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CHANGES IN AUSTRALIAN TEACHER EDUCATION: A PROPOSAL FOR SCHOOL-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

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The structures of teacher education in Australian tertiary institutions should change to take advantage of changes in the context of teacher education. In particular, the teacher education institutions should become more involved in all aspects of school-based teacher education.

Changes in the Context

Demographic and financial changes have occurred in the last decade in Australia and are likely to have a long-term influence on the context of Australian teacher education. The decline in Australia's birth rate and migration intake has slowed the rapid increase in the school population. Retention rates at secondary level have steadied or fallen and so, barring a decision to lengthen compulsory schooling for social welfare reasons, the school population cannot be expected to show dramatic increase. The extent of the change in the rate of growth of school population varies in different areas of Australia due to the shift of population from the south-east. Compounding the impact of demographic change is the reduction of the teacher resignation rate due to economic recession. As general unemployment rose from 2% in the early 1970s to 7% by the end of the decade, alternative job prospects for teachers were reduced and so resignations were halved. Further, economic recession reduced the amount of money governments were prepared to spend to employ more teachers so as to reduce class sizes or to provide support services. These changes have reduced the demand for new teachers in Australian schools.

In addition to reductions in expenditure due to economic recession there are other changes in the Australian context which ensure that education as a whole and teacher education in particular will continue to receive reduced financial support. Education was oversold as a social panacea in the 1960s and, for most people, its worth was to be measured in increased national and individual wealth that has not eventuated. Investment in schools permitted much heralded pedagogic change and longer teacher education courses. These new schools and the teachers produced by the new courses have been seen by the federal government

as the prime cause of youth unemployment and they have concluded that funding should be reduced and redirected. Funding for teacher education was reduced and to be redirected to technical studies supporting resource development, business studies and a tri-service defence university. These changes have reduced both the level of funding and the confidence in the desirability of the present forms of teacher education. Teacher education seems set to remain an area of dispute in the contest between Commonwealth and State governments for the distribution of finance.

A further change in the context of Australian teacher education was the flurry of inquiries and reports undertaken on this topic in the late 1970s. These reports articulated some of the views relating to changes in Australian teacher education. In particular, Auchmuty (1980, p.49) espoused the view of "Teacher education as continuous professional development" encompassing pre-service, induction and in-service. Auchmuty (1980, p.68) also claimed

that over the next twenty-five years the continual professional development of practising teachers will become the major means of safeguarding and further improving the effectiveness of the teaching force and thus the quality of learning in Australia's 10,000 schools and pre-schools.

This change in emphasis in teacher education is a result of the decline in the rate of entry of new teachers. Much of the in-service role of professional support and development has been undertaken by the newly created teacher centres, as is noted by Auchmuty (1980, p.151). While these reports have had a useful function in stimulating professional consideration of teacher education programmes and recorded the major forms of current effort and concerns, they did not propose radical changes in teacher education. They did attempt to show, at a time when reduction in States' expenditure on in-service teacher education is likely, how to improve the quality of in-service teacher education with some increase in funding.

A Proposal for a Change to School Based Teacher Education

This proposal is based on the author's experience in the Claremont History Investigations Project (CHIP) which was a form of in-service teacher education for primary teachers requiring assistance in teaching history. Visits to several institutions including Sussex (pre-service), Jordanhill (induction), Bristol (in-service) and U.C.L.A. have helped confirm aspects of this proposal.

