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Cohesion and purpose : a consideration of the structure of pre-service teacher education

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**CHURCHLANDS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF TEACHER EDUCATION
OCCASIONAL PAPER NO. 1**

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A Consideration of the Structure of Pre-service
Teacher Education**

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FOREWORD

This is the first in a series of discussion papers concerned with current issues within the School of Teacher Education at the Churchlands College.

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In this paper, Mr. Courts draws on his experience in England to suggest some possibilities for course development in teacher education at Churchlands.

Editor.

**COHESION AND PURPOSE:
a consideration of the structure of
pre-service teacher education**

Any consideration of the structure of pre-service teacher education must take account of the long-standing and still-continuing debate on the relative merits of consecutive and concurrent patterns of training. The co-existence of both approaches — the universities with degree courses followed by one-year professional training and the majority of colleges of advanced education with concurrent course structures — shows that not only are both systems viable but that neither can claim significant superiority. It is often argued that the concurrent pattern is more suited to the training of primary school teachers while the consecutive pattern, particularly in the university context, has particular value for secondary subject specialist teachers.

But this debate, although it has major organizational significance, derives from a more crucial but less discussed distinction: that which is usually made between academic and professional courses; between those components which, it is claimed, contribute to the personal development and general education of the student, and those which prepare him directly for his work in the school. To assume that academic subject-based courses further personal development, a vague and rarely-defined concept, while professional courses do not is simplistic. There has been little research on the impact of courses and the issues involved are resistant to precise definition. Perhaps as significant as the course content in furthering personal development are the methods of teaching and the personality of the lecturer. It is moreover, interesting to note that only in teacher education does this issue attract constant attention although periodically it is raised in other contexts, particularly in science and technology: in medicine, for instance, it seems to be assumed that personal development and vocational training coalesce; that the demands of a complex professional training adequately further personal maturity. If, however, personal development is an important and relevant factor in teacher education, then experience with mature students indicates that the interpolation of a period of work or study in another field between school and college would be a more positive influence than the incorporation of any specific academic component in initial training. Whatever the value and implication of the distinction between academic and professional components it has traditionally been accepted as a central issue in teacher education and one which is bound to influence any discussion of course structures.

The developments in teacher education in England and Wales over the last two decades have highlighted several of the issues involved. The Robbins and James Reports, a massive expansion of teacher education, followed within a few years by an even greater contraction, the re-organization of the college of education system: all these have brought into sharp focus the philosophy and principles of teacher education as well as raising a series of issues ranging from the infrastructure of tertiary education in general to the relevance of particular course components.

In its evidence to the Robbins Commission in 1961, the Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education said: 'The combination of academic and professional education is a distinctive feature of colleges (of education) . . . They are concerned with the education of students as persons and as teachers, each re-inforcing the other.'¹ The rejection of the American concept of the liberal arts college and of consecutive training by the Robbins Commission revealed the powerful commitment by colleges of education to concurrent training and to the concept of balance in their programmes. The structure of course was, and despite recent organizational changes still largely is, that of the McNair Report with a Main Subject(s), Education Professional Courses, and Practice Teaching. Although the proportion of time allocated to each of these areas has varied from college to college and different systems of phasing the components over the three years have been used, the basic pattern has been universal.

The most significant recent challenge to the established pattern was that of the James Report (Teacher Education and Training, 1972). This contended that pre-service teacher education should be viewed as one component in a wider pattern of teacher education and training which itself should be more closely related both to higher education in general and also to the training for other professions. The report distinguished three sequential sections or 'cycles' in teacher education: firstly, the personal education of the student which, it argued, should precede any specifically vocational training or any binding commitment to teaching as a career; secondly pre-service professional training linked with a one year induction period in school in which college and school staff would combine in assisting the student in his first post; thirdly, in-service

1. A.T.C.D.E. evidence to Robbins Committee: quoted in J.D. Browne "The balance of Studies in a College of Education" in W.Taylor (ed.): "Towards a Policy for the Education of Teachers", Colston Paper No. 20, London, 1969.

training organized on a co-ordinated and systematic basis. It was felt that concurrent training "suffers from a conflict and confusion of objectives" which, moreover, were often ill-defined. The "simultaneous co-existence (of personal education and professional training) as valid objectives for the whole of the three year course must be seriously questioned."

