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AUSTRALIAN TEACHER EDUCATION: ALTHOUGH REVIEWED TO THE EYEBALLS IS THERE EVIDENCE OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE AND WHERE TO NOW?

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Abstract

Teacher Education within Australia is once again on the cusp of further reviews at both State and Federal levels. This is in spite of frequent and invasive reviews and inquiries over the last 150 years of formal teacher education. Since the 1980s many reviews have been conducted with the intent of improving the quality of teacher education – in order to improve the learning outcomes for the pupils in the nation’s schools. This paper examines some of the reviews and the emergent patterns as it follows the journey of teacher education from the 1850s to the present day. It highlights many of the recurring dilemmas and the frustrations of the educational community, which includes the following: Education versus Training; Theory versus Practice; Supply versus Demand and Profession versus skilled & competent practitioners. Perhaps it is now time to recognise the binaries that have continued to cause division and move beyond them into a new era based on mutual collaboration, acceptance of diversity, effective dialogue and resource sharing. The establishment of a common foundation of essential knowledge/learning and the development of core non-negotiable elements, including a blend theory and practice, within Australian teacher education, has the potential to lead to substantial benefits for the nations children.

Introduction

According to Korthagen (1999) it would seem that teacher education throughout the world, in (HEIs), is in trouble. Korthagen makes this point based on the move, especially in the UK, to move PSTE to

school-based ‘training on the job’ because of a perceived failure of the HEIs to prepare beginning teachers for the reality of the classroom in this post modern digital age. This substantial shift, consisting of a return to an almost apprenticeship model of PSTE, caused by the failure in the HEIs, that occurred in the UK in the early 1990’s, indicates one of the great dichotomies surrounding, and seemingly endemic, within teacher education in the western world for many years. Training, according to Smith (1992), which is closely associated with apprenticeships, tends to be located in a specific field and associated with the development and acquisition of a battery of skills and competencies that in turn become the tools of a skilled practitioner. On the other hand, an education consists of a more global and integrating outlook focused on knowledge acquisition, thinking, skill development, engagement, morality and the understandings behind the knowledge in all aspects of life (Smith, 1992, p. 2).

It would seem that when the practice ‘in the field’ is valued over theory there is an increasing emphasis placed on training, as distinct from an emphasis placed on education. This further suggests when the concept of education, as defined by Smith (1992) is prioritised, rather than training, there is a synergy, rather than a separation of theory and practice. This synergy has the potential to build the professional status of the profession of education, as distinct from preparing skilled and competent practitioners. Herein lies four of the most significant issues that have continued to impact upon teacher education preparation over the last 150 years.

∞ Education versus Training

- ∞ Theory versus Practice
- ∞ Supply versus Demand
- ∞ Profession versus skilled & competent practitioners

It is my understanding, along with many other educators, (Britzman, 2003, D. Coulter & Wiens, 2002, Gore, 2001, Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth, & Dobbins, 1998, Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, Korthagen & Kessels, 1999, Leach, 2000, Zeichner, 1999) that there are other, and perhaps different ways than we have used in the past, to prepare quality teachers for this now digital, bordering on the genetic, age. I have also formed the opinion that there are special requirements, or unique characteristics vital to be present in a quality teacher for this age - such as the following: a quality teacher is self-efficacious and capable in their own right, is willing and able to take responsibility for the various tasks at hand, is able to manage their own life but is also able to recognise that they are not alone, is a moral person recognising the rights of others, is willing to put the needs of others, especially their students, before their own, when it is necessary to do so, and recognises that through collaboration and resource sharing the power of one becomes the power of many. Indeed a quality teacher is capable of changing one's beliefs and everyday practices. A quality teacher is therefore a learner as well as a teacher and is primarily focused on facilitating quality learning in their students. The basic assumption that lies within these statements is that a quality teacher is a prerequisite for a quality education.

In looking for evidence to substantiate these claims I have considered the following: Firstly, I have attempted to examine one of the most crucial and important elements of humanity, i.e. quality education for the successors of planet earth. Secondly, through an investigation into the history and the inquiries into teacher education I present what has been seen in the past as the best way, or the way to conduct, Pre-service Teacher Education (PSTE). Thirdly, I will present the re-occurring and unresolved themes of PSTE in an attempt to establish how best to prepare quality, capable and self-efficacious beginning teachers who can embrace the challenges of a post modern digital world.

Preparing teachers in an age of uncertainty

In this post modern age of uncertainty education in general, and in teacher education in particular, it would seem to be vital that systemic change be anticipated, encouraged and implemented through the shifting of existing perspectives and a revision of existing, belief systems. Effective, and 'Future Age' thinking, i.e. open "Worldview" thinking (Reece & Overton, 1970) cited in (Knowles, 1990, p. 17) rather than just 'Present Age' thinking has the potential to guide the holistic shaking down of all that is thought to be known by the individual preparing to be a teacher. Bauman (2001) places emphasis on what he refers to as 'tertiary learning' – "learning how to break regularity, how to get free from habits and prevent habitualisation, how to rearrange fragmentary experiences into heretofore unfamiliar patterns while treating all patterns as acceptable solely until further notice" (Bauman, 2001, p. 125). A graduate leaving a teacher education program, rooted in tertiary learning, should be able to view their life, their chosen career, their spheres of influence and their personal contribution to planet earth in a totally different way to that which they perceived it when they entered their teacher preparation course. If this were the case then the graduates from teaching degrees, or education degrees, would emerge with a keen sense of "educational judgement" (D. Coulter & Wiens, 2002) that is founded on a unity between thought and action.

