

5-2003

## Robert George Cameron : the First Professor of Education, at UWA 1927-1954

Di Gardiner  
*University of Western Australia*

Tom O'Donoghue  
*University of Western Australia*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Gardiner, D., & O'Donoghue, T. (2003). Robert George Cameron : the First Professor of Education, at UWA 1927-1954. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 28(1).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2003v28n1.2>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol28/iss1/2>

**ROBERT GEORGE CAMERON:**  
**THE FIRST PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION, AT UWA**  
**1927–1954**

**Di Gardiner and Tom O'Donoghue**  
**University of Western Australia**

There has been much debate about the status of Education as a field of study within universities. In many circumstances the evidence suggests that there was hostility towards the inclusion of Education within the university curriculum. The fact that 'teacher training was never accepted at the Universities of Sydney or Melbourne in the same manner as the professional training courses such as Medicine, Law or Engineering' (Bessant and Holbrook, 1995. p.266) was a legacy of the association of teaching with the public service and apprenticeship training. This attitude lingered well into the 1970s as evidenced in the opposition to the establishment of a School of Education at La Trobe University. (Bessant and Holbrook, 1995. p.266) Within many Education Departments this resentment led to a polarisation of views; on the one hand there was the desire to escape completely to what was referred to as 'the high ground of theory and respectability' while, on the other hand, there were those who argued for the pre-eminence of becoming immersed in recent and relevant experience, uninformed by theoretical perspectives. (Pring and Gordon, 1980, p.122)

Since there have been few studies done of particular sites it is difficult to make generalisations about how widespread these tensions were or how common the resistance to the inclusion of Education within the university curriculum was. Indeed there is much work to be done in researching these issues at other sites. This paper is based on one such study, focusing on the situation at The University of Western Australia entitled

*We Did It Our Way: The Construction of Education as an Area of Study at UWA 1916-1981.* (Gardiner, 2001) This study reveals that there was strong support for the introduction of Education as an area of study at UWA, and that it enjoyed a high status without the tension evident elsewhere. One of the reasons for this was the strong relationship that existed between the University and the Teachers' College. This successful partnership was, in turn, due to the influence of significant individuals appointed to positions of leadership. One of these was Robert George Cameron.

The Claremont Teachers' College was established in 1902 when the pupil-teacher system was no longer considered adequate preparation for teachers. The need for a theoretical basis for the practice of teaching was strongly supported by Cyril Jackson who had arrived from London to oversee State education. (Clubb, 1927. p.371) Within the first ten years, the College responded to the need for teachers by offering a range of courses, varying in duration. With the establishment of the University in 1913, students of the college were able to integrate studies at UWA into their college courses. The University's original curriculum strongly reflected the belief that the disciplines available should have relevance to the state's economy. At that time Western Australia was still an infant state, very much dependent on wheat growing, pastoralism, and mining. In fact John Winthrop Hackett, the University's founder and chief benefactor, made clear the direction he believed the University should take in his report to the Royal Commission which

recommended the establishment of the University. He stated that ‘ In its education, the foremost place must be given to modern subjects and to practical work’ (Report of Royal Commission). This opened the way for support for the introduction of studies in Education.

When studies in Education began at The University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1916, an important association with the Claremont Teachers’ College (CTC) was established. While this was not unique, it certainly was successful where other such relationships had been fraught with difficulty. A number of factors contributed to this situation, not least of which were the contributions of William Rooney, Robert George Cameron and Colsell Sanders. In particular, their commitment to the academic preparation of teachers provided a sound basis for the acceptance of studies in Education at the University, at the same time recognising the important role the CTC had to play in terms of the practical component of teacher education. While the contribution of each needs to be recognised, this paper focuses on the role of Cameron.

While tension existed between universities and teachers’ colleges in other states and overseas, the relationship between UWA and the Claremont Teachers’ College was supported by the University from the outset. In 1914 Professor Murdoch at a meeting of the Professorial Board, made this commitment quite explicit:

*... the Senate be recommended to consider whether the time has not come for the University to be brought into closer relations with the State Training College with the view to granting by the University of a Diploma in Education (Professorial Board, 1914).*

At this stage, the University and the Claremont Teachers’ College already had an established relationship, with students of the College who had matriculated being permitted to enrol for units offered in the

Faculties of Arts or Science, for credit towards their teacher training. This support of the work of the Claremont Teachers’ College by UWA was strengthened in 1916 when studies in Education were introduced at the University. Those who enrolled for Education included Teachers’ College students, teachers studying part-time towards a degree, and a number of internal students of the University who contemplated a teaching career after graduation. The combining of studies at the University and the Claremont Teachers’ College was seen as a way of providing both the theoretical and practical requirements of teacher training. This association was not surprising given that the Minister for Education, Thomas Walker, and the Director of Education, Cecil Andrews, were both members of the first University Senate (Alexander, 1963, p.45). This collaboration between the two institutions enabled the Department, and later the Faculty of Education, to achieve what seemed to be unattainable in some other settings, namely respectability and relevance, and it certainly laid the foundations for the future.