The report proposed a 2+1+1 pattern of training; two years for a Diploma in Higher Education, one year pre-service professional training, and one year induction in the school. The two year Diploma in Higher Education course was intended to provide a general education at sub-degree level and it was envisaged that educational studies might be a component of this for some students. Though some courses have been established, the Diploma in Higher Education has yet to gain general acceptance by either employers or by many universities. The Diploma in Higher Education shows the danger in creating awards on grounds of expediency rather than on proven need. It has not won acceptance by professional bodies and it is difficult to see how it can co-exist with three year degree courses. The implementation of the wider proposals has been prevented both by financial stringencies and the recent re-organization of colleges, several of which have merged with universities or polytechnics, while others have either been phased out or subject to much reduced student intake. A further factor has been the volume of adverse criticism directed at several of the proposed changes in particular and at the thinking of the report in general.

The report's criticism of the monotechic nature of many colleges of education has, however, been widely accepted and the recent re-organization has been seen as a way of broadening the basis of available courses and widening the experience of students. Whether in practice these changes result in better teachers remains to be seen but it is a response to the charge that academic courses in colleges were often too restricted, and sometimes too diffuse, because of the limitations on staff and resources in smaller institutions. In making its criticism, the James Report signally failed to appreciate the success that small and medium-sized colleges had in achieving a cohesion and inter-relationship between the components of their courses, a factor which, in many cases, outweighed the supposed deficiencies in the range of courses available.

The development of Bachelor of Education courses on a 3 year Ordinary/4 year Honours degree pattern has underlined still further the issue of concurrent training and the demarcation between academic and professional components in the pre-service course, yet the haste of colleges to establish degree courses and the less excusable rapidity with which some universities have validated these courses, have prejudiced discussion of the fundamental issues of the relationship between the different strands in teacher education courses. Almost inevitably,

the effect of university validation of degree courses has been to add further prestige to the 'academic' subject components, which usually match the departmental divisions of university faculties, while in many instances the standing of the professional training or curriculum element has been diminished. Education faculties and departments have too often been concerned more with developing courses in the disciplines of education in philosophy, sociology, psychology, history and curriculum development than in ensuring the coherence and status of professional and curriculum training.

The four component content of initial teacher training (subject studies, education, professional courses, and practical teaching) has not been seriously questioned in any of the major reports or in the subsequent discussion. It is, in any case, organizationally entrenched in the institutions involved. One of the chief criticisms that can be made of the James Report and of consecutive training in general is that by separating 'academic' subject courses from professional training it prevents links being established between the two areas and probably further elevates the status of the former.

The crux of the discussion on course structure and on the relationship of the components in the overall course is not one of organizational patterns or of academic values but is what structure provides the best environment for the training of a teacher. It should, perhaps, be emphasised that the context of this discussion is that of the training of a primary or kindergarten teacher; it is acknowledged that many of the conclusions and suggestions would have to be modified or reviewed to accommodate the different needs of the secondary teacher.

There is no doubt that in many colleges the commitment to concurrent training was part of an ideology of balance and wholeness with significant attempts often being made to develop significant relationships between the different components, while in others such attempts as were made lost themselves in often vacuous and superficial "integrated" courses. Even where more coherent and structured course programmes existed they were increasingly undermined by the subject-oriented demands of newly introduced degree courses.

The James Report assumed that the only alternative to the concurrent training programme was a consecutive one. That it did not fully appreciate the strengths of a concurrent programme is clear; that it did not fully consider alternative structures within the concurrent training framework or make recommendations to overcome the weaknesses it saw is strange in view of the support that the principle of concurrency had received from previous government commissions.

Before suggesting a different perspective on the balance of components in the training programme, it is relevant to consider some aspects of the four

components which it is generally agreed exist in both a concurrent and a consecutive training programme.

