teachers be trained to meet the emerging needs of the student population and organisational change within schools. Schools are, for example, faced with increased responsibilities for pastoral care, child protection, facilitating partnerships between business and the community and teaching values. It is disappointing that these areas are largely absent from specific consideration in the Terms of Reference.

AISSA recommends a review of University teacher education faculties, particularly in relation to facilitating their responsiveness to meeting the changing needs of schools and strengthening links with schools.

A perception exists that the Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) scores required for acceptance into a University teaching education program are relatively low in comparison to other professions, such as engineering, and that this is contributing to the lower quality of graduates and the lower standing of teaching as a career. There was a suggestion, however, that current teachers also need to take some responsibility for improving the standing of the teaching profession by focusing more on the benefits of a teaching career and encouraging young people to consider teaching as a positive career choice.

On-going programs of professional development to support teachers are an essential ingredient in ensuring that teachers both maintain and continue to increase their knowledge and skills. AISSA appreciates funding from the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme (AGQTP) and welcomes the announcement that this funding is to be extended. AISSA recommends that this programme should include professional development activities for teachers in relation to supporting the needs of student teachers.

More regular consultation, connectivity and collaboration between higher education (teacher education) faculties and schools, and school authorities, is a key element of a long-term commitment to high quality teacher training. In fostering this connectivity consideration should also be given to University representation on some MCEETYA taskforces, such as the Student Learning and Support Services Taskforce.

At this point there are some conflicting views about whether there is in fact a severe shortage of teachers. Assessment of the demand and supply of teachers needs to take into consideration the demographic profile of Australia and individual states and territories, in particular the growth or decline of the school age population. It is essential that the work of MCEETYA is considered in any future policy considerations around this area. The latest MCEETYA (2003: 97) report *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia* found that 'As at 2001-02, the national labour market for teachers remained broadly in balance. However, both the government and non-government sectors continued to report recruiting difficulties in some locations, and in a number of teaching specializations...' including '...mathematics and science (especially physics and chemistry), and languages other than English (LOTE) and the industrial arts.'

The report further argued that 'in the period ahead (post-2004) Australia is likely to face increasing shortages of teachers due to age-based retirement. The extent of the shortfall will depend on the success of policy initiatives to attract and retain teachers. Workforce planning to target potential sources of teachers and training those people to become teachers will also be important.'

It needs to be noted, however, that the mobility issues surrounding the teaching workforce are not unique to teaching. Other professions, such as nursing, are also experiencing workforce shortages in this regard. Hence, there needs to be recognition generally of what is increasingly a fluid workforce. In this context regulatory authorities should examine how they can facilitate entry into the teaching workforce from other industries and occupations.

In making this submission, AISSA recognises the challenges faced by Universities in terms of funding constraints. It is the role of Government to give coherent leadership and to provide a policy framework that enables educational institutions to address the challenges that lie ahead. A key challenge for governments is to recognise the importance of education in Australia's future development and increase spending on education across all sectors and all levels.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Profile of the Sector

The AISSA represents the interests of 93 Independent schools with an enrolment in excess of 37,000. AISSA also represents an additional seven campuses attached to Independent schools. The South Australian Independent School Sector has experienced a significant growth in enrolments since 1992. The largest enrolment growth is occurring in areas characterised by low socio-economic conditions (ISCA 2003). Approximately 3000 teachers are currently employed in South Australian Independent schools.

South Australian Independent schools educate students within a curriculum underpinned by a diverse range of religious affiliations (Anglican, Baptist, Christian, Christadelphian, Greek Orthodox, Islamic, Jewish, Lutheran, Uniting) and educational philosophies (Montessori, Waldorf Steiner). The sector also includes a number of secular schools and a special school which educates students with severe intellectual disabilities. A number of Independent schools are also members of a system, for example, the Lutheran Schools Association and Adventist Schools Australia.

Independent schools educate students from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds. For example, within the sector there are 1196 students who have been classified as having a disability (according to Commonwealth definitions), 5,712 classified as having a learning difficulty and 340 Indigenous students (Advisory Committee on Non-Government Schools in South Australia, DEST).