By the mid 1920s the question of the establishment of a Chair in Education, was raised for discussion. This was fully supported by the Senate which suggested that the occupant should also assume control of the Teachers’ College. While this was generally favoured, the Teachers’ Union demanded that the Government retain control over the Teachers’ College. To meet this demand it was decided to appoint a Professor of Education at UWA, who would also be Principal of the training College, and a Vice-Principal who would guide the practical work at the College. Robert George Cameron was appointed as Professor and Principal, with T Milligan, President of the Teachers’ Union, taking up the position of Vice Principal. Against this background, Cameron arrived in 1927 to assume duties as Professor of Education and Principal of Claremont Teachers’ College. At the time the only other Chairs in Education in Australia were at the

Universities of Sydney and Melbourne (Sanders, C. 1968).

Cameron's appointment to UWA was especially fortuitous. His early career in Education exposed him to a philosophy of teacher education which recognised the importance of academic preparation for teachers, a view not held in all universities, but one which facilitated the development of Education as a university subject. This was significant in light of the concern he had to raise the status of the teaching profession. Also, Cameron came with a clearly developed notion of Education as an area of study and the importance of research in Education. This meant that Education at UWA was able to emerge meeting both the needs for relevance and respectability, a balance which was unattainable at some other universities.

Cameron's initial training in Education was an important influence in his leadership at UWA. He had been a student, and later lecturer at Sydney Teachers' College under the guidance of Alexander Mackie, who was significant in the development of Cameron's philosophy and practice in Education (Sanders, C. 1954, p. 1). Mackie, who was Professor of Education at the University of Sydney and Principal of the Teachers' College during Cameron's time there, had completed his teacher training at the Free Church Training College in Edinburgh, while concurrently completing his Master of Arts at Edinburgh University (Spaull and Mandelson, 1987, p. 98). Professor Laurie at Edinburgh University, who was a major influence on educational thought and practice and a significant force 'in establishing the study of education as an acceptable university enterprise and in having professorships in education established', shaped much of Mackie's thinking. Under Mackie, Sydney Teachers' College soon became distinguished for the quality of its academic staff and many eminent educators began their careers at the College. Cameron was one of these.

While working with Mackie, Cameron was impressed by the scholarship of those with whom he worked. His colleagues published across a wide range of subjects, conducted research into children with learning difficulties and strived for teacher education to be given university status (Sanders, C. 1970). It is not surprising, therefore, that when Cameron took up his position at UWA, he had a commitment to research and high ideals for teacher training. This provided UWA with a scholar who was also keenly interested in the practical aspects of teacher training, to guide the Department and later Faculty of Education during its very important foundation years.

In this regard Cameron's arrival was especially timely as there was a growing concern about the quality of teaching in schools in WA. Much concern was expressed at the 'dull and bad teaching which is responsible for much of the loafing in our schools, and not the boys and girls themselves'. What underpinned much of the discussion at the time was a serious concern about the poor quality of teacher training and the lack of any systematic knowledge of the science of pedagogy by many teachers. Cameron was well prepared to address these concerns.

When Cameron arrived at the UWA campus, then still situated in Irwin Street in central Perth, he found the University on the eve of a new era, as the new campus at Crawley, alongside Matilda Bay on the Swan River, began to take shape. Within a year of his appointment, Cameron's influence was evident. In his dual capacity as Professor of Education and Principal of the Claremont Teachers' College, he succeeded in developing Education as a recognised area of study at UWA, separate from, though related to, philosophy, psychology, history and the classics. He conceptualised the relationship between these as follows:

*It seems to me unfortunate that quite a number of University education departments in Great Britain either assume that the training of teachers is their only function or have been driven by the force of circumstance to accept this as their only function. I feel that the inclusion of education among University studies can be justified only if it is a study that is susceptible of philosophical and scientific methods of investigation. This indeed is the primary aim. The training of teachers is a secondary aim and is made possible only by the attainment of the primary. (Cameron, 1953, p. 2)*

Cameron's views gave new dignity to school teaching as a profession, despite the polite cynicism of some of his colleagues regarding the place of Education in the Faculty of Arts, and its association with the Teachers' College, which they considered to be 'slightly plebeian'. (Sanders, ad. p. 16)

Cameron systematically reviewed the content of courses, concerned always to maintain academic rigour. The inclusion of content such as the theory of education and its relationship to the philosophical and social sciences; the role of the school in relation to other ethical institutions; the nature of intellectual, aesthetic and volitional training; and a study of Plato's Republic, challenged the minds of his students. The practical needs of the students, however, were not neglected. Studies of relevant curricula, the measurement of scholastic ability, the experimental study of teaching methods, lesson types, and diagnosis and treatment of scholastic defects were all undertaken. Educational measurement, the education of 'subnormal and gifted children', the use of intelligence tests, diagnosis and treatment of scholastic defects, and the use of objective standards were all new aspects of Education introduced by Cameron with direct classroom application.