The academic subject area is usually designed to further the general education of the student and, in the case of secondary teacher students, to provide backing for the specialist subject options. Certainly subject studies, if rightly conceived and taught, further a student's intellectual development — they assist him in what is perhaps the fundamental aim of education, to develop a philosophy of life — but they can easily in colleges become the refuge of the erstwhile university lecturer who sees an opportunity to further his subject specialisation, often without regard to the needs of the teacher education course as a whole. Where a college does not have a clearly articulated rationale of its function and its courses or where its academic programme is too loosely structured, then the tendency to an 'ivory tower' irrelevance is the greater, with specialisations being developed that could more appropriately and more effectively be achieved in a university context. On the other hand, to limit subject studies to basic school-oriented content courses would be short-sighted and clearly an awareness of the principles and techniques of enquiry of a subject is of considerable value to a teacher. The teacher of history, for example, even at primary level where it is a component of 'Social Studies' should be aware of the nature of historical evidence and some of the ways in which historical knowledge differs from that of, say, the physical sciences. The subject study must be seen not as an end in itself but as a component of the whole training programme. This factor is one that indicates the distinction between a university and a college of education. In a university the subject areas exist as independent disciplines, in the college they are justified by their relevance to the education of a future leader. The objection that such a perspective limits academic freedom is not tenable provided that the total programme is philosophically sound and structurally cohesive. Such cohesion is, surely much easier to achieve in the limited size of the college than in the necessarily more diffuse organization of a university or polytechnic.

The range of subjects which can be offered in a college is inevitably narrower than in a university because of limits on staff and resources but this is a disadvantage more in theory than in practice provided the major disciplines are adequately represented; more important than the number of subjects is the quality and relevance of the teaching in those subjects.

Subject studies need not necessarily follow only traditional lines; though academic conservatism is not as critics often suggest a negative factor — it is a necessary balance to the less responsible pressures for innovation; there is always scope, even within the constraints suggested for the development of particular

topics to capitalise on the individual staff interests and expertise available. Perhaps because of a commitment to 'wholeness', perhaps because of their limited size, colleges have often developed integrated, inter-departmental courses. Real integration is not achieved through new courses or new programmes; it can only develop in the mind of the student as with experience, increasing and developing awareness he perceives the inter-relationship between the various aspects of his work. There is scope for the development of new courses cutting across traditional subject divisions – regional studies, expressive arts, environmental studies are examples – but lacking the accumulated wisdom of long experience that supports the established subjects such new disciplines demand close, but sympathetic, scrutiny before they are accepted.

In the past, as James noted, many colleges over-prescribed and over-taught their courses, allowing little freedom for student choice; the opposite experience is the programme which, in striving to maximise choice, loses cohesion and allows individual student programmes to become unrelated and fragmented. Any programme which embodies choice in the subject fields must impose some constraints dictated by the need for balance and the practical needs of the schools. The gradual development of specialist and resource teachers in the primary schools, teachers who are, like their colleagues, class teachers but who act as advisers on special areas such as reading, music, or remedial work, may be reason to consider the incorporation of a substantial subject component, linked with relevant curriculum experience, for at least some students. It is interesting to compare the time spent in an English college of education in the three year certificate course on subject studies with that demanded in a comparable three-year diploma course in one Australian college. It is, of course, realized that the two patterns of training differ considerably, especially in the designation of the professional curriculum 'core' component, but if subject studies are a component of a training programme then the time devoted to each particular subject is a matter for serious consideration.

Pattern A Subject Studies Component (English Example)

Three year course (a) :	1 main subject:	
	6 hours contact time per week	
	30 weeks (approximately) per year	
	3 year course	... 540 hours
(b) :	1 main subject and 1 subsidiary subject	
	main subject	... 360 hours
	subsidiary	... 180 hours
		540 hours

Pattern B Subject Studies Component (Australian Example)

Three year course (a) :	General studies	
	6 units of 45 hours per unit	... 270 hours
	(to comprise at least 2 concentrations	
	of 2 units each. The maximum	
	number of units in any one	
	concentration is, therefore, 4.)	
(b) :	Curriculum electives	
	3 units of 45 hours per unit	... 135 hours
		405 hours

The emphasis in one pattern of training is on depth in a narrow field(s) while in the other it is on combining a width of subject choice with the opportunity for limited depth in specific areas. Strong arguments can be made for both patterns but it is relevant to ask whether the width of subject methodology needed in curriculum core courses need necessarily be matched by a similar width in subject elective areas.