Independent schools are distinguished by a model of governance based on local management and accountability to school communities. Independent schools are accountable to government through the requirements for registration under the *Education Act 1972* and on a number of other legislative levels, including the *Children's Services Act 1985*, *Children's Protection Act 1993* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. Independent schools, and school authorities, are further accountable to the Australian Government through the signing of contract agreements, which include both educational and financial accountability requirements.

The direct accountability of Independent schools to parents is a key strength of the Independent school sector.

### 1.2. Submission Outline

This response is based on consultation with Principals, other key school leaders and AISSA staff. In this submission AISSA focuses on Terms of Reference 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

The concerns raised in this submission are those which were outlined in the consultation process. They relate generally to the University sector rather than to the performance of any individual University.

## **2.0 EXAMINE AND ASSESS THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTING STUDENTS FOR TEACHER TRAINING COURSES**

### **2.1. Overview**

It seems that the current selection criteria, focussed on TER, does not necessarily produce the best teachers. AISSA concurs with the view expressed in the ISCA submission that '[c]urrently the reality is that most teacher training institutions do not actively select students: rather, they accept applicants who meet academic entry requirements until their quotas are complete'. This focus is not appropriate given the people-based nature of teaching.

### **2.2. Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER)**

Significant concern was expressed over what are considered to be the low TER scores, which are required to enter teaching, in comparison to the TER scores required for other professions.

### **2.3. Suggested Additional Selection Criteria**

All students in Australia have a right to be educated by committed and highly trained teachers. Given the people-based nature of the profession, and the increased responsibilities of teachers in regard to issues of pastoral care, discussed in other parts of the submission, a focus must be placed on the ways in which entry criteria can include assessment of a person's academic **and** *personal* suitability. For example, in addition to academic results, eligibility criteria could also incorporate a form of psychological testing and an interview process.

There is a precedence for the recognition of the necessity for 'people skills', in addition to academic skills, in other people-based professions such as medicine. Indeed, rather than devaluing the teacher profession and discouraging people from applying, expanding the selection criteria may in fact contribute to raising the standing of the profession in the community by implicitly acknowledging the wide range of skills required to be a successful teacher.

## **3.0 EXAMINE THE EXTENT TO WHICH TEACHER TRAINING COURSES CAN ATTRACT HIGH QUALITY STUDENTS, INCLUDING STUDENTS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERIENCES.**

### **3.1. Overview**

The consultation process raised questions as to how it is possible to change the perception of teachers and teaching and more specifically how is it possible to educate society that teaching is an honourable profession. More



work needs to be undertaken to promote the benefits of a teaching career and to increase community recognition of the high quality work undertaken by teachers.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the decline in status of teaching as a profession is having a negative impact on the numbers of people interested in taking up a teaching career. It is both a strength and a weakness that students are shaped by teaching and teachers shape what students think about teaching. In this context, current teachers need to take some responsibility for raising the profile of the profession and playing a greater role in encouraging bright students to consider teaching. This is an acknowledgement that teaching offers, those committed to it, a wide range of benefits, both personally and professionally and that these benefits should be conveyed to young people.

There is some suggestion that what are considered to be low TER levels do not necessarily attract the best and brightest people to teaching. A perception exists that teaching is in some instances considered as a 'final resort' for some students unable to achieve their choice of course, and a potential gateway to other courses. Moreover, there is a perception that some student teachers are doing a Diploma of Education because it is something to do, rather than because they are interested in a teaching as a career.

### **3.2. School Initiatives**

A number of Independent schools indicated that they make an effort to identify and talk to current students, who are considered by staff in the school as having the ability to be good teachers, in order to encourage them to consider teaching as a career. In some cases these students return to the school to take up teaching positions.