In addition to initiating these changes, Cameron implemented the Diploma in Education in 1929 with support from the

Senate. This course had been planned more than a decade earlier, but had never been implemented. The new course proved popular with initial enrolments of 22 in 1930 doubling to 44 a year later, and rising still further in 1932 to 53. The popularity of the course also resulted in a growing number of part-time enrolments and a great deal of interest from teachers who held a Teachers' Certificate from the Claremont Teachers' College. Given that at the time the Department of Education at UWA consisted of Cameron and one other staff member, the achievement of Cameron in raising interest in the qualifications of teachers was substantial.

While guiding the implementation of the Diploma in Education at UWA, Cameron was at the same time responsible for the more liberal approach to the training of students which emerged at the Claremont Teachers' College. The hitherto rigid discipline and closely supervised daily routine that characterised previous approaches was relaxed, as Cameron introduced a measure of freedom and gave more responsibility to the students. While his initiatives at the College were appreciated by the students, they were not always easily implemented as there was considerable tension between himself and his Vice Principal, Milligan. The relationship between the two positions was fraught with difficulties resulting from the uncertainty that surrounded the division of authority between the Principal and the Vice-Principal and it was further aggravated by the personality differences between the two men.

Despite the tensions, Cameron remained committed to ensuring high standards at the College, and he introduced a series of reforms based on modern educational thought and designed for greater freedom and more specialisation. Greater attention was given to educational psychology and experimental education, both of which were taught by Cameron. Hygiene became a compulsory subject, more emphasis was

given to aesthetic education, more time was devoted to speech training, and visiting speakers and excursions became regular features of the College courses. More time was also devoted to demonstrations and practice teaching, which was completed in the final three weeks of the year, after examinations. These developments as indicated in the following words of a final year student (1928) were received enthusiastically:

*At last the College has wakened to itself and its possibilities—it has acquired a personality which has been reflected in all forms of College life ... We go out filled with enthusiasm and vigour, the ideals of which we have cherished here inspiring not only our teaching but our lives.*

Much of the success of the course from 1928 to 1930 was attributed to the status that Cameron brought to the College:

*The greatest impact came from the establishment of the Chair in Education. Professor Cameron introduced a new level of inspiration into teacher training. Provocative, stimulating, and progressive, Professor Cameron was imbued with the ambition to enhance the professional status of teachers.* (Mossenson, nd. p. 31)

Despite this success, however, the 1930s proved to be a difficult decade for Cameron in his role in teacher education due to the depression, pressure from the Teachers' Union and the recommendations of the Wolff Royal Commission.

During the difficult 1930s Cameron maintained his strong commitment to a university-based theoretical orientation as a necessary foundation for teacher education, while the Teachers' Union stressed the need to emphasise the practical aspects of training. This tension between theory and practice, which had long been debated in Britain, the USA and in the older universities in Australia, now surfaced at UWA. Typical of

the dialogue which took place was that reported in the *WA Teachers Journal* :

*On the general question as to whether a degree should be a necessary preliminary, Professor Cameron said ... the specialisation for the Diploma should be based on a solid, general education, culminating in a degree. This was the practice in Scotland, NSW and increasingly in England. The status of teachers had been gradually improving and this was a further step in that direction. It would, when it became fully operative, definitely place teaching on a level with other professions.* (*WA Teachers' Journal*, May 1930, pp. 63-4.)

Cameron believed that the training college would become a College of the University and that the Diploma would be the recognised entry to the profession. The Teachers' Union had other ideas:

*Professor Cameron expressed the opinion that the Teachers' College would, ultimately, become a College of the University. In this event, of course, the University or so to speak more accurately, the Professor of Education at the University, would, as regards aim, be given a kind of dictatorship over the education of the state. Now, even although an autocracy of this kind may have been set up elsewhere in Australia, it does not appear to be in any way desirable, nor indeed, does there seem to be any serious prospect of its happening here. Let it be clearly understood. It is not sought to belittle or to disparage the importance of theory or of research in education; but any step which would lead to the exclusion from a say as to the manner in which education is to be carried on would be calamitous. Let us clear our minds of the cant about the omnipotence of the theorist.* (*WA Teachers' Journal*, 1930, p. 74)

Before this debate could be satisfactorily addressed, the progress of the College was interrupted when it was closed in 1931 by the Government as a cost cutting measure at the

height of the Great Depression. (Lake, J. and Neal, W.D. 1979. p. 264) The Government claimed it had a surplus of trained teachers, although their initial predictions of oversupply proved to be inaccurate, and the demand for teachers remained.