The following argument is advanced in support of this proposal:

1. traditional structures of teacher education were designed to meet conditions requiring rapidly increasing numbers of teachers;
2. in the foreseeable future the absolute numbers of students in pre-service teacher education will be less than in the mid 1970s;
3. in the foreseeable future any increase in the number of students in pre-service teacher education will be less dramatic than in the 1950-1970s;
4. so an opportunity exists to attempt to improve teacher education in a context free of some of the pressures experienced in the past.
5. In any human endeavour a gap between theory and practice is endemic and can, in favourable circumstances, be beneficial;
6. present structures in pre-service teacher education do not make sufficient beneficial use of the theory-practice gap;
7. so attempts to improve teacher education should focus on the theory-practice gap.
8. Present teacher induction practices are inadequate.
9. Reduction in the resignation rate of teachers increases the expectation to teaching as a career for a major part of a teacher's life;
10. present structures of in-service teacher education do not adequately facilitate significant professional development of teachers;
11. so attempts to improve teacher education should recognize the increased importance of induction and in-service teacher education in the professional development of teachers.
12. Part of teacher education is more effective if conducted in the context of school activity;
13. teacher education institutions ought to display commitment to improving teaching in schools;
14. so teacher education institutions should take the opportunity to develop school-based teacher education programmes which integrate pre-service, induction and in-service in schools.

Most of the claims in this argument are acceptable to a wide variety of teacher educators so comment will be restricted to 12 and 13. Teacher education institutions recognize that formal course offerings are not the only or most effective way to achieve some aspects of teacher education. The widespread practice of providing teaching experience in schools for pre-service students attests to this view. The proposal for school-based teacher education extends this notion to make more detailed and effective use of school experience by pre-service students and teachers.

Supervisors of teaching practice by students in schools either lack the skills and interests required to develop the issues arising from incidents in teaching practice or they lack time and continuity to take advantage of these incidents. The former is usually the case with the classroom teachers and the latter is usually the case with supervisors from teacher education institutions. It is important to have pre-service teachers explain and justify their actions to permit them to explore and develop their understanding and competence in various aspects of teaching. Sensitive discussion with supervisors is an important means whereby the student can appreciate how theoretical concerns are significant in informing and shaping practice. Reflection on practice leads to theoretical consideration which informs further practice. Classroom teachers are often not equipped to conduct such discussion with student teachers and rely, instead, on global commendations and specific tips for action. Teacher educators have as important a task in assisting the classroom teachers in their professional development as they have with the student teacher. Once a teacher is appointed to a school they are faced with many major problems in professional development and the teacher education institution has a role to play in this aspect of their life. It is inappropriate merely to tell them how to swim, throw them in, and wait at the other end of the pool to give them help with style. So it is that teacher education institutions have a greater role to play in areas of methodology, curriculum development and professional development for teachers at the pre-service, induction and in-service stages in schools.

The traditional in-service courses, whether for awards or not, have usually taken such teachers as are able or willing to attend, irrespective of the particular requirements of the teachers. Formal courses for award are often provided and taken for financial reasons more than to improve professional development. School-based teacher education would not abandon formal courses at teacher education institutions but would provide them where they were the most appropriate way to improve the teaching in schools.

A major change in the relationship between schools and teacher education institutions is required if 'education' is taken seriously. Part of what it is to educate is to attempt to change for the better. Teacher education institutions would thus attempt to change teachers for the better. This is already implicit in the pre-service and in-service programmes but it may be helpful if this commitment were made more explicit. Further, as a teacher cannot make all the changes required in isolation, to change teachers for the better implies a commitment to changing particular schools for the better. In order to carry out teacher education, it seems that a continuing commitment to the improvement of particular schools and staffs would be a better system than the traditional *ad hoc* piecemeal approach with individual teachers. The teacher education institution would serve as a kind of teacher centre to specified schools and so provide integrated pre-service and in-service teacher education.

Part of the change in relationship between schools and teacher education institutions involves accepting that the problems to be tackled in in-service activities are not determinable by either party in isolation. One of the difficulties with formal courses offered by institutions is that they are not always seen, by teachers, to address real problems. A difficulty of providing in-service on the basis of teacher demand is that teachers may lack the perspective and experience to identify real problems. Questions of relevance and importance are more likely to be handled satisfactorily if the problems of teaching are identified as a result of negotiation¹ between the parties involved. This negotiation is itself an important part of the in-service work. One of the main beneficiaries of the negotiation may be the teacher educator² who comes to take seriously the notion that teachers do have a significant body of professional knowledge and expertise. The in-service work could thus be improved if it was reoriented from a deficit or remedial model to a view that emphasised the development of the existing strengths of the teachers.