Whatever pattern is developed for subject studies three criteria need emphasis: firstly that all components of the programme are in accord with the philosophy of teacher education adopted by the college; secondly that they are functionally related to the other components of the programme; thirdly that they develop thinking and understanding rather than supplying a mass of factual knowledge — that they are in the best sense of the phrase — a discipline of thought.

The role of education as a discipline in pre-service courses has often been ill-defined and friction between subject and education department is not uncommon. In one respect all lecturers in teacher training are lecturers in education, or should be, but there are specialist areas which demand competencies and specialisations beyond those of subject specialists. The development within education of the disciplines of educational psychology, educational sociology, philosophy of education, curriculum development, and history of education has encouraged, particularly in England, the setting up of separate courses in these areas. With the exception of educational psychology it is arguable whether a specialist, demarcated approach in these sub-disciplines is appropriate in an initial pre-service course, but to criticise the tendency to separation and over-specialisation is far from denying the importance of a major education component in the programme. Such a component with its focus on areas such as child development, the learning process, school and society, approaches to teaching and so on, is vital but just as there is a tendency in some subject areas to lose perspective in pursuit of academic interests and status, so

too in education, where topics more suited to in-service courses with teachers of experience are put into initial pre-service courses; topics such as counselling and career guidance are not appropriate and should be confined to in-service courses for experienced teachers. In a training programme which is often considered to be over-full, the establishment of priorities is essential. Many of the most interesting and most important areas in education, the 'Why' and 'How' questions of principle and policy, demand an understanding and maturity which can only be achieved through teaching experience — a further reason for the development of an in-service programme.

The professional training component, the curriculum studies area, is perhaps the most important, possibly the most contentious in the education of the teacher. In England, the development of Bachelor of Education courses has often resulted in the demotion, at least in the eyes of students and sometimes of staff, of curriculum courses to second-class status and in some cases they seem not to have received the care in planning accorded to other areas. The comment of a senior colleague that "you can't get academic weight into curriculum courses" is typical of a prevalent attitude which derives from a failure to accept that the aims and function of a teacher education course are not those of a university course and that the criteria by which one evaluates a professional curriculum course are not necessarily the same as those applicable to a subject study.

There are at least three objectives that a professional curriculum component must set: firstly, the student must be able to command techniques to enable him to teach adequately in his first months in school — a short-term survival kit; secondly, he must have an understanding of the content he is to teach and the awareness to relate this to the child and his needs; thirdly he must develop a critical understanding that will enable him to develop new approaches, new techniques and new courses and to evaluate developments in materials, methodologies and content. Whether the last of these, the ability to evaluate critically and responsibly, can be adequately developed in an initial training course is doubtful but at least secure foundation can be laid, later to be built on with experience and, if possible, with in-service work. Many teachers are notoriously conservative, even reactionary in their methods and probably the evaluation of new courses, developments and approaches should form the core of in-service programmes.

To dismiss initial pre-service curriculum courses as 'tips for teachers' is either to misunderstand the function of such courses or to fail to relate them to the other components of the programme. The curriculum courses need to be integrated with school experience and practical teaching in order to develop competence and confidence in the student. They must also be concerned to