While the Diploma in Education continued through this period, the closure of the College potentially left many students unable to complete their training. The University was quick to respond to this need. (Professorial Board, 1931) Classes were organised by Cameron and his staff and the University agreed to allow non matriculated students, if recommended by Cameron, to take up studies in Education, History and English. By 1935, in response to the continuing demand for teachers, the Senate of the University approved new regulations for the introduction of a one-year Teacher's Certificate course in the Department of Education.

Interest in university preparation for teachers continued to grow following these initiatives. In 1939 a number of students showed an interest in a Bachelor of Education degree. Some of these were senior staff of the State Education Department who sought ways of upgrading their qualifications. Cameron, however, remained committed to the notion of a two-year postgraduate course:

*I am opposed to an undergraduate course leading to a Bachelor of Education, as in my opinion such a degree course places insufficient emphasis upon the general culture of the prospective teacher ... and that teachers should have an opportunity of taking an advanced course in their professional work. (UWA, Professorial Board, 1939)*

While discussions regarding the introduction of the Bachelor of Education continued, arguments concerning the relative importance of theory and practice, and the control of the College, caused tension for Cameron, especially with the Teachers'

Union which stated its position in unequivocal terms:

*It seems, therefore time to assert that no Minister of Education is likely to be persuaded into handing over the control of the Teachers' College to the University, as prophesied by Professor Cameron. (The West Australian, 1940.)*

This tension lingered until 1944 when, in an effort to resolve the issue, the Minister for Education, John Tonkin, decided that the extensive program of teacher training that would be needed in the post war period, would be served best by the separation of the roles of Professor of Education and Principal of the College. This would allow the Principal of the College the freedom to devote all of his attention to the College, while the Professor of Education would be able to focus on the development of the Diploma course. Thomas Sten was subsequently appointed Principal of the Teachers' College.

At this time Mr Justice Wolff was appointed to conduct an enquiry into the Administration of the University in 1940. This was motivated by complaints from the University regarding levels of funding, community concern for what was perceived to be a developing elitism and the lack of community involvement in the Senate. Wolff's report, in addition to commenting on entry standards, fees, funding and sub-graduate courses, also dealt with Education and teacher training, and once again raised the theory-practice issue. Wolff was critical of the University's role in teacher training firmly stating that:

*It must be realised that the training of teachers is a technical matter. The Teachers College partakes of some of the characteristics of a high school and some of the characteristics of a technical college, and the University is not, in my opinion, the place to undertake instruction in the technique of teaching. It may certainly give instruction to*

*student teachers in cultural subjects, a good many of which are covered by the Arts degree. As a matter of technique the College is better fitted to impart instruction because the College is better able to keep in touch with the ever-changing needs of education in this respect, whereas the function of a University lies in its pursuing a broader cultural basis. (Lake and Neal, 1979, p. 254)*

While these views were in complete contrast to the beliefs of Cameron who had worked consistently to promote the need for a university education for teachers, the UWA Department of Education, through its association with the Claremont Teachers' College, was well positioned to respond. By combining the practical expertise and ready access to schools of Claremont Teachers' College with the academic rigour of university studies in Education, UWA was well equipped to face the post-war challenges to teacher training programs and the recommendations of the Wolff enquiry.

One of the Wolff recommendations was the implementation of an Advisory Board for the Teachers' College which was duly established in 1945. Membership comprised the Director of Education, the Professor of Education, the Principal of the Teachers' College, the Superintendent of Primary Schools and a Teachers' Union representative. The Board began its deliberations in a strictly advisory capacity, but as Cameron commented, its concerns soon reached beyond the training of teachers: *It was soon found that some decisions on this matter depended on decisions of wider educational questions. Its decisions and its discussions have then affected not only the training of teachers and the whole education system of the State, but also the teaching of education at the University. (Cameron, 1950, p. 7)*

This Board, no doubt with advice from Cameron, was quite influential in the push for university studies for all teachers. In 1945, it recommended that first year Claremont

Teachers' College students be encouraged to study education at a first year level and requested that the Professor of Education take the matter up with the Faculty of Arts. The proposal was accepted, resulting in the restructuring of the Education unit. As the status of studies in Education continued to grow Cameron recommended the creation of a Faculty of Education, a recommendation supported by the Faculty of Arts and the Professorial Board. (Professorial Board, 1946)

The regulations for the new Faculty were approved by Senate in November 1946, and came into operation on 1 January, 1947. This opened the way for studies in Education to expand and for new courses to be developed. One of these, an initiative of Cameron's, was a four-year undergraduate Bachelor of Education degree the first in Australia. It is not clear why Cameron's views regarding the introduction of the Bachelor of Education program changed between 1939 and 1947. Speculation on the matter raises several possibilities. The establishment of the Faculty of Education in the interim may have provided the impetus for the development of the degree. Given that it was to be a four year program, perhaps Cameron conceded that it was possible in that time frame to provide sufficient emphasis on both the 'general culture' and 'professional work' that he believed prospective teachers required. Cameron may also have seen this as a way of raising the status of the profession, an increasing concern of his. It is also possible that through his association with the State Education Department, Cameron had come under some pressure to implement such a course. This was considered a bold experiment which generated much debate regarding the relative importance of a general education as opposed to the need for a teaching specialism in courses for student teachers. Cameron's philosophy was that the greatest need was to educate, and at the same time to raise the status of ordinary teachers in schools. This view emerged clearly in his writings:

*Today there is a new spirit abroad. Not the training of the teacher, but the education of the teacher-and of the whole teacher-is being undertaken. It is now recognised that 'he who would educate must himself be educated'. What is aimed at is the enlightenment of reasonably cultured people about the principles underlying their profession, which incidentally includes much more than teaching. (Cameron, 1951, p. 2)*

With Cameron's belief in a solid theoretical foundation, it is not surprising that the new degree course placed a strong emphasis on theoretical studies in the first three years, with the final year given over mainly to professional preparation. The final year of the degree relied on a strong relationship between the University and the Claremont Teachers' College. The course was designed with three ends in view:

*Firstly it attempts to provide a flexible subject matter content drawn from Arts or Science or from both these cooperating faculties. The major objective in this respect is to make possible a general teaching competence to the level of the third or fourth years of a post-war high school. Secondly, it attempts to provide students throughout the four years of the course with an opportunity to visit schools in city and country, to see experienced teachers at work, and to gain teaching experience in a variety of schools ... Thirdly it attempts to share the total task between the Faculty of Education and the Teachers' College in a way that allows each to do what it is best equipped to do. (Sanders, 1956, p. 28)*

The Faculty of Education was responsible for teaching units in Education, Psychology, English and Science, while the Teachers' College completed the professional aspects of training. The objective of the academic units of Education was to provide students with a sound knowledge of the philosophical, psychological, historical, social, comparative and experimental aspects of Education.

Cameron had a firm belief in the need to develop in his students an enquiring and critical mind regarding the problems of education in general, and Australian problems in particular. Implicit in this was the need to prepare students in the techniques of educational investigation, in the subject matter to be taught, in the capacity to teach and to have an understanding of the child as a person and a learner. Education was seen also to have a responsibility for the development of values.

During the first three years of the degree course, school visits and observation of teaching, which were organised by Claremont Teachers' College, were undertaken concurrently with university studies. As the practical work was distributed throughout the four years and was the responsibility of the Teachers' College, the latter became an institution formally affiliated to the University, although a loose cooperative arrangement had long existed. (Sanders) This new development mirrored the recommendations of the McNair Report (1944) on the recruitment and training of teachers in Britain which recommended that the teachers' colleges in England should form closer relationships with the universities since as it was stated:

*We believe in years to come, it will be considered disastrous if the national system for the training of teachers is found to be divorced from the work of the Universities or even to be running parallel with it. (McNair Report, 1944)*

In England this led to the establishment of University Institutes of Education, whereas in WA the response was to affiliate the University with the Claremont Teachers' College. This affiliation was also in line with Wolff's recommendation, that the vocational aspects of teacher training were best undertaken by the Teachers' College.

The Bachelor of Education prepared kindergarten, primary and secondary

teachers, although secondary teachers could still teach solely with an Arts degree. The course was structured as follows:

First Year: Education I, Psychology I, English I, General Science

Second Year: Education II, Psychology II, two optional subjects, Social Science (non examinable)

Third Year: Education III, two optional subjects.

Fourth Year: Education IV, Social Institutions, Special method (infant and Primary taken at the College, Secondary at University), Physical Life of School Children and Physical Training, Speech Training, two of Music, Art or Hand-work.

Optional subjects could be selected from the following combinations:

French I and II: German I and II

Physics I and II: Chemistry I and II

Physics I and II: Chemistry I, Zoology I

History I and II: Constitutional Law I and II

Physics I and Engineering Physics I: Drawing and Design I and II

Botany and Agricultural Botany: Chemistry I, Principles of Agriculture I. (Cameron, 1950, p. 9)

Noticeable from the subjects included was the concern to educate and not just train teachers, reflecting the influence of Cameron. In the second year of the Bachelor of Education course, all students were required to complete a course in Social Studies (although no examination was conducted) as it was thought 'imperative that anyone studying education should have some knowledge of man's development'. (University of Western Australia, 1952, p. 112) The rationale for this course was explained by Cameron as follows :

*I have always felt strongly, very strongly, that prospective teachers should know the road the race has travelled and thus get at least a glimmering of their part in the evolutionary process. Furthermore, such knowledge should assist them to overcome those*

*moments of pessimism which come to every teacher when they find that they cannot go beyond the innate powers of their pupils.* (Cameron, 1953, p. 2)

This initiative was also partly stimulated by the introduction of the subject 'Social Studies' into the school curriculum.