### **3.3. Flexible Pathways**

#### ***3.3.1. Course Delivery***

Anecdotal evidence suggests that mature age and mid career teaching students do particularly well at teaching, in part because they bring with them a number of life skills. However, they also often carry with them 'greater financial and family commitments'.<sup>1</sup> Recognition of these commitments will necessitate an innovative response from Universities in regard to the structure of teacher training (Education and Training Committee Final Report 2005). The Education and Training Committee Final Report (2005: xxi) identified the following as suggestions for 'universities to improve delivery of teacher education':

- 'offering intensive coursework modules that shorten the time taken to complete teacher education requirements;

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<sup>1</sup> Similar comments can also be made in regard to the growing number of young students who are combining paid employment with study.

- optimising the use of the full calendar year rather than restricting delivery within an inflexible academic timetable;
- offering classes in the evenings and on weekends;
- repeating course units and offering them in a combination of delivery modes (including weekend, intensive and weekly structure), to enable pre-service teachers to take advantage of class times that are most suitable;
- optimising the use of online delivery for the theoretical (or other suitable) components of teacher education courses; and
- developing partnerships with schools and other appropriate education and training organisations for more effective, flexible delivery of appropriate course components.' (see also Recommendation 3.4)

### ***3.3.2. Incentives***

Attracting young people, including school leavers, and mid career professionals to teaching requires that there be perceived end opportunities, for example, in terms of the professional standing, work environment and financial remuneration.

In previous submissions AISSA has outlined a number of strategies to improve the supply and retention of high quality teachers including scholarships and exemptions from HECS fees. AISSA identifies below a range of other incentives:

- The availability of 'sign-on' incentives for particular disciplines experiencing shortages
- Increased financial reward for good teachers in targeted fields
- Allowances for teachers in high cost of living areas and schools that are difficult to staff
- Study leave after a prescribed period of employment
- Release time for professional development
- Enhanced specialist facilities and administrative support.

Here it should be recognised that as a consequence of the expectation that people will no longer stay in one career, it is necessary to offer incentives to attract people back to the teaching profession. These strategies need to be supported by more flexible pathways into the teaching profession being created by higher education institutions and teacher registration authorities. AISSA recommends further consideration of these incentives.

### 3.3.3. Vocational Education

With the increasing number of vocational education programs being offered in schools, flexibility is needed in assessing the suitability of people to deliver all or part of these courses, particularly where specialised skills are required. For example, a qualified chef who has already acquired the competencies required by AQTF Standard 7 could be employed by a school to deliver VET programs in Commercial Cookery and Hospitality. However, in many States this is not currently possible under existing teacher registration guidelines that require formal teaching qualifications as well as a degree.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of criteria for selection of students for teacher training courses, applicants with industry recognised qualifications and experience should be given high priority for entry to teacher training programs and furthermore be provided with appropriate credit/recognition for the knowledge and skills attained during their industry qualification and experiences in the workplace. Such actions would result in a teaching workforce that includes teachers from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

'Fast-track' teacher training programs that result in a teaching qualification should be developed for industry trained and qualified persons. Such programs should recognise the skills, knowledge and 'life' experiences of those people wishing to enter the teaching profession.

Schools should also have greater flexibility in employing staff with industry experience but without tertiary teacher education qualifications for VET programs especially where specialized skills are required. Schools will still need to make judgments that those persons are considered to be *fit and proper* persons.

### 3.4. Diversity

It is essential that Australian students are educated by a pool of teachers which reflect the diversity of Australian society. AISSA considers that many of the strategies identified above (3.3.1, 3.3.2) could be employed to increase

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<sup>2</sup> The Australian Quality Training Framework (hereinafter 'the AQTF') was endorsed by ANTA in June 2001. The AQTF consists of 12 Standards covering areas such as Quality systems, legislation and regulations, financial and administrative management, staffing requirements, assessment and learning strategies, issuing qualifications and marketing. Under AQTF Standard 7 "*The competence of RTO Staff*" all trainers/teachers delivering and/or assessing VET competencies must comply with new minimum standards. Persons assessing competencies must have a minimum of three competencies from the *Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training* (or demonstrated equivalence) and relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being assessed. Persons delivering training must have all the competencies in the Certificate IV from the *Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training* (or have demonstrated the equivalent competencies) or be working under the direct supervision of a person with these competencies, and is able to demonstrate vocational competencies at least to the level of those being delivered. Additional requirements may also be outlined in Training Packages.

the diversity of the teaching population. Significantly, there should be a focus on providing a range of sustained strategies. It is likely that a focus on short-term strategies will be of limited benefit.