Australia in joining the rest of the world in the first decade of the 2nd millennium has moved once again into a re-occurring cycle of examining what is effective in pre-service teacher education. It does so, as well documented by Preston (2000), on the cusp of a major shortage of primary and secondary teachers. This shortage is not only an Australian problem but also a

worldwide problem. The problems associated with this shortage are manifold. A move could be taken by Governments and Education Authorities to push teacher preparation institutions into conducting 'quick fix', short duration, pre-service teacher education courses. Such events have occurred in the past and have resulted in poorly qualified teachers presenting at the chalk face. Short term courses 'pressure cook' applicants and just about anyone who wanted to be a teacher could possibly pass through the preparation process in teacher education just to fill the job vacancies (Auchmuty, 1980). Another danger already presenting itself is the employment of less than fully qualified student teachers that are being offered, and are taking up, teaching positions either as instructors or as casual relief teachers. Even though this is now illegal in the State of Victoria, under the recently promulgated Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Act of 2001, some schools are prepared to risk the heavy fines and place unqualified persons into classrooms. Their reasons for taking the risk are based on the claim that there is a lack of teachers available to take up teaching positions, including part time and casual relief work.

However, at this time of a shortage it is still just as vital that the students in our schools receive quality teaching from a qualified, committed and dedicated teaching profession. It is perhaps timely that organizations similar to the Queensland Board of Registration and the recently instituted Victorian Institute of Teaching are now emerging in a number of States across Australia, promoting the registration of all teachers and claiming to represent the profession of teaching. Teachers, without registration, are no longer permitted to teach in any school (government or non-government) within Victoria. Most other States now have similar regulations in place, or are in the process of developing the same. One might well ask - why now?

My response focuses on the following; firstly, there appears to be an Australia-wide need to lift the status of the teaching profession i.e. by formal recognition of credentialed professional teachers, secondly, to apply a set of standards applicable to all those involved in teaching and thirdly, to provide a means of regulating the profession into the future (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2003). However these things are not new to the profession of teaching as will be evidenced through the historical journey presented in this paper.

A return to the core of education

Gore (2001) rightfully places a key emphasis on that which should always be at the core of teaching and learning. It is the student, and what they get out of a learning experience, in terms of their learning, which is of paramount importance. It is also logical that this same focus should also exist in the higher learning institutions (HEIs), charged with the responsibility of conducting pre-service teacher education. Part of the responsibility of tertiary institutions includes opportunities for research, the provision and dissemination of up-to-date relevant knowledge, and programs that balance theory and practice. In an attempt to understand the historical influences and to briefly map the story of teacher preparation in Australia the four issues, already identified, will be used as a framework, or as journey markers, as we proceed through the 150 years of acknowledged formal teacher preparation.

A journey of review

In conducting a researched review of the journey of teacher education in Australia I too, like others before me (Ramsey, 2000), have reached the conclusion, that, as a group, teacher education has been reported on and examined almost beyond belief or reason, especially over the last 25 years.

The roots of teacher education: A focus on training rather than education

In Australia, like New Zealand and the UK, the roots of teacher preparation, or what has in the past been referred to as teacher training, reside in the tradition of a monitorial or apprenticeship system. Within this scheme, as noted in the National Inquiry into Teacher Education (NITE) report of 1980, “teacher training institutions [schools] were as much concerned with bringing teacher trainees up to an acceptable minimum standard of general education as with ensuring effective teaching in the classroom” (Auchmuty, 1980, p. 1)

As recorded in the appendix to the NITE report, submitted by Hyams (1980), the early 1850’s in Australia were significant because it was at this time that the first formalised system of teacher education came into being through the ‘Model’ schools. The ‘training’ of teachers was conducted from 1850 in these ‘Model’ schools rather than in specialised institutions. It was known as the pupil-teacher system and remained in place well into the 20th Century. The pupil-teachers ideally built up their teaching skills by working under the supervision of a master-teacher both during and after school hours. As a method of teacher education it was popular because it was cheap and as noted by Hyams (1980), abuses were evident in terms of excessive workloads for the pupil-teachers, neglect by the supervisors in terms of education of their protégé and in poor working conditions for the pupil-teachers. In fact almost the entire teaching force during these times was prepared as teachers through on-the-job skill-based training, an apprenticeship scheme, based on a process of skill and competency development. It would appear that the essential reason that this occurred, and remained in vogue for so long, was on economic grounds rather than educational grounds. “In the face of such extensive cost saving, scant attention was paid to the plea that it was undesirable to have school children taught by those who were themselves so young and immature” (Hyams, 1980, p. 250).

The emergence of theory as the basis for teacher preparation

Towards the end of the century (1899), there emerged the need and awareness that a sound and more theoretical educational base was required for the effective preparation of teachers Hyams (1980). Hyams, (1980) clarifies the next wave of development evidenced in the 1920s by the establishment of institutions of teacher training in the Capital city of every State and a mandated requirement of one year minimum formal teacher preparation. In moving to a theory-based education, the importance of teachers’ colleges to impart this theoretical base in teacher training, emerged. A further, and contributing factor changing the face of teacher education was the involvement of universities in teacher education. It is of interest to note at the time of Federation there appeared to be a difference in emphasis placed on teacher education by the States, which, in retaining control of education at Federation, presented a definite movement to theory-driven teacher preparation, located away from schools, and into teachers’ colleges and some universities. It is also interesting that together with this movement was an increase in the recognition of teaching as a profession. It would appear that this early concept of teaching as a profession, which is evident today, was associated with the concept of higher learning in specialised institutions, namely universities and teachers’ colleges.