This initiative also coincided with criticism by R. Freeman Butts, the noted American educationalist, that the neglect of a general education in social science and in the social and philosophical foundations of education for intending teachers, was a serious shortcoming of teacher education in Australia. Butts stated:

*I have found little effort to see that all teachers had some grounding in history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science or social psychology. It is not enough these days to assume that a teacher has acquired enough social understanding in high school, because I have already pointed out what a subordinate position the social sciences hold in high school courses ... Some universities had no department of political science or anthropology. No university had a department of sociology. I wondered how political and social education could be infused into the schools if there were so little tradition of it in the universities.* (Freeman Butts, 1955, p. 74)

Cameron's views were certainly in sympathy with this. Furthermore his views on educational research were reflected in the inclusion of an educational investigation on an approved topic during the fourth year of the Bachelor of Education. Many of the resultant theses were of a very high standard, confirming the academic rigour of the course.

The Bachelor of Education, while generally regarded as sound, with a good coverage of psychology and its educational applications, experimental education and history and

philosophy of education, did have some weaknesses, including a lack of flexibility and the inadequate coverage of subject content from Arts and Science. In fact, there was some concern that it may not have been adequate for teaching in Senior High Schools due to the lack of depth in the subject disciplines. Furthermore, 'although it provided a good basic training for possible future educational administrators, it was less well suited to secondary teaching at a time when the State secondary service was expanding rapidly'.

In light of these concerns, one of the most surprising developments during Cameron's leadership in the early 1950s was the decision to discontinue the Diploma in Education and the Teachers' Certificate courses in favour of focusing on the Bachelor of Education. At that time, due to the severe shortage of teachers, Dr T.L. Robertson, the Director of Education, had embarked on a vigorous recruitment program offering bursaries to school leavers and increasing the student training allowances for Claremont Teachers' College students. When the UWA Diploma in Education ceased, the Teachers' College immediately organised a secondary training course for graduates in Arts and Science, and enrolments at Claremont Teachers' College rose dramatically. It soon became clear that the decision to drop the Diploma in Education after twenty-one years was a mistake. While the Bachelor of Education course may have had academic support within the University, it was not able to respond quickly enough to the needs of the government and non-government schools. In 1953, as a short term measure to recover lost ground, the Teachers' Certificate was reintroduced. (University of Western Australia Calendar, 1953, p. 98)

Recognising the need for change in the face of falling enrolments, the Faculty, under Cameron's guidance, revised the Bachelor of Education course to provide for more in-depth study in the subject content of the Arts

and Science disciplines. The introduction of Education was delayed until the second year, and more teaching practice was included throughout the four years. This measure refined the balance between academic and professional studies. Education as an area of study expanded to include: the history of civilisation and the development of man; the evolution of education; a detailed study of the English education system; the function of a school; centralisation and decentralisation; the history, function and curriculum of the secondary school; guidance, both educational and vocational; the history, function and curricula of tertiary institutions; the problems of values education; education and its relation to political theory; modern developments in education; educational sociology; work relationships and a range of method courses. Broadly, this development represented the 'modernisation' of studies in Education, bringing together more contemporary studies with the traditional base.

Thus Cameron's work in teacher education had been significant and his approach had supported a strong association between the University and the Claremont Teachers' College. His commitment to a University preparation for teachers and his recognition of the role the College had to play in the practical aspects provided the basis for the acceptance of studies in Education at UWA and a harmonious relationship between the institutions. This relationship continued well into the future.

Before Cameron's retirement from the Faculty, he also made a significant contribution to the development of higher degree studies and research in Education. Prior to the establishment of the Faculty of Education at UWA, only three Master of Arts theses undertaken within the University were on topics related to education. These theses were *The Technique of the Written Examination with Special Attention to the Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations in Western*

*Australia*, (Minutes of meeting of the Faculty of Arts, 1934) *Non-focal Learning and its Application to Teaching Practice* (Minutes of meeting of the Faculty of Arts, 1938) and *The Teaching of History in Secondary Schools, being an Examination of its Purpose, Material and Method in the Light of Modern Theories*. Once established, the Faculty of Education soon offered a Master of Education degree. Candidates with a Bachelor of Education with Honours could undertake a Master's degree one year after completing their Bachelor of Education, while those with a pass degree were required to wait two years, and pass a qualifying examination. The Master's Degree was completed by thesis on a theme approved by the Faculty. (University of Western Australia, 1949, p. 110)

In addition to the Master's degree, the Faculty of Education initiated professional development activities in line with Cameron's commitment to the continuing education of teachers:

*No professor of education would be happy unless he felt his institution had become a centre of educational influence to which teachers at all levels should be able to come for information, inspiration and all kinds of educational guidance.* (Cameron, 1953, p. 5)

The first of the professional development courses was a General Science course which ran from 1949 to 1951. This was available only to students who already held an Arts Degree and a Diploma in Education. The course in the history of science, general science and practical exercises required students to undertake a 'specified amount of general reading at a popular level'. (University of Western Australia, 1949, p. 111) This coincided with an unprecedented expansion in the school population and a resulting crisis in teacher supply. The combined influence of Australia's immigration policy, the nation's post war birth rate, an increase in the school leaving age and a lowering of class sizes, contributed

to this shortage. The flexibility of the University in responding to changing educational needs indicated that support for a strong theoretical foundation was not to be at the expense of providing relevant, professional courses.