While there has been a significant focus in regard to the difficulties faced in attracting men to teaching, it is important to recognise that there are other groups in the Australian community under-represented in the teaching profession including Indigenous peoples and people with disabilities.

In regard to increasing diversity in a wider sense, given the reality that many young Australian graduates go overseas we question why Australia is not actively seeking graduates from overseas in order to increase the diversity of its employment pool.

## **4.0 EXAMINE THE PREPARATION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TEACHING GRADUATES:**

### **4.1. Overview**

The Education and Training Committee Final Report (2005: xvii) of the Inquiry into the Suitability of Pre-Service Teacher Training in Victoria noted

'The consistent view of the education community is that teaching requires a balanced mix of professional and pedagogical skills and subject knowledge, and the ability to respond to an increasingly diverse range of learning and personal needs of children in the classroom.'

Significant changes have taken place in relation to the operation of schools with consequent requirements for the knowledge and skills of new teachers. Schools are, for example, now legally required to provide values/ civics and citizenship. School staff in South Australia are legally required to mandatory notify. It is also now essential for graduates to have a broad understanding of the legal responsibilities of schools, in particular in regard to duty of care and child protection.

Further recognition within teacher education Universities of the significant changes in government policy, particularly as these changes relate to the operation of schools and the work requirements of individual teachers is of critical importance.

AISSA recommends a review of University teacher education faculties, particularly in relation to facilitating their responsiveness to change.

While pastoral care issues are touched on under a number of the categories listed within the Terms of Reference, further consideration by the Committee is necessary of the key role that schools play in this regard. The pastoral care

role of teachers has significantly increased as schools are now one of the last stable institutions within communities (Power 2000).<sup>3</sup>

The consultation process identified also a perception that some graduate teachers do not have an awareness of the diversity of school families in the Independent school sector. This is related, in some instances, to the stereotypical notions of the three school sectors, which do not reflect the reality.

## 4.2. Specific Areas

### 4.2.1. *teach literacy and numeracy*

It is essential that University lecturers maintain a currency of knowledge with regard to the latest developments in schools as they relate to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. In this regard there needs to be a fluid interface between schools and Universities. As an example of the ways in which this could be facilitated current teachers with specialist knowledge and practical experience could be invited on a regular basis to present to teacher education students.

In relation specifically to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, a further integration of courses, which are offered as professional learning opportunities to practicing teachers, such as First Steps in Mathematics and Stepping Out (Edith Cowan University Resources for Learning) and ESL in the Mainstream, into the curriculum would be of benefit.

An important area for consideration in the development of effective teachers of mathematics is the need for all teachers to be highly competent in the mathematics of their particular year level as well as being highly competent in the teaching and learning of mathematics. Anecdotal evidence has suggested that a number of students entering undergraduate courses do so with a number of personal mathematical misconceptions and/or anxiety about mathematics.

One method for overcoming this is for Universities to provide mathematics courses tailored to include both the provision of a personal grounding in mathematics and the pedagogical content to develop effective learning of mathematics in the students they will be teaching.

Ongoing links between undergraduates and professional associations, for example *The Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers*, and Australian Literacy Educators Association (ALEA) should also be fostered.

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<sup>3</sup> This situation has led to increased demands being placed on schools in general (and teachers in particular) in a number of areas, including providing support to school families undergoing crises.

#### *4.2.2. teach vocational education courses*

There is a perception that in the majority of cases graduate secondary school teachers are not ready to teach VET. The exception in this regard is reported to be mature age graduates with an industry training background.