The boom of post World War II – An emphasis on skills and training in a time of teacher shortage.

In the post-war era (1945-1960’s) emphasis was placed on basic knowledge and skills, or what is referred to as the vocational approach to teacher training. Teacher education was seen as ‘teacher training’ and was for the most part conducted in State controlled and funded teachers’

colleges. The exception was the one, or two-year part-time, University-based graduate diploma of education, for the preparation of secondary teachers. State control of the training institutions meant that for the most part the employing authority controlled both the administration and the curriculum in the training institutions creating a monopoly leading to what Hyams (1980) refers to as “conservatism and brevity of most training programs, with fragmentation and superficiality as its further results” (Hyams, 1980, p. 252). To manage the crisis of a teacher shortage a number of teachers’ colleges were established throughout Australia. By 1964 there were twenty-nine teachers’ colleges throughout Australia compared to nine before World War II, Hyams (1980). To further accommodate the shortage of teachers, standards of entry were lowered and the duration of courses was further shortened.

Further to this, some States also reverted to an apprenticeship model or junior-teacher model consisting of time spent in schools for new trainees prior to entry into a short course at the Teachers’ College. Because of an excessive demand for teachers, in a time of teacher shortage it would appear that the cycle moved around once again and what was expedient and cheap for the State Government became the accepted practice.

The Implications of the Post War population increase

The post war years through to the 1960’s were characterised by a shortage of teachers at all levels of schooling, but especially at the secondary level years, as the population bulge moved into the high schools. The Report of the Committee on Australian Universities, (1957), known as the Murray report, states the following:

The post war community calls for more and more graduates of an increasing variety of kinds...The proportion of the population which is called upon to give professional or technical services of one kind or another is increasing every day; and the proportion of such people who have to be graduates is increasing also. (Murray, 1957, p. 7)

In essence, the report identified the increasing need for graduates from the Universities of Australia, which were at this time essentially State Universities, assisted by Federal funding. This report is very significant in Australian tertiary education for two major reasons. Firstly, because it identified nationwide problems such as: an overabundance of first year students; an extremely high dropout rate; and poorly resourced and ill-equipped facilities. Secondly, because the summations and findings of the Murray report were the catalyst for initiating increased Federal funding and Federal involvement in the Universities of Australia. However along with the additional involvement of the Federal government in the funding of the Universities came increased intervention from the Commonwealth in matters of education. The Federal commitment to tertiary education in 1963 was a mere 0.8% of the Gross National Product (GNP) (Martin, 1964). While their financial contribution was low so too was their control of the education agenda. However, the changes suggested by the Martin report (1964) strongly indicated that it was time for substantial change.

The Martin report (1964) was commissioned to “consider the pattern of tertiary education in relation to the needs and resources of Australia and to make recommendations to the Australian Universities commission on the future developments of tertiary education” (Martin, 1964). Hyams (1980) suggested that this period, following the boom post war years, was a time of much frustration for those within the teachers’ colleges and the wider community. Facilities were of a poor standard, the curriculum was overloaded, the period of the courses were too short and practical training varied from state to state. A change in emphasis was indicated to

redirect teacher education away from the concerns of just supplying sufficient graduates to one of supplying quality graduates who were educated in their role as teachers rather than just be trained to be teachers. There was also the concern that the emphasis had again returned to practice or the 'how to do teaching skills' rather than an emphasis on why we do what we do. The teachers' colleges, burdened with a lack of funding in poor facilities, conducting short courses - because of the demands of supply, were no longer able to provide quality teacher preparation. Every State looked out for their own needs and the Commonwealth did not want to buy into teacher education.

The significance of the Martin report

Without any doubt the recommendations of the Martin report (1964) highlighted the importance and central significance of teacher education in a very clear manner. In an attempt to improve the quality of teacher education in Australia it recommended that adequate financial support should be provided by the Commonwealth to back up the existing State contribution. It set up standards of entrance for tertiary education even in a time of teacher shortage and it increased the length of courses. The report also recommended that all involved in education should be professionally trained and that Boards of Teacher Education be set up to support the movement of local autonomy of teachers' colleges. From these recommendations, it would seem that the Martin report was an early attempt to professionalise the 'teaching profession.' Although the report still used the terminology of 'training', there is some evidence to suggest that holistic teacher education was encouraged and the need for synergy between theory and practice was recognised. It is also interesting to note that the recommendations for the establishment of Boards of Teacher Education, are only now, forty years later, becoming a reality in some States.

