

1980

Teaching as a career: the facts

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CLAREMONT TEACHERS COLLEGE

TEACHING AS A CAREER

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THE FACTS

B. LAWRENCE

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The Claremont Teachers College commenced in 1902 with a course in teacher education for thirty-seven (37) students and in the first two decades of the 20th century, courses were of either one or two years duration. It wasn't until 1927 that the University of Western Australia established a professorial chair in education. It is interesting to note that the principal of the Claremont Teachers College was also the professor of education. In the 1930's, after the Depression, it was fairly common for teachers to undergo only very short courses in teacher education, these often lasting only six or twelve months. In 1945 two years of training became the accepted length of course and it was not until 1968 that three years of training was introduced by the Claremont Teachers College.

Up until 1973 the College was controlled by the Education Department of Western Australia. In 1973 the College separated from the Education Department and became autonomous under its own College Board and became a constituent member of the Western Australian Teacher Education Authority. 1978 saw the College attain full autonomy, with the abolition of W.A.T.E.A. Nowadays the College is completely independent and is funded, not by the State Government, but like other Universities and Colleges, by the Federal Government.

For some fifty-three years Claremont Teachers College was the only College in Western Australia preparing teachers and it was not until 1955 that the Graylands Teachers College was established. The late 60's and early 70's saw a rush to establish new institutions; Nedlands College - 1968, Mt. Lawley - 1970, Churchlands - 1972, W.A.I.T. School of Teacher Education - 1975 and Murdoch University took its first undergraduate students in 1975. A student teacher seventy-seven years ago undertook his training in one small college, whereas his counterpart today has a choice of seven institutions, but still only one Teachers College - two very large institutions offering a diverse

range of studies, four medium sized institutions hoping to become larger, and one small specialist teachers college. It is worthy of note that Claremont has retained the word 'Teachers' in its title of Claremont Teachers College and is the only College to do so, for obvious reasons. It is not a Teachers Training College, nor a primary teachers college, but rather a 'Teacher's' college where both beginning teachers and experienced teachers come to study. Claremont is the only small specialist professional college of teacher education in Western Australia.

Intakes into Primary Teaching Courses

TABLE 1

	<u>1975</u>		<u>1980</u>	
	<u>Start</u>	<u>Finish</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>Finish</u>
Churchlands	394	300	260	200
Claremont	304	234	205	165
Graylands	197	163	-	-
Mt. Lawley	404	311	260	200
W.A.I.T.	102	62	62	51
Murdoch	55	28	35	21
University W.A.	-	-	27	22
Totals	1,465	1,107	849	659

CLAREMONT

1975	304	1978	180
1976	240	1979	160
1977	250	1980	160

Intakes of students into teacher education courses have been reduced by about 60% since 1975, which year saw an intake of 1,465 students of which 1107 graduated at the end of a three year course. In contrast the intakes in 1980 have been reduced to a total of 849, of which 659 are expected to graduate.

The comparison can be made rather simply, inasmuch as in 1975 two colleges took as many students as seven colleges and universities are taking in 1980. The point of concern here is that, rather than there being an excess number of students entering into primary teaching education, it appears that there is an excessive number of colleges and universities offering courses in primary teacher education. To accommodate the newer colleges and universities developed in the 1970's, the intake into the successful Claremont primary teacher education course has been slashed from 304 in 1975 to only 160 in 1980.

The comparison between students commencing courses and completing and graduating from them is important to note. Table 1 indicates an overall wastage rate of 23%. This wastage rate will be examined further at a later stage, where financial and other economic factors will be considered. Throughout Australia it has been common to claim that there is an excessive over-supply of teachers and that intakes into teacher education courses need to be reduced even further. This is generally not true and particularly is false in Western Australia, where the necessary cuts in intakes have been made earlier than in other Australian states. In 1980 there will be no further cuts in intakes into primary teacher education as it is expected that the demand and supply of teachers will be properly balanced by the time the 1980 entrants graduate.

Entry into Primary Teacher Education Courses

People wishing to train as teachers have two avenues of entry. The most common is for persons to complete their Tertiary Admissions Examinations at school prior to entering a college or university. People who have not done T.A.E. subjects and who are over 21 years of age, may enter by doing one of two different Mature Age Entry tests. The mature age entrant may select to do two T.A.E. subjects, one of which must be English or English literature and then on the basis of these two results, apply for entrance. Alternatively the mature age person may select to do a college test which is simpler, inasmuch as it involves an aptitude test, a test of English expression and an interview. Entrance can be granted to persons performing well on each of the three criteria.