Some major difficulties confront attempts to change teacher education towards an integrated school-based model. Neither tertiary institutions nor schools are funded in such a way to facilitate a change in the use of teacher education resources. Financial accounting procedures, based on

¹ For further consideration of negotiation as a significant aspect of teacher education see Haynes, B. (1982).

² A notable feature of the CHIP activities was the benefit obtained by the teacher educators from their in-service work with teachers which led to improvements in their pre-service teacher education.

the numbers of students in formal courses, permit some relatively equitable decisions on levels of funding but do restrict other kinds of activity as being uneconomic. Some recognition of the point that informal in-service work requires different budgeting procedures is necessary if schools and tertiary institutions can provide the time and money for such work. One possible way of handling the matter is to provide a percentage of the funds (as determined in the traditional way) for use in informal in-service work. It would be helpful if both school and tertiary institution were to fund these activities as this would provide an equal basis for negotiation as to the details of the activity. A second major difficulty is that teacher educators may not have the experience and skills required to be successful in this different teacher education setting. Unlike formal courses, the teacher educator in schools does not have superior authority, cannot follow a set programme and must be flexible and responsive to perceived changes of direction of the in-service activity. As the CHIP experiences have shown, on a small scale, these difficulties can be managed if a range of teacher educators can be employed in a school as demand requires and if the negotiated demands on teacher educators are kept within tolerable limits. A third major difficulty is that teacher educators may be seen to be irrelevant to the issues confronting teachers in their professional development. This difficulty may be seen to stem from the perception that either teacher educators have nothing to offer or, at the other extreme, they are only interested in pushing their own particular views as to the nature of the problems and their solution. On the one hand it is useless for the teacher to waste time with someone who has nothing to offer and on the other it is a waste of time to work with someone who doesn't even understand what the problem is. The aim of negotiating between teacher and teacher educator is to reach agreement on what is worth making an effort to change by way of in-service work and how this is to be achieved. This negotiation continues throughout the in-service activity and so it is possible for the in-service work to end up at a point quite unforeseen at the start.

By conducting pre-service courses, such as teaching methodology, in schools where in-service teacher education was being conducted on a continuous basis, it should be possible to improve the performance of all concerned. A graduate move towards integrated school-based teacher education in some of the Australian teacher education institutions would seem a warranted development in the present circumstances.

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RECENT CLASSROOM RESEARCH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING*

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In the early days of classroom research, a great number of studies were conducted but unfortunately yielded either insignificant or contradictory results. As Medley (1979) puts it, "to borrow a phrase Charles Silberman once used in a similar context, the teacher educator who examines the research is likely to conclude that there is less there than meets the eye" (p.16). But in the past twenty years, and especially the past ten years, the research on teaching has been fruitful and can be of great benefit to teachers and teacher educators.

This research generally follows a process-product framework where teacher behaviours and classroom factors (process) are identified which most influence student academic achievement (product). This research is described in many sources, including Peterson and Walberg's *Research on Teaching* (1978) and Berliner's chapter "Instructional Variables" (1982).

Within this area of research, Berliner and Rosenshine identified a cluster of teacher and classroom variables that they found to be consistently related to student academic achievement and which they termed direct instructional variables (Berliner and Rosenshine, 1977; Rosenshine and Berliner, 1978; Berliner, 1979). Most of these variables pertain to the academic or cognitive side of education, such as the amount of time teachers spend on academic subject matter or the provision of academic feedback, but a few variables pertain to the emotional or affective side, particularly interpersonal relations.

A central study that contributed to the direct instruction model was the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study (BTES) under the direction of David Berliner. This paper will focus on the major findings of this study and its implications for teaching in Western Australia.

* This paper was written as a result of professional leave taken with Dr. David Berliner of the University of Arizona, U.S.A.