The introduction of the ANTA VET in Schools and School-Based New Apprenticeships has challenged the role and responsibilities of schools in post-compulsory education. Some of the changes that have arisen from the introduction of these initiatives are outlined below.

- Schools are no longer the sole providers of accredited curriculum to secondary students or the sole site for the delivery of the curriculum. They have developed partnerships with enterprise, community service organisations, regional development boards, training companies and other registered training organisations.
- The competency based approach to curriculum and assessment has provided significant challenges in the way schools and Boards of Studies organise knowledge and skills and approach assessment and reporting.
- Direct links between the labour market and schools have been strengthened.
- Broader industrial relations and legal issues have arisen about industry trained personnel being able to delivery VET programs to school students in schools without having teacher registration qualifications.
- The well-established structural division between education and training institutions, schools, and Universities has also been challenged with some TAFE Institutes now delivering degree courses, and some schools now delivering VET qualifications that were previously only available in the VET sector.

It is not clear that Universities, in most cases, have recognised the extent of this shift and as such have not incorporated it into their pre-service teaching courses. The introduction of VET in Schools Programs has required significant resourcing in the area of teacher training and professional development of existing teachers to meet the quality assurance and registration requirements of the various State Accreditation and Registration Councils, as well as the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) of the VET sector.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The introduction of Training Packages has increased the accountability of schools to ensure that teachers of VET possess the competencies to deliver and assess the programs according to the required levels in the Training Packages as well as the teaching qualifications required under the various State Teacher Registration requirements.

#### ***4.2.3. effectively manage classrooms***

The consultation process indicated that in some cases graduate students were not adequately prepared to effectively manage the classroom. Alarming, basic skills, such as how to call a roll, were lacking. It is unacceptable that teaching graduates should complete University training without a core set of basic skills and competencies in classroom management in addition to the required pedagogical knowledge.

More practicum was seen to be of significant benefit in this regard.<sup>5</sup> Here it was noted that in previous years there were significantly higher levels of practical experience for student teachers. While there may be initial resource requirements for governments in the short term, this would be of significant long-term benefit, given that graduate teachers are in some cases less likely to leave the profession if they are adequately skilled.

It appears that teachers now face a range of challenges in relation to student behaviour in the classroom, particularly in regard to students with diagnoses of such difficulties and disabilities as autism spectrum disorder. The Independent sector is increasingly required to provide significant support to schools in cases where severe behavioral problems require individualised behaviour management plans. In addition, there are more frequently a range of Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare, duty of care and other legal issues related to the enrolment of these students.

The increased numbers of students with disabilities in regular classrooms, and a range of socio-economic factors related to disadvantage, necessitates that all student and graduate teachers receive training in this area. In addition to specific information on disability, in particular in relation to autism spectrum disorder, ADHD and some other emotional/ behavioral issues, there is a need for units on basic classroom management relating to behavioral issues. Graduate teachers also require an understanding of the school and agency structures available for their support. It should be acknowledged that whilst specific information is required on a need to know basis, in regard to individual students in the classroom, there is a significant need for pre-service basic training that focuses on inclusive practices which reflect the diversity of students now in every classroom. It is necessary for this approach to be integrated across the whole curriculum in teacher education courses.

#### ***4.2.4. successfully use information technology***

The continuous advances in ICT technology necessitates that there needs to be a greater focus within teacher training on the ways in which ICT can be used to enhance learning across all areas of the curriculum as well as ICT specific skills.

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<sup>5</sup> This is discussed in more detail below.

**4.2.5. deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families**

Schools are increasingly filling a significant void in the lives of students with regard to social issues such as family breakdown. Significantly, schools are expected by the community to be involved more in a range of areas often outside of their expertise. Schools have become in some cases substitutes for the traditional family and other social networks. In this context, teachers can sometimes find themselves in the role of a counsellor.

It is of course the case that all schools, government and non-government, have always provided pastoral care. However, whereas in the past families could turn to a social network for support these networks are in many instances no longer available. A consequence of this 're-defining' of the role of the school has been an adverse effect on the status of schools. Schools are increasingly blamed for, and in some cases held 'responsible' for solving, wider societal problems. It is not clear that teacher education universities and teaching graduates recognise the extent to which this change has taken place.