Development of the Binary System of Tertiary Education

Although Menzies stated in March of 1964 that he saw little need or advantage for the Commonwealth to be involved in teachers' colleges he did, in 1965, accept, in principle, the recommendations of the Martin report with reference to the technical education sector. The acceptance of this sector, and the subsequent funding in light of the Martin report, eventually led to the State teachers' colleges slowly becoming embedded within Advanced Education, under the umbrella of the Australian Commission on Advanced Education and away from total funding by the State Education Authorities (Hyams, 1980). From 1967, the Federal Government, supported by the then Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Advanced Education, provided funds to build State teachers' colleges to the plans submitted by the State Governments. Indeed the federal funding, to assist teacher colleges, arising out of the report and the establishment of the binary system of tertiary education certainly had a significant impact on education. This move, initiated by the Martin report, would seem to be an attempt to raise the status of Teacher Education by initially placing it within Federally funded Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE's). However it is worth considering where teacher education might be today if the binary system had not been established and we had moved directly into one tertiary system, as has eventually happened.

In looking back at the history of Teacher Education, over the intervening 40 years since the Martin report, it is apparent this report had a major impact on teacher education and is largely responsible for bringing Teacher Education into the advanced education sector. However, and also as a result of the Martin report, there would appear to be a formalised distinction established between those who were 'intellectually trained' in universities (Sharp & White, 1968), and the 'manually trained' workers in colleges and institutes. Teacher education remained during this time in an ambiguous position since primary teacher education was

viewed as ‘hands on’ practice and secondary teacher education - occurring in both in universities and colleges – was seen as at the bottom of the intellectual ladder.

The Swanson report: a milestone report on teacher education in particular

The Swanson report, a Federal report of the Special Committee on Teacher Education presents the thinking of the time about teachers, the profession, competency, and of course the old divide between theory and practice, so well reflected in the following quote from that report.

Teachers earn their living by teaching; they are professionals. A mark of the professional in any vocation is an assured competence. Nothing less than high quality craftsmanship is acceptable from the professional. The colleges [of Advanced Education] must therefore have the resources to ensure that they send their students out into the profession technically competent to work in it. But the work of the professional teacher goes beyond teaching competence. It demands a confident mastery of the subject matter. As it is ‘of the mind’ teaching has to be studied, thought about and discussed. ...As teaching is a creative art, it must be practised, analysed, re-thought and practised again. This requires observation and practice teaching in schools and the time and equipment necessary for close, sophisticated analysis of this observation and performance (Swanson, 1973, p. 11).

In viewing teachers and teacher education in this way it would seem that the concept of being a teacher in the 1970s was starting to shift away from the earlier thinking that a person was ‘trained’ to be a teacher. It raises concerns in my mind about what marks a professional, the appropriateness of the term “technically competent”, the mixing of the term craftsmanship with the term professional and the re-occurring divide between theory and practice. However the statement does, on a positive note, make a strong case indicating that since teaching is of the mind, teachers need to have a confident mastery of their subject. They also need to have studied, reflected and come to an understanding of their work in the company of others, because teaching is a gregarious occupation and is centred on relationships. Although I might debate that teaching is a craft, or an art form, I do accept that teachers learn their craft [profession] through practice and reflection [thinking] about their observation and performance and through their own metacognition about their developing knowledge and skills. The student teacher in particular needs time and space built into their courses so that they can learn through their thinking to establish their identity as a teacher.

This was the kind of teacher preparation envisioned for the 1970s and located within the new, Federally funded, multi-purpose colleges of Advanced Education rather than in the out-of-date and run down facilities funded and managed by the State Departments of Education. According to Hyams (1980) the movement to Federal resourcing and management occurred either through traditional colleges being transformed into CAEs or with teacher education courses being added to CAEs. The final stages of transformation as noted by Hyams (1980) consisted of a movement to self-governing institutions under the aegis of a State governing authority, as was suggested by the Martin (1964) report. This came about as a result of the linking of funding and the removal of State control by the employing authorities.

The Colleges of Advanced Education and a two class system

The fully funded teachers’ colleges became CAE’s in 1973 with respect to funding and by 1974 were totally under the funding auspice of the Commonwealth. By the late 1970s it was apparent that teacher education had become a fully integrated component of the Australian tertiary education system and consisted of self-governing institutions under the supervision of the

State's Coordinating Statutory Bodies. Davies (1989) claims that the "binary system was flawed from the beginning" (Davies, 1989, p. 135). She makes this claim because of the understanding that the research-orientated base was presumed to exist only in universities, and the other, alternative institutions, in the form of Colleges of Advanced Education were presumed, or indeed stipulated by Government, to cater for the vocational needs of the service organizations in the community. The universities, with a research orientation were to prepare the professions in society and the Colleges of Advanced Education were designed to prepare the vocational or service providers of society. With this kind of thinking in place the rhetoric of the Swanson report, referring to the professional status of teaching, can be seen as meaningless. The rhetoric and the practice did not match and what is expedient, and the cheapest, becomes the adopted way. However, what can be noted as a recurring theme, since the involvement of federal funding in teacher education, is the pressure exerted on teacher education as the result of federal government policy. Eltis (1987) uses the example, that as the supply of teachers in the late 1970's exceeded the demand for teachers, the federal government with its policies, attempted to shift the focus of teacher education. "A vast expansion took place in the amount of resources available for the continuing professional development of teachers and a parallel reduction took place in the resources available for pre-service teacher education" (Eltis, 1987, p. 187).

The wave of reports and reviews

Concern at the expansionism and considerable dissatisfaction is evidenced in a series of reports beginning with the Williams report of 1979, which was a comprehensive examination into the provision of education facilities, services, and the relationship between education and the labour market. Following the Williams report was the first nation-wide review of teacher education known as the National Inquiry into Teacher Education (NITE, 1980), or the Auchmuty report. This report, presented in August of 1980, was surrounded by a number of State reports that were being conducted around the same time. All of these reports grew out of concerns about the quality of teacher education, in a time of over supply of teachers, occurring in colleges of Advanced Education spread throughout the country.