A further initiative introduced in 1952 was the course for a Certificate in Educational Administration. Admission was available to candidates who had a degree, an approved Teacher's Certificate or Diploma in Education and at least five years' teaching experience. Again this strengthened the relationship between UWA and the Claremont Teachers' College. The course was offered on a part-time basis and all candidates were required to pursue their studies for at least five terms. At the end of the course, candidates sat an examination and submitted a thesis. (University of Western Australia Calendar, 1953, p. 105) The introduction of this course represented the first attempt to provide further studies as a form of professional development for practising educators. The demand for such a course reflected the post war expansion of government schooling and the subsequent administrative demands on staff.

Initially little attention was paid to post graduate work and research in the University generally. With each department relying on only two or three staff and some part-time help, a large proportion of the teaching was done by the professors. One consequence of this was limited opportunities to undertake research. Within the Department of Education at UWA the importance of research was well recognised and supported by Professor Cameron. His commitment to this was acknowledged, when, in 1945, he was appointed as the Director of Educational Research, a position created by Tonkin, the Director General of the State Education Department. As Director, Cameron served on a board whose brief was to advise on educational research in the State.

While it was one thing to recognise that Educational research was important,

implementing a strategy to support research endeavours proved to be more difficult. Given the rapid growth in population and industrial development in post-war Australia, it is not surprising that the universities directed their energies to providing graduates, especially in areas of critical shortage such as science and technology, and teaching. (Murray Report, 1957, p. 124). There was much debate about the relative importance of teaching and research in the universities and the relationship which should exist between them. Even at vice-chancellor level there was disagreement:

Put bluntly by one vice-chancellor “the central object of our enterprise is education, not investigation”. (Matheson, 1969, p. 12-13) As viewed by another, over emphasis on research had resulted in too little stress on teaching, which was the vital function of universities. Those who support the view of the equality of research and teaching would hold that research was essential in the search to extend knowledge and that teaching which was not underpinned by relevant research would lack freshness, appeal and originality. (Maclaine, 1973, p. 246)

R. Freeman Butts, Professor of Education at Teachers’ College at Columbia University, entered this debate during his visit to Australia in 1954. In his forthright appraisal of Australian education at all levels, he criticised the provision of teacher education for a number of reasons, one of which was the neglect of research in teacher preparation. Butt asserted that any genuine professional education should combine ‘theory and practice, principles and methods, intellectual understanding and skill in execution ... Scholarship, research and teaching ability must go along together. Academic discipline and professional concerns must go hand in hand’. (Freeman Butts) Butt believed that the universities were better placed to provide this balance than the teachers’ colleges, suggesting that better qualified staff and more capable students were the reason for this. According

to Butts, the inclusion of educational psychology, philosophy of education, history of education, comparative education and research methods would provide academic rigour and the basis for research. It is noteworthy that as a result of Cameron’s leadership these were all features of courses within the Faculty of Education at UWA by the early 1950s.

Evidence of Cameron’s belief in scholarship and research can be found in the establishment of *The Educand* in 1950. In the Editorial of the first issue, Professor Cameron explained the importance of this scholarly publication:

*The aim is to stimulate educational thinking and practice. But more precisely the Faculty of Education hopes by publishing annually a brochure of this kind to provide a means of recording both educational opinion and research in all fields of educational activity. (Cameron, 1950, p. 5)*

Cameron went on to encourage research in two areas. The first was in the philosophy of education which he believed was important since ‘the question to what ends are we educating? is a complex one’. The second area of research was in school classrooms. The first issue of *The Educand* contained a diverse range of articles contributed mainly by the staff of the Faculty of Education and Claremont Teachers’ College, further evidence of the harmonious relationship between the two institutions. These contributions included: *Study Conditions of Teachers’ College Students, Non-state Schools of Australia, Education in English of New Australians, Objective Tests at the Tertiary Level, Attitudes, Incidence of Speech Defects in Western Australian Schools, Objective Tests at the Tertiary Level, General Science, and the Bachelor of Education*. The wide circulation of this journal encouraged research and publication. Today, *Educational Research Perspectives* continues the work of *The Educand* established by Cameron.

While Western Australia was generally considered a late starter in the development of public education, the nature of teacher education and acceptance of Education as a legitimate field of study at the University owed much to the vision and leadership of Professor Cameron. Moreover, he also succeeded in establishing a Faculty of Education to ensure future progress, something not achieved at the University of Sydney where Education remained within the Arts Faculty. Throughout Cameron's leadership the growth and development in the Faculty of Education at UWA was significant. Still largely directed to the preparation of teachers, as was the case in other Australian university faculties of education, the Diploma in Education, Teachers' Certificate courses, and later the Bachelor of Education Degree reflected Cameron's belief in the importance of theoretical foundations in teacher education.

