

2003

Editorial

Janina Trotman
Edith Cowan University

Recommended Citation

Trotman, J. (2003). Editorial. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 28(1).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2003v28n1.1>

This Editorial is posted at Research Online.
<http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol28/iss1/1>

EDITORIAL

Janina Trotman

Edith Cowan University In 2002, Edith Cowan University celebrated the centenary of Claremont Teachers' College. Claremont was the first post-secondary educational institution in the state of Western Australia and until the establishment of the University of Western Australia in 1912, was the sole provider of teacher education. In 1982 Claremont combined with three other teachers colleges to form the Western Australian College of Advanced Education, transitioning to Edith Cowan University in 1991.

In recognition of the centenary of Claremont this issue of the *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* is devoted to the history of teacher education. The four articles selected for this edition provide a miniature of key issues and enduring themes in the history of teacher education in Australia. They delineate debates about the balance of theory and practice in courses, the politics of decision-making, the importance of networks, the influence of individuals and nature of teacher professionalism.

Di Gardiner and Tom O'Donoghue's essay on the first professor of education at the University of Western Australia, Robert George Cameron, is not only a biographical snapshot, it also illuminates the tensions surrounding the establishment of Education and teacher training within a university. In the Universities of Sydney and Melbourne, teacher training was never given the same status as Engineering, Law or Medicine, whereas at the University of Western Australia, there was strong support for the introduction of Education as an area of study. Gardiner and O'Donoghue propose that the strong support was attributable to the close relationship between the University and Claremont Teachers' College, to which Cameron had joint appointments, as well as Cameron's skillful leadership. A further contributing factor was the strongly utilitarian emphasis of the university's original curriculum which 'reflected the belief that the discipline's available should have relevance to the State's economy' – wheat growing, pastoralism and mining.

Kaye Tully and Clive Whitehead's article is also about the University of Western Australia and the triple incarnations of the Diploma in Education. The title, 'Staking the Territory: The University of Western Australia, The Diploma in Education and Teacher Training' is an apt one for this picture of the relationship between potential 'markets' and the provision of teacher training courses. As the authors maintain, 'the rise and demise of each diploma can be tied to conditions in the State's schools'. Professor Cameron is a key figure once more, and this paper illuminates the political complexities he negotiated in his dual role as Professor at the University and Principal of Claremont Teachers' Training College. Tully and Whitehead also reveal the inclusion of social class as a key factor in this historical investigation of the establishment Diploma in suggesting 'that the main motivation of such involvement was to protect the quality of its matriculants, many of whom came from independent schools'.

Cameron's staunch efforts to liberalise and widen the scope of teacher training in the 1920s and 1930s are documented in both of these articles. In the third article by Lynne Trethewey and Kaye Whitehead this theme is also central, as they document the role of Margaret Emily Hodge and Harriet Christina Newcomb, in the New South Wales educational reforms at the turn of the nineteenth century. These wealthy and educated English women 'were recruited to Sydney in 1887 for the purpose of establishing a new training scheme equivalent to the teaching diploma courses offered at the University of Cambridge'. This paper is a significant contribution to our historical understanding of the role of women in the generation of educational reform, and like recent publications of Joyce Goodman and Jane Martin (2003) in the *History of Education* highlights the importance of social networks. Hodge and Newcomb's social origins and cultural capital enabled them 'to fit relatively easily into the social-cum-intellectual circles that led public debate on educational matters in Sydney'. It was the strategic deployment of these connections which allowed them to 'negotiate a space for themselves in the public world'. (Martin, 2003:224)

When they returned to London eleven years later they modestly claimed to have achieved 'the petty' but that the 'vast' was still undone. However, their contributions to the professionalism of teacher education had 'sown the seeds'. Trethewey and Whitehead's concluding comments are a timely reminder that teacher education has always been a contested terrain. The current emphasis on the

technical and the apparent victory of managerialism and centralised policy in universities threaten the hard won victories of those who see teacher education as more than a collection of ‘skills’.

The current regime of truth in teacher education may valorise the ‘practical’ and ‘immediately applicable’ but history reveals a counter discourse emphasising the normative and the less tangible. Malcolm Vick’s contribution to this edition of *The Australian Journal of Teacher Education* explores the attempts by teacher educators of the first half of the twentieth century to develop ‘personal-professional character’. He has analysed archival materials from teachers’ colleges in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, illustrating the importance placed on the cultivation of ‘character and personality’ in the student teachers and the changing of their ‘inner selves’. These were not merely decorative add-ons of the professional teacher, they were seen to ‘irradiate and stabilise’ the knowledge and skills teachers transmitted to their pupils. Vick traces the ways in which this achievement of appropriate personal characteristics and dispositions was intended to be achieved through both the formal and informal institutional practices, such as the curriculum, teaching practice, assessment and, of course, sport and other college activities. This is what the sociologists term the ‘hidden curriculum’ and many of us who went to colleges in the 60s and 70s would have experienced it.

In his conclusion, Vick invites further historical exploration of these practices and to also investigate continuities and discontinuities between past and present practice. Present practices may be elusive to pin down however. One of the distinctive features of past practices was that student teachers were thoroughly embedded in institutional life – like it or not – by a full-time overloaded curriculum in a college which was single purpose; teacher education/training. Today’s students, even pre-service ones, are likely to be fitting teacher education into a life that is already loaded with a paid job – often poorly paid – to finance payment of HECS fees. Furthermore, ‘virtual campuses’ allow for a minimal commitment to time spent with other students and lecturers, since much course work can be completed on-line. It would be very illuminating to uncover the hidden curriculum of today’s practices.

This edition of the AJTE is a celebratory one. A centenary for Claremont Teachers’ College, and much to be proud of in histories of other institutions and biographies of individuals. As I suggest in my opening, it is also a miniature of many of the recurring themes and issues in the professional education and preparation of teachers.