The Williams report leading to the Auchmuty report

The Auchmuty (1980) report, according to Carrick (1979) was intended to significantly influence the quality of education for the next 25 years. However, it failed to have a significant impact on Government. The report, according to Knight et al, (1994) attempted to shift teacher education "from a narrow trade-based vocational approach to a broader more professional approach and from certificates and diplomas to degrees in education" (Knight et al., 1994, p. 460). This move, in particular, along with the push for a change to three years as a minimum for pre-service teacher education, would seem to have been yet another attempt to raise the status of the teaching. However, the overall impact of the report can be summarised in the few words that precede the recommendations and positions of the report. "Teacher education is a continuous process of personal and professional development" (1980, p. xxv). To me these eleven simple words unify and emphasise the vital significance and importance of the entire continuum of teacher education. This statement reinforces the position that Teacher Education is much more than the time of initial preparation in an institution of higher learning - it involves personal and professional development throughout the career of teachers. In essence, the response made to the report by the Federal Government through the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC), although positive with respect to the overall notion that the quality of education is dependent on the quality of teachers, rejected all recommendations that involved resource or expansionary implications.

As pointed out by Coulter and Ingvarson (1984), in their report to the Schools Commission, the CTEC considered that implementation of most of the committees recommendations to be the responsibility of the State employing authorities and tertiary institutions. This approach of moving the responsibility for the implementation, of what were National recommendations, to the States seems to be an endemic and recurring pattern in teacher education within Australia. In shifting this responsibility to the States the responsibility as Coulter and Ingvarson noted “resided with the individual tertiary institutions, State coordinating authorities, employers and with the profession itself” (F. Coulter & Ingvarson, 1984, p. 48).

This shift in responsibility highlights again the recurring problem, still existing today in Australia, of no professional coordinating State or National organization designated specifically to represent all the interests of what is so loosely called, ‘the profession of teaching’. By this I mean that there is no organization that truly represents the teachers in schools, the teacher educators and the employing authorities. In my opinion, these three major groups should constitute the teaching profession, but in reality they do not, because they are motivated by self-interest. In 1981, when the CTEC was not prepared to back or support the recommendations of the Auchmuty report, because of the associated resource costs, it moved the responsibility to the States which in turn had no overall coordinating organization representing all of the ‘Profession’, at a State level, to assist and guide the implementation of the recommendations; i.e. no unifying professional organization at the helm. The implementations were therefore left in the hands of the various interest groups involved in teacher education such as the employing authorities, and the individual tertiary institutions. What I believe was needed in 1980 and still needed today is a ‘professional’ organization maintained and managed by the profession itself that could and would take control of the ‘profession’.

In spite of the extensive work conducted by a wide range of experienced educators and experts from all levels of the community, many of the recommendations of the NITE report, as indicated by (F. Coulter & Ingvarson, 1984, Evans, 1987, Knight et al., 1994) remained unfulfilled. Evans summarised this claim as follows:

They [the reports] represent forward thinking in teacher education, which was not before its time, but was overtaken by financial crises which saw funds removed, in a relative sense, from both pre-service and in-service teacher education at a time when the need for progress was greatest (Evans, 1987, p. 12).

The view also expressed by Knight et al (1994) declared that these reports were a high water mark of national policy advocacy for professional teacher education and for continuing professional development. However, although there is evidence to suggest that a shift away from the narrow vocational perspectives to the more professional approach to teacher education was advocated in the early eighties the reality didn’t start to take hold until the late eighties when the binary system was removed, and four year university-based degree programs became the norm. Although Evans (1987) noted that little occurred through the eighties in terms of teacher education Knight et al (1994) declare that this was the period when stress was placed on the need for quality teachers and on the educational needs of a teacher as a professional person, which in turn influenced the curriculum development in teacher education courses.

The movement to the unified system in Tertiary Education

Dawkins instigated the next major and final change in tertiary education in 1987. Under Dawkins, the Federal Minister for Education, the binary system of tertiary education was replaced by the unified national system of tertiary education that still exists today. As Dwyer (1990) indicates, the round of higher education amalgamations and the elimination of the binary

system gave rise to “a concern about the status of teacher education within universities”. This concern of Dwyer (1990) was focused on practical issues such as the place and the mode of practice teaching within a university setting and the apparent shift in emphasis from a vocationally based course, grounded in theory, to an emphasis on research. Perhaps he was also concerned about the practical implementation of the Dawkins rhetoric stated as follows; The quality of teaching is central to the quality of our schools.... We must examine means of improving the initial and on-going training of teachers to meet the demands of a changing educational, economic, and social world (Dawkins, 1988) cited in (Dwyer, 1990, p. 103).

The move from the binary system to the unified national system can be considered as a positive step taken to raise the status of teaching as a profession and as suggested by Evans (1987) the vision of a completely graduate profession edged closer to reality. However, Knight et al., (1994) suggest that the amalgamations and reconstitution of the CAEs into universities was for greater efficiency and for economic reasons and had little to do with improving the quality of teacher education or the raising of the status of teaching to that of a profession. Knight et al (1994) explain that the economic and instrumental concerns provided the *raison d’être* for improvements in the quality of teacher education which were directed towards a shift in emphasis from theory to practice and from foundation studies to content grounding in subject disciplines. Along with these was an emphasis on teaching competencies and the skills of teaching which in effect re-emphasised the ‘training’ dimension as highlighted by Dawkins.