Throughout his career as a university teacher, Professor Cameron maintained an exceptionally wide range of interests. He was associated with the work of the Australian Council for Educational Research and also with the progress of music, the fine arts, museums, kindergartens and broadcasting. Under his leadership theoretical and historical studies in Education prospered. Studies of educational administration, a stronger focus on Australian and rural education, and the development of experimental education and research, likewise reflected Cameron's influence. Always a theorist who constantly kept before his students the challenge of ideas, Cameron was responsible for the training of four hundred graduates who gained the Diploma in Education at UWA during his time as Professor. (Sanders, 1954, p. 3) On his retirement members of the Faculty of Education expressed their appreciation of his contribution to the Faculty over many years. In reply, Cameron said that he had enjoyed good fellowship and cooperation from his colleagues and looked back with much

pleasure on his work at the University. (Faculty of Education, 1953)

## REFERENCES

- Alexander, F. (1963). *Campus at Crawley*, Melbourne, Cheshire
- Bessant, B. and Holbrook, A. (1995). *Reflections on Educational Research in Australia*, Victoria, AARE
- Cameron, R.G. (1950). Editorial, *The Educand*, I, (1), p.5
- Cameron, R.G. (1950). The establishment of the Faculty of Education, *The Educand*, I, (1), p. 7
- Cameron, R.G. (1951). The Institutes of Education, *The Educand*, I, (2), p. 2
- Cameron, R.G. (1953). Retrospect and prospect, *The Educand*, I, (4), p. 2
- Clubb, W. (1927). Western Australia, in Browne, G.S. (Ed.), *Education in Australia*, London, MacMillan
- Faculty of Arts, (1934). Minutes of meeting December 5, University of Western Australia
- Faculty of Arts, (1938). Minutes of meeting March 22, University of Western Australia
- Faculty of Arts, (1945). Minutes of meeting December 3, University of Western Australia
- Faculty of Arts, (1946). Minutes of meeting April 16, University of Western Australia
- Faculty of Education, (1953). Minutes of meeting September 18, University of Western Australia
- Freeman Butts, R. (1955). *Assumptions Underlying Australian Education*, Melbourne, ACER
- Gardiner, D. (2001). We did it our way: The construction of education as an area of study

at UWA 1916-1985, unpublished M. Ed. thesis University of Western Australia

Lake, J. and Neal, W.D. (1979). Post-secondary education on the move, in Neal, W.D. (Ed.), *Education in Western Australia*, Perth, University of Western Australia Press

MacLaine, A.G. (1973). *Australian Education*, Sydney, Novak

Matheson, J. (1969). Problems of Australian universities, *The Australian University*, 7, (1), pp. 12 –13

McNair Report, (1944). *Teachers and Youth Leaders*, Section 179

Mossenson, D, (nd). A history of teacher training in Western Australia, *The Educand*, Murray Report, (1957). *Report of the Committee on Australian Universities*, Canberra, Government Printer

Pring, G. and Gordon, P. (Eds) (1980). *The Study of Education: A collection of inaugural lectures early and modern*, (Volume 1), London, Woburn Press

Professorial Board, (1914). Minutes of meeting of February 18, University of Western Australia

Professorial Board, (1931). Minutes of meeting March 5, University of Western Australia

Professorial Board, (1939). Minutes of meeting November 29, University of Western Australia

Professorial Board, (1946). Minutes of meeting October 4, University of Western Australia

*Report of the Royal Commission on the Establishment of a University*, Appendix III

Sanders, C. (1954). Retirement of R.G. Cameron, *The Educand*, II, (1), p. 1

Sanders, C. (1956). Education and its teaching in the University of Western Australia, *The Educand*, II, (3), p. 23

Sanders, C. (1970). Letter to Ken Cunningham, Personal papers of Colsell Sanders, UWA Archives

Sanders, C. (nd). Retirement of Professor R.G. Cameron, *Gazette of The University of Western Australia*

Sanders, C. (nd). The education of teachers, Personal Papers, UWA Archives

Sanders, C.(1968). The education of teachers, Notes for a talk to the Western Australian Section of the World Education Fellowship, July 11, UWA Archives  
Spaull, A.D. and Mandelson, L.A. (1983). The College Principals – J Smyth and A Mackie, in Turney, C. (Ed.), *Pioneers of Australian Education*, Volume 3, Sydney, Sydney University Press

*The West Australian*, (1940)

University of Western Australia, (1949), *University of Western Australia Calendar*,

University of Western Australia, (1952), *University of Western Australia Calendar*,

University of Western Australia, (1953), *University of Western Australia Calendar*