People completing their twelfth year at school, by taking their T.A.E. subjects will be granted entrance on the basis of their total or aggregate score in their best five T.A.E. subjects. The calculation of the aggregate will be referred to in a later section of this paper, however you should note that each student must pass in English or English Literature and that all

T.A.E. subjects count equally. The scaling test does not enter into the calculation of the aggregate and there are no other compulsory requirements in the taking of subjects. The student can select to take either a three or four year course. The most common of the three year courses is the Diploma of Teaching, although Murdoch University refers to its three year course as a Bachelor of Arts with a major in teaching. The great majority of primary teachers are three year, rather than four year trained. Four year trained primary teachers in fact do two courses, firstly a degree course in an area of their own choosing, followed by a one year graduate diploma in education. It is my firm opinion that recent graduates of the three year Diploma of Teaching courses are very much better prepared for initial classroom teaching. Experience shows that students with only one year of teacher education are initially under-prepared, but with experience in a classroom improve their teaching standards.

Aggregates for Entry to Teacher Education (Primary Courses)

A minimum aggregate for entry into the Claremont Teachers College is 270 out of 500. The minimum aggregate of 270 is a firm one, whereas the minimum aggregates at both Churchlands, Mt. Lawley and W.A.I.T. can be considerably less to enable these institutions to meet their quotas. The minimum of 270 is approximately equivalent to a U.W.A. aggregate of 300 out of 550 required for entry into the Arts and Science faculties at that institution. Although the minimum aggregate is 270, the mean, or average aggregate for Claremont entrance in 1979 was 325.

Scaling of Marks

The five marks added together to form the aggregate are not examiner's marks, but are modified so that each mark is comparable, or relatively fair, for the purpose of combining them in the aggregate of marks. Aggregates have been used for entrance purposes for the last ten years, initially for selection of candidates for Commonwealth University Scholarships. The scaling procedure used is referred to as an 'anchor variable' procedure, inasmuch as one particular

variable called the scaling test or Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test (ASAT) is used for the purposes of making subjects comparable in the compilation of the aggregate mark. The ASAT Test is considered to be a measure of general ability or achievement, as are the T.A.E. examinations. The ASAT scores are used to adjust the examiner's marks (without changing the order or general relativity in each subject) so that in some reasonable sense each subject makes an appropriate contribution to the aggregate. They are used so that for groups of students taking different subjects, the scale scores of different subject groups are related in the same way as are the scaling test scores for these groups. Here is an example of how examiner's marks are scaled.

- Step 1. We assume that 70% of students in each subject will gain a scaled mark of 50 or more. This is in keeping with historical expectations.
- Step 2. The ASAT score which is obtained by 70% of all students is determined. Suppose it is 55.
- Step 3. If it is Physics, which is the subject under consideration, we determine the percentage of students who gain ASAT scores of 55 or more. Suppose 80% of physics students have gained an ASAT score of 55 or more. Likewise for geography, suppose 50% of geography students gain an ASAT score of 55 or more. Therefore 80% of all physics students will gain a scale score of 50 or more, whereas 50% of all geography students will gain a scale score of 50 or more.

The above is but an illustrative example utilizing one examination score, 50, but the general idea applies to the scaling of all examination scores, all of which are modified. It is important to remember that the order of merit reflected in the examiner's marks is preserved in the scaling. For example, if student A was considered 10th best in geography by the examiner, then his scale score would also be 10th best. Students should consider the scaling test to be important, even though it does not count in the calculation of the aggregate. However it is important inasmuch as the ASAT scores obtained by all students in a particular subject group, e.g. geography, helps determine the scaled

scores obtained. Therefore it is important to obtain as high an ASAT score as possible.

Costs Involved

There are no tuition fees payable in colleges and universities. Although direct tuition costs are minimal, the usual living and travelling expenses are very real, necessitating very many students to find part-time employment.

This situation is aggravated by the lack of funding from governmental sources.

Whereas in the past the Education Department would provide scholarships to all students requiring them, nowadays only 100 scholarships are awarded by the Education Department and none of these are given to first-year students.