As indicated by both Knight et al (1994) and Howe (1991), there was a plethora of reports being released in the late 80’s and early 90’s by Dawkins and by all the newly formed associations such as the Schools Council and the Australian Education Council (AEC). The common theme of all these reports was the ‘pursuit of quality’ which Howe (1991) stated as the hallmark of the 90’s. She presents in her paper to the National Workshop three key elements necessary for the improvement in the quality of teaching. These are: teacher education, career and salary issues and classroom and school level practices. The essence of reform is focused on the following:

there must be greater effort to attract people into the teaching profession who are able and suited to teaching; teacher education must be improved in both quality and outcomes and must pay greater attention to pedagogy and practical experience... These reforms are only achievable through the cooperative efforts of employers, higher education institutions, schools, teachers and governments and through the development of a unified teaching profession (Howe, 1991, p. 59).

Perhaps this re-states one of the most fundamental problems that has beset teacher education and teaching throughout the last 150 years of formalized education in Australia. As Howe suggests there is the need for the recognition and the implementation of a ‘Profession’ at all levels of teaching. The major stakeholders as mentioned above, should be representing, in a unified and cooperative manner, the ‘Profession of Teaching’ as a collective self-regulating organization, rather than a multitude of self-interest groups looking out for their own needs.

Ebbeck report: A first attempt to establish a national system of teacher education

In the early 1990s there were increasing pressures for a rationalisation and/or a standardisation in the content and the structures of pre-service teacher education (Knight et al.,(1994). According to Knight et al, certain directions taken by the Commonwealth such as the Ebbeck (1990) report were concerted efforts “to extend the unified National system of higher education to a unified system of teacher education” (1994, p. 459). However, the other view held by the Australian Education Council (AEC), which initiated the Ebbeck inquiry, presents the case that

there were serious contemporary concerns affecting teacher education in the early 1990's and the inquiry was an attempt to address them. The listing of these concerns, detailed in the Ebbeck report, show once again the same re-occurring themes impacting on teacher education and very evident in 1990:

- ∞ the quality and quantity of teacher supply;
- ∞ the structure of the teaching career;
- ∞ the apparent inadequacy of the practical preparation;
- ∞ the restructuring of higher education;
- ∞ the increasing need for a nationally recognised teaching profession;
- ∞ the widespread changes in the structure, curriculum and governance of schools in Australia (Ebbeck, 1990, p. 1).

Many of these points that the AEC raise as concerns in 1990 can also be recognised as the concerns of the educational leaders as we look back over the period of time since WWII. Throughout these years and in fact right back to when formal teacher education was first mooted in the 1850s the major concern of a thinking educational community has always centred on the quality of teacher education because without quality teachers, quality learning cannot occur in the Nations' schools.

The Ebbeck report (1990) clearly stated that it recognised many dilemmas facing teacher education and suggested that it was important to recognise that pre-service teacher education could not be expected to do everything that schools might expect of a fully qualified professional teacher. It also suggested that it was appropriate to have modified approaches to the design of pre-service teacher courses with the aim of achieving a sounder academic education and longer and more realistic practical teaching experience. The report also noted that the end-on Graduate Diploma in Education existing for over one hundred years in Australian education, was seen as of limited value, as inadequate preparation for teachers and requiring re-designing and linking to an associateship. Along with the above mentioned suggestions and recommendations the Ebbeck report placed a special emphasis on the following recommendation, "that the AEC adopt the policy that all initial teacher education programs be conducted as a cooperative tripartite activity involving higher education institutions, school employers and teachers" (Ebbeck, 1990, p. v)

Further to this it was recommended that a three-year university-based program of preparation followed by a two-year part time internship/ associateship, be developed as the recognised model for initial teacher education with links into in-service professional development. The majority of the stakeholders rejected this recommendation almost out of hand. This model of teacher education was not unlike the model suggested by the Queensland Bassett report of 1979 that was also strongly opposed at the time. What both models were suggesting was a combination, or a synergy of theory and practice, after an initial university - based course, which also contained components of practical experience. Howe (1991, p. 63) in her report explained that whereas the concept of an internship was acceptable, an associateship was not. According to Knight et al.,(1994) the unions in particular strongly opposed the Ebbeck report on the grounds that it undermined industrial agreements such as the payments to supervising teachers.

Ramsey 1990

With the rejection of the Ebbeck report the Commonwealth made a second attempt at National reform with the Ramsey (1990) report titled 'The Shape of Teacher Education'. This report according to Knight et al (1994) sought to shift the balance of power in initial teacher education

from the facilities of education to the employing authorities, both with respect to curriculum content and the practicum. It called for national teacher registration and a national professional body of teachers. Finally it recommended cooperative arrangements between higher education institutions, employing authorities, and teachers at local, state and national levels (Knight et al., 1994, p. 460).

Whereas some of these recommendations, especially in terms of cooperative arrangements between the stakeholders, and the national registration of teachers and a national professional body, could be seen as desirable, the shift in the power base - back to the employing authorities - appeared to be a retrograde step and similar to the employing authority influence in the teacher colleges which had existed up to the late 1970s.