It must be recognised that there are necessary boundaries and limitations faced by schools in this area. Schools must be able to work in partnership with other community organisations and professionals.

It should also be recognised that the ability of schools to assist students in accessing social and professional services can be limited by external factors. For example, difficulties were reported in regard to access to services in rural areas. In many cases these services are simply not available and schools, and teachers, are having to deal with these issues. Moreover, teachers in rural areas face particular issues in that they generally live in the community and consequently are more likely to come into frequent contact with school families and students than teachers in metropolitan areas.

**4.2.6. deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;**

The majority of children with special needs and/or disabilities are educated in regular education settings. Hence, it is likely that the majority of teachers will have students with disabilities and a range of learning difficulties in their classes. AISSA has noted above the increased demands on schools in relation to behaviour management.

Several recent reports including, *Mapping the Territory Primary Students with Learning Difficulties: Literacy and Numeracy* (DETYA 2000) and *Literacy, Numeracy and Students with Disabilities* (DETYA, 2000), have highlighted the need for special education units in pre-service training. The Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee (2002) Report, *Education of Students with Disabilities*, also noted that 'as the challenge of dealing with students with disabilities, including gifted children with disabilities, is now more commonly recognised, there must be acknowledgement of this in university courses'.

Whilst there is a need for specific units on disabilities, AISSA supports an inclusive approach to education given that all classrooms have a diverse range



of students including those from language backgrounds other than English and those with special education needs and a range of other disadvantage. This approach should be integrated across the whole curriculum in teacher education courses. In AISSA's experience this is not always the case.

It is essential teachers are effectively prepared for the diversity they will experience in their teaching careers including in regard to students with special needs. In this context, there should also be a requirement that all teacher training include preparation for work with both Indigenous and ESL students.

#### **4.2.7. *achieve accreditation***

No further comment.

#### **4.2.8. *deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.***

There is some question as to whether student teachers are receiving an adequate overview of the structures of schools and the differences between schools. This is particularly important in the context of Independent schools where different management structures exist.

Some concern was expressed with regard to the ability of new graduates to deal with parents and other members of the school community. However, it was also noted that while it is possible to 'skill up' student and graduate teachers to deal with parents it was *experience* that was of most significance in this regard.

### **4.3. Child Protection**

In addition to the areas listed within this Term of Reference, there is a further area that warrants specific consideration by the Committee – Child Protection. It is disappointing that the Terms of Reference do not specifically address the area of Child Protection, in particular given the increasing legal responsibilities placed on schools in this area and the development and implementation of the National Safe Schools Framework.

AISSA, in conjunction with the two other South Australian school sectors, is working with South Australian Universities to ensure that police checks are carried out on all student teachers prior to their placement in a school environment. However, AISSA remains concerned at the lack of attention given to issues of child protection within teacher training curriculums. This is an area in which significant changes have taken place over a relatively short period of time yet Universities appear reluctant to adapt to changing circumstances, including changed community expectations, increased recognition of the importance of child protection and legislative change. It is, in many cases, schools which provide student and graduate teachers with training in fundamental child protection matters including basic elements of student behaviour.

It is also understood that some key University staff do not believe that the Universities should train student teachers on their legal obligations regarding child protection.

#### **4.4. Increasing the Duration of Practicum**

A key theme which ran throughout the consultation process was the need for student teachers to undertake a greater duration of practicum. Research continues to show that the relationship teachers build with their students is an integral part of the learning process. Significantly, student teachers only learn this in the classroom environment.<sup>6</sup>

It was emphasised, however, that practicum needs to take place in a positive school environment in which student teachers are supported by the school and the wider school community. Hence, schools must be selected carefully. Schools must also take some responsibility in this regard. For example, it is essential that students are matched carefully with host teachers.