They are awarded on a merit basis. A common assistance funding scheme is the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme. However this is subjected to a severe means test, which means that many students are ineligible to receive the assistance.

TABLE 2

	<u>LIVING ALLOWANCE</u>	
	<u>not Payable</u>	
	<u>Living at Home</u>	<u>Living away from Home</u>
Student only	\$13,509	\$16,809
Student + 1 sibling	18,309	24,909
Student + 2 siblings	23,109	33,009

Many students living at home and who come from middle income families, do not receive any financial assistance because of the means test applied to parental income. Even those students living away from home often do not receive any of the living allowance. For example, if the adjusted parental income of a family whose eldest student is attending a tertiary institution is \$13,509, then no living allowance at all is payable. The situation is hardly alleviated in the case of the tertiary student living away from home. Many of our college students are ineligible for T.E.A.S. In the case of independent students, to

that is, those living away from home for two years, or over twenty-one years of age, the full allowance is \$2,348 a year. This allowance has not been increased in recent years, despite increases in the cost of living and so

independent students also face considerable hardships. This whole area of funding of tertiary students requires attention and is of concern to students and parents. The situation is generally unsatisfactory and requires immediate action.

General Information

In 1978 there were 11,201 primary teachers, of which 6,304 were in primary schools. The pupil-teacher ratio in primary schools in 1978 was 23 to 1.

Numbers of Primary Schools

533 government schools enrolling 142,184 students.

128 non government schools enrolling 25,104 students.

Total schools. 661 Total enrolments. 167,288.

Numbers of Aboriginal Students in Government Schools 9,955

Numbers of Aboriginal Students in non-government Schools 1,670

11,625

Salaries of Teachers

These salaries are for 1978 and do not include the recent 3.2% cost of living increase.

Commencement salary for a 3 year trained teacher is \$10,537, which increases to \$17,648 without added responsibilities.

Principal of a primary school - \$22,323. These examples of teachers salaries compare more than favourably with community salary levels, e.g. the average adult salary in Australia is \$11,871. The average professional salary is 16,370.

Employment Prospects

The unemployment of qualified teachers needs to be considered in the context of unemployment in other occupations and throughout Australia where the

current unemployment is of the order of 7 or 8%. In Australia in 1978 5% of accountancy graduates were seeking full-time employment, 4% of law graduates were seeking full-time employment, 12% of engineering graduates were seeking full-time employment, 8% of economics graduates were seeking full-time employment, 12% science graduates were seeking full-time employment, between 9% and 16% of Humanities graduates were seeking full-time employment and 9% of education graduates were seeking full-time employment. Thus the unemployment of teachers is not particularly high compared with unemployment with other occupations. Last year and the year before the Education Department of Western Australia employed 90% of available teachers. It is expected that similar percentages of available teachers will again be employed this year. Because Western Australia has severely reduced its intake quotas into primary teacher education courses, the demand and supply of teachers is now approximately balanced and by the time 1980 entrants graduate the balance will be even and employment should be, if not readily available, available for the great majority of well qualified graduates. The Education Department, when selecting beginning teachers, uses several criteria, the most important of which are academic performance, teaching performance and rating in an interview. Eligibility to teach anywhere in the state is also an important factor because many of those teachers currently unemployed are very restricted in their choice, due to their personal circumstances and as a consequence are unavailable to take teaching appointments in country areas. Additionally, preference is given to teachers who are single income recipients. That is, if the spouse is in full-time employment it is unlikely that the teacher would be given a high priority.

Teaching opportunities will continue to increase in Western Australia during the rest of this century, because the Western Australian population is projected to increase from anywhere between 1,431,000 and 1,874,000, depending upon the rate of migration. Whereas a decade or so ago, when teachers were in very short supply, employment was guaranteed, nowadays immediate employment is not guaranteed and students may not receive an immediate appointment upon graduation, but are very likely to obtain employment within a year of graduation. Teaching

appointments are now more competitive than previously and entry into the profession is similarly more competitive.

In conclusion, teaching remains a very important occupation, one which continues to be demanding but very rewarding and motivated people seeking a career in teaching should not be put off from pursuing their ambitions because of scare tactics adopted for political and economical reasons.

The situation in Western Australia is optimistic, although students should realise that entry into the profession is now more competitive than previously.

and efforts to improve the quality of the profession and to ensure that the profession is seen as a career of choice for young people.

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