The Dawkins solution of reform as related by Knight et al (1994) was to support the establishment of the semi-representative National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL) through having representatives from the AEC, DEET, State education and authorities and national teacher unions. However, even with such a representative group it would still appear that in Australia the funding control was still firmly in the hands of the Commonwealth, and as shown in papers such as 'Teacher Education: a discussion paper', the position of the Commonwealth was clearly stated as Knight et al (1964) explain:

Because the Commonwealth provided the funds, it was acting in the public interest in demanding changes for the 'renewal' of teacher education to produce teachers who would help develop a multi-skilled and competent workforce in industry and commerce, who were more efficient in their form of teaching and school organization, and who can teach the intended national curriculum (Knight et al., 1994, p. 462).

The agenda and the pathway to renewal had been made clear and further clarification and funding came with the Beazley policy statement of 1993, 'Teaching Counts' (1993). This policy statement eventually led to the funding of substantial professional development programs for the nations teachers through the National Professional Development Program (NPDP); the establishment of the Australian Teaching Council (ATC) the National Schools Network (NSN) and such renewal forums as the Innovative Links project. These organizations and networks became the instruments of the reform and renewal agenda supported between 1993 and 1996 by the NPDP program. The program, implemented through consortiums consisting of teachers, unions, universities and employing authorities, perhaps can be considered to have brought into reality the rhetoric expressed in the Beazley report and summarised by Knight et al (1994) as follows:

it supported diversity and quality in teacher education programs: partnerships between schools and universities; linking theory to practice; a strong knowledge base; flexibility of programs to change the 'mix' of theoretical and practical education' as needed; close links between universities, teachers and 'trainers' resulting in courses which are more 'relevant' and 'responsive' to teachers professional and developmental needs; and university recognition of and adequate responses to the needs of employing bodies (Knight et al., 1994, p. 463).

What was suggested in the Beazley policy speaks loudly of balance and commonsense. Again it is interesting to note that the themes of a balance in theory and practice, a strong knowledge base, professionalism, partnerships and flexibility within teacher education programs are all recognised as the essential components contributing to the renewal of teacher education. Sadly, and yet again as the funding ran out, with the change at a National level from a Labor to a Coalition government, the momentum for the reform, suggested by the Beazley policy, was lost.

This pattern, observed so many times in the history of teacher education is perhaps one of the handicaps of a federal system of control that as the government changes so too does the agenda.

NPQTL in Action

One of the early initiatives of NPQTL was the establishment of a working party commissioned to improve the status of teaching and the quality of teachers by identifying National Competencies for teachers. The governing board of NPQTL in 1991 commissioned a representative working party known as 'The National Working Party on Professional Preparation and Career Development' to examine and offer advice on three fundamental questions (1992).

Can the work of teaching be captured in a framework of national competency standards? If so, what should the competencies look like?

What are their purposes and benefits? (NPQTL, 1992, p. 1)

Diane Peacock, Director of the NPQTL Secretariat, stated in the June 1992 operational brief that the impetus for the National Competency Standards (NCS) arose from award restructuring and the initiatives of the Special Premiers Conferences.

In the teaching profession these initiatives are directed at removing barriers and impediments to improving the quality of teaching and learning, and hence, the quality of learning outcomes for Australia's students...the general purpose of the National Competency Standards is to enhance practice by explaining what counts as competence (NPQTL, 1992, p. 1).

The reality is that the brief was never implemented and the final result was a set of competencies for beginning teachers. "The development of explicit standards for such a highly contextualised profession as teaching would be very difficult, and the working party agreed to proceed with a 'competency framework', not a set of competency standards (ATC, 1996). This work however contributed to the development of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education" produced in 1998 and perhaps has also contributed to the development in 'Standards for Teaching' in most States.

Another output of NPDP was the Innovative Links Project (ILP). Gore (1995), in her ILP report, developed as a product of extensive research and representative discussion forums, a number of recommendations mostly focused for teacher educators. The most significant recommendations, with respect to this current discussion, focused on the following:

the need to clarify who we are as a profession; the need for schools and universities to collectively, collaboratively and inclusively establish through partnerships the reform agenda; the need for the reform agenda to address the contemporary context with respect to economic, political cultural and technological change; and finally the need to establish a national system of accreditation of courses and registration of teachers (Gore, 1995, p. 9).

These recommendations, on the table since 1995, are still recurring as part of the cycle of unattended issues in teacher education. When the federal government changed in 1996 the existing NPDP program disappeared and new projects began under a new government. As part of the funding for 'Projects of National Significance Program' there emerged a new project named the "National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education" (1998). This project, managed by the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE), and chaired by Professor Adey, was commissioned to: "develop standards and guidelines for initial teacher education; consider the roles of such guidelines in underpinning high standards of teacher education and entry into teaching across Australia; and identify appropriate means of fostering partnerships to enhance initial teacher education" (Adey, 1998, p. iii) They were an attempt to

establish unified National standards and guidelines for teaching and as such were an attempt to express what was recognised, as the fundamental qualities required of beginning teachers throughout the entire country. The report makes it clear that “if there is to be a serious commitment to the quality of Australia’s teaching force, more attention must be given to the development and maintenance of a strong, professionally-based planning framework and structure” (Adey, 1998, p. iii).