There was also a significant argument for ensuring that by the end of their training student teachers have gained practical experience in a wide variety of schools. For example, it was previously the case in South Australia that you could not teach in a secondary school until you taught in a primary school. This was considered to be of significant benefit for student teachers.

Concerns were raised in the consultation process about the suitability, and also variances in quality, of some supervisors of student teachers. In many cases it was reported that supervisors had little recent experience of the school environment and the changing roles of schools. Here it was suggested that a potential solution was to draw more heavily from the pool of current teachers for supervisor roles. Arrangements could be made with individual schools to identify and release teachers.

It is essential that stronger links between Universities and school sectors are fostered in order to ensure effective delivery of practicum and that the practicum experience is of benefit to student teachers.

### **5.0 EXAMINE THE ROLE AND INPUT OF SCHOOLS AND THEIR STAFF TO THE PREPARATION OF TRAINEE TEACHERS.**

#### **5.1. Overview**

There is a significant need for more connectivity between Universities and schools, particularly in the area of preparation of student teachers and research. AISSA raises a question as to whether the expectations of schools in regard to teacher graduates are in fact consistent with that of some of the Universities.

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<sup>6</sup> An issue raised about practicum, however, was the perception that some parents consider that their children are being disadvantaged by the use of 'practicing' teachers.

## 5.2. Preparation of Trainee Teachers

Some concern was expressed that new graduates do not have an effective understanding of the differences between the three school sectors. This understanding is of crucial importance in an employment context. For example, many schools in the Independent school sector expect teachers to embody the values of the school, both inside and outside of school hours. In addition it was reported that new graduates also do not have an adequate understanding of the differences between schools within each sector. This is of significant concern.

The current practice for South Australian Universities is that feedback for student teachers is determined by the Universities, resulting in different feedback criteria for different institutions.

As noted above, concerns were raised that in some cases University provided student supervisors have little recent teaching experience. As a consequence some of these supervisors may not be familiar with the significant changes that have occurred in regard to curriculum. In order to ensure that students are supervised by supervisors with up-to date knowledge and skills, it was suggested that one option was to have current teachers spending six months supervising with graduate teachers employed on a part time basis to supplement their load.

## 5.3. School Based Programs

It was recommended that there should be an agreed induction program for graduate teachers across the three school sectors. AISSA signals its willingness to work with the other two school sectors in developing such a program. In order to assist young graduates, one school indicated that they were employing more and more graduates in the first instance on a part-time basis. This worked in a sense as a de-facto internship program for graduate teachers.

Mentoring plays an important role in the development of graduate teachers and member schools indicated that they consider this as a crucial area for schools. Member schools emphasised the importance of matching mentors carefully with new graduates.

## 6.0 INVESTIGATE THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE CURRENT SPLIT BETWEEN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION TRAINING.

While there are certainly pedagogical issues to consider in regard to students at primary and secondary year levels, the consultation process indicated that with the advent of middle years schooling and the increasing numbers of combined primary and secondary schools, the current split between primary and secondary education training is increasingly irrelevant for some schools. This was seen to be a particular problem for rural schools where it is often necessary for teachers to teach across several year levels.

Within the consultation process there was some perception that teacher education training was currently too restrictive in this regard and, moreover, that teachers get locked into a head set about what they can teach. For example, if they are a primary teacher they can only teach primary.

## **7.0 EXAMINE THE CONSTRUCTION, DELIVERY AND RESOURCING OF ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS ALREADY IN THE WORKFORCE**

### **7.1. Overview**

The current and increasing demands placed on schools, and teachers, necessitates that teachers engage in continuous professional development. However, the provision of professional development can be resource intensive for schools. It is essential that governments recognise the benefits of continuing and up-to-date professional development and provide funds accordingly.

A number of Independent schools have responded in innovative ways in providing professional development. For example, many Independent schools are sharing resources and also buying and selling school based expertise.

Other schools indicated that they partly fund post-graduate study through the payment of half of the HECS debt. In order for teachers to qualify they must demonstrate that there is a need within the school. The Lutheran Education system in South Australia has also introduced a professional development program to develop leadership skills among both existing principals and those staff who aspire to be principals.