However, in the hindsight of but a few years it would now seem that the expressed concerns of some of the Advisory committee came to pass in reality. The complexities, and the self-interest of both State and Commonwealth governments appears to have prevented the adoption of the Standards and Guidelines as a National framework to prepare the nation’s teachers. The State of NSW, as indicated by the Ramsey (2000) report, recommended the establishment of their own standards through the development of a NSW Institute of Teachers. The State of Victoria, from late December 1998, and with the authority of the Standards Council of the Teaching Profession Act of 1997, (1999) evaluated its own pre-service teacher education courses and developed its own standards and expectations of graduates. This has since been superseded by the Victorian Institute of Teaching who still uses the Standards Councils’ guidelines to review teacher education courses in Victoria.

A Class Act

In 1998 the Federal government commissioned a Senate Inquiry, titled ‘A Class Act’ (1998). This, now almost forgotten Senate Inquiry, was perhaps the only inquiry that was specifically commissioned to examine the ‘Profession of Teaching’. This inquiry into the status of teachers was claimed by the chair, Senator Crowley, to be timely because of the significant changes occurring within Australian education at a Commonwealth level. The inquiry gathered evidence suggesting that the morale of teachers was low and that there was a widespread crisis amongst teachers that contributed to a lack of status in the teaching profession. The argument continued that since the heart of a quality education system is in the quality of teachers the lack of morale was contributing to low quality teaching. To change this the committee recommended “that teaching needs to be accepted as a profession” (Crowley, 1998, p. 1). A battery of nineteen recommendations were made including “the development of a national professional teaching standards and registration body to have responsibility, authority and resources to develop and maintain standards of professional practice (Crowley, 1998, p. 1). This was yet another attempt to nationalise the ‘profession of teaching’ in a time of low morale and teacher supply shortage. A clear understanding was revealed in this report that quality new recruits to education would not be found to replace the aging teaching force if the status of teaching was not increased. However, just the stating of this ideal, or making teaching more attractive was not enough and as others have pointed out the real issue has always been the resourcing of this essential human endeavour (Eltis, 1998, Ramsey, 2000). Crowley summed up the importance of the inquiry and the need for a healthy profession within the education system in her introduction to the Senate inquiry. “What remains to be seen is whether governments in Australia will acknowledge the central importance of teachers to ensuring a successful education system, and whether they will make a practical commitment to practical measures to support teachers” (Crowley, 1998, p. 2)

Conclusion

The continual reviews, inquiries, reports and position papers throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium appear to focus on the same issues of supply and demand/ attracting quality recruits, and providing quality outcomes for the nations’ students. They also focus continually on the quality of teachers, developed through quality teacher education programs, which unfortunately have been plagued by a continual lack of consensus between the States and the

Commonwealth, a lack of resources to implement a realistic balance between theory and practice and inadequate forward planning with respect to supply and demand. We therefore could be forgiven for viewing the reviews and inquiries into teacher education as useless and achieving little except for meeting the needs of select interest groups and individuals. Many different interest groups have entered the debate and the unfortunate result has been plenty of 'noise on the network', a lack of clarity and a lack of consensus, purpose and direction.

If teaching continues to struggle to be seen as a 'Profession' it is not necessarily because of the size of the endeavour of education but because the educators of the nation, the various interest groups in the States and the associated organizations are motivated and sustained by self-interest and no genuine self-regulation exists within the nominal 'profession'. According to Coulter (2002)

The public world is the arena required for action, where plurality and natality are possible. Equal, but distinct individuals meet in the public to determine who they are and who they want to be individually and collectively. Respecting diverse standpoints requires dialogue with other people, listening to their stories, and relating to their uniqueness without collapsing these divergent views into a generalised amalgam" (D. Coulter & Wiens, 2002, p. 18)

It would seem to me as I consider Arendt's (1958) and Coulter's (2002) concept, of a different form of political debate, that it is time to recognise the binaries that have continued to cause division and move beyond them into a new era based on mutual collaboration, acceptance of diversity, effective dialogue and resource sharing. The binaries of theory /practice; profession/craft; skills/knowledge; training/education; school-based/university-based and State/Federal all lead to division. Knight et al (1994) argued for "a new model of teacher education which goes beyond the binary of educated professional or competent practitioner to something akin to the educated, competent professional" (Knight et al., 1994, p. 464) I would further add to this the concepts of capability, self efficacy and moral discernment. Our history in teacher education has shown us that there has never been a shortage of recommendations or good will from the dedicated teachers of the nation but that there has been a lack of resources to implement the recommendations and a lack of real support for those at the coalface of teaching at all levels.

It is apparent that many issues have never been resolved, and perhaps never can be, while the existing divides in Australian education and teacher education are maintained. Even within a national unified tertiary education system, introduced in 1987, and the movement to an entirely federally funded university graduate profession, Australian teacher education is fragmented from state to state and between university and university. The establishment of a common foundation of essential knowledge/learning and the development of core non-negotiable elements, including a blend theory and practice, within Australian teacher education, has the potential to lead to substantial benefits for the nations children.

If teacher education and the 'profession of teaching' are to move forward, then the central purpose and reason for existence need to be re-examined. Teacher education, as a lifelong developmental process throughout the career of a teacher, exists to prepare and develop teachers to teach in formal educational institutions for the common good of the nations children in a post modern digital world.

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