AISSA funds a range of professional development programs. In recognition of the increasing importance being placed on school leadership AISSA has recently developed a Leadership Program for Principals, teachers in leadership roles and aspiring leaders. This is an area in which Universities could significantly improve their delivery of professional development activities. AISSA works with the Australian Catholic University in the provision of part of the leadership program. AISSA has sought external funding, in the form of sponsorship to fund this initiative.

There is a tension between the demands for professional development and the operational demands of schools. For example, the provision of significant levels of professional development between 9am-3pm, can place a considerable strain on school resources as the result of the need to provide replacement teachers. Moreover, parents can be wary of what they consider to be the over-use of replacement teachers.

Increased recognition is necessary of the fact that in some cases teachers are facing information overload. The busyness of the school day and the amount of professional development required to maintain and update knowledge and

skills leaves little time for teachers to reflect on what they have learnt and incorporate the new skills in their current teaching practice.

## **7.2. Government Funded Initiatives**

AISSA appreciates access to AGQTP funds, Targeted Program funding, and other Commonwealth funded initiatives such as the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, which assist in the provision of professional development activities for Independent school teachers.

AISSA welcomes the recent announcement that AGQTP funding is to continue. AISSA is pleased also that the feedback provided to DEST, with regard to the limitations of the previous funding arrangements which enabled only short term planning and delivery, have been taken into consideration and the funding will now extend the programme until 2009. This will enable careful planning of professional development activities to take place.

The requirement that VET teachers in schools meet AQTF Standard 7 has placed considerable demands on teachers to undergo intensive professional development as well as industry placements to ensure compliance. This is an additional cost to schools if delivery takes place within the school. In the longer term, this will result in increased costs of VET delivery and limit the long-term sustainability of school-based programs.

It is necessary that funds continue to be available to support teacher training as an integral part of the expansion of VET in Schools programs so that VET programs in schools are sustainable in the longer term.

## **7.3. University Based Programs of Professional Development**

There is currently in the Independent school sector a lack of confidence in the ability of Universities to provide professional development due in part to a perception that Universities have not kept pace with the changing needs of schools and teachers.

Greater flexibility is needed in the offering of professional development including greater use of the full calendar year and the provision of activities during evenings and on weekends (Education and Training Committee Final Report 2005: xxi, see 3.3.1). Anecdotal evidence provided to the AISSA also indicates that the most popular post graduate courses are incremental, for example, enabling teachers to do a certificate in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and a diploma in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

In general, increasing the connectivity between schools, school authorities and Universities would be of significant benefit in ensuring that professional development activities meet the needs of schools and current teachers. It should be noted, that in some cases links on an individual basis have been made between schools in the Independent school sector and South Australian Universities. For example, one Independent school has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with one South Australian University in regard to a 'cooperative participation in joint educational projects'. Agreements such as these should become the norm.

Increasing the connectivity between the schooling and University sectors necessitates a recognition by University staff of the high quality work conducted by schools. As one participant in the consultation process noted 'schools are dealing with post-compulsory learning in ways in which universities are not'.

It was also suggested that selected schools could become in essence lighthouse schools where professional development and research is conducted as an arm of the school.

## **8.0 CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

AISSA considers that there needs to be a number of reforms to teacher education and in-service professional development programs. It is essential that a focus is placed on providing incentives and more flexible pathways into teaching, including increased recognition of prior learning for mid career change professionals.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are differing levels of satisfaction with regard to Universities across particular training areas, with some Universities considered to be of significantly higher standard in some areas of teacher education. The challenge for the University sector is to ensure that all Universities provide high standards of teacher education. The challenge for governments is to provide a framework which supports this goal. In this context, AISSA notes that the challenges placed on Universities as a result of funding constraints.

It is apparent from the consultation process that there should be increased collaboration and connectivity between the school sectors and the University sectors. This would serve a number of benefits including ensuring that new graduates are appropriately trained to meet the changing needs of schools and school students.

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