relate other aspects of the student's programme to classroom practice and to give him the perspective which will enable him to relate principles and theory to practice. The frequently encountered criticism that much of teacher training courses is irrelevant to the needs of the classroom is not solely due to inadequacies of the courses but in part reflects the inability of some students to interpret and relate the different components of their course; to apply, for instance, their knowledge of basic lesson strategies to particular subject content or skills. The remedy is not to attempt to cover every teaching strategy, every lesson situation, in the curriculum and teaching method courses – an impossible target – but more clearly to define the structure and content of these courses to achieve the objectives outlined earlier. It is well to remember that teachers are being trained not only for today's schools but for those, 10, 20, 30, even 40 years hence. This underlines the importance of producing teachers who are secure in the basic techniques and approaches but who have the ability to adapt and respond to changing needs. In their thinking about curriculum and methods the student, and the practising teacher, need to be creative yet critical, to combine an understanding and respect for the established with a willingness to consider and select from the new and innovative; the student must develop an ability to integrate and correlate the different facets of his course and link them with his growing experience. If the programme in college can be seen to be inter-related and infused with a common purpose and philosophy then the chances of the student acquiring this perspective are enhanced.

Students, especially mature students, bring to their studies a range of different experiences and some choice of options permitting different programmes would be beneficial within the area of professional curriculum studies. Selection is inevitable given the impossibility of covering every aspect of this area so that a clear range of priorities needs to be established specifying the essential core and identifying those components of lower priority which might have to be available in optional courses.

Practical teaching experience is always acknowledged as vital but all too often it becomes prey to administrative expediency. Possibly the most useful pattern is one which allows at least a four-week period in school in any given practice though in the final year of the course a more extended period is essential. Of particular value, especially for relating subject and curriculum courses to practical teaching, is a period of involvement with a class or school over an extended period of a term or a semester, or even a year in which a tutor and a group of students work together with the class teachers for a given time, perhaps half a day, each week. Such a programme could most productively be a component of the first or second year curriculum courses. The James proposal

for an induction year is attractive but such an extension of the existing pattern involves factors so far outside college control that it is not appropriate to discuss it further here.

The need which emerges from the discussion of the different components of the pre-service course is for there to be some overall framework to which each component relates not only at an administrative and organizational level but, more importantly, to provide an explicit rationale and philosophy for the course of training as a whole. The overall structure should reflect a clear awareness of the function of each component so that although integration is a developing concept, a process in the mind of the student and the staff member, the structure provides clear guidelines for this integration to develop.

The following criteria would seem in the light of this discussion, to be relevant to the revision of existing training patterns. The overall course structure should:

1. Reflect a coherent philosophy of teacher education and clearly defined basic aims. (Those aims will certainly include the production of a competent and educated teacher aware of his responsibilities to the child and to society and of a teacher aware of the need to develop still further his professional competence and understanding.)
2. Indicate the inter-relationships between the course components and relate these, at least by implication, to the central philosophy of the programme.
3. Allow for different possible administrative and organizational structures.
4. Allow for flexibility in individual course planning within given constraints.
5. Allow departments and individual staff to develop areas of special interest subject to the overall course requirements.

It is accepted that the four components already discussed will form the basis of the overall structure. Within, and between, components it will be necessary to prescribe certain courses and combinations of courses but there should be scope for meaningful student choice. To allow a student in any area virtually unrestricted choice, even where a counselling system operates, represents a lack of confidence and responsibility: a student does not have the knowledge or the experience to pattern his course overall whereas the college does.

The proposals which follow from these considerations are aimed principally to achieve cohesion and relevance in the total structure. Although they do not constitute, at least organizationally, too drastic a departure from some existing patterns, they attempt to implement the principles developed earlier: that the personal development of the student can be achieved through professional as well as academic subject study; that the demarcation between academic and professional courses should be minimised; that professional training is the

fundamental element; that all components in the course should as far as possible, be seen to interrelate. The pre-service course should be a foundation for the development of in-service, degree, and post-graduate diploma courses.

It is suggested that a revised course structure should involve:

1. Subject studies systematically linked with a core component of professional training.
2. A core component consisting of –
 - (a) professional curriculum courses in the basic subject area,
 - (b) practical teaching and methodology,
 - (c) education and educational psychology – including provision for elective choice.
3. Curriculum/subject electives grouped in two sections: one comprising maths and language (including reading); the other subjects such as art, physical education, science, social studies, music. Students might select these as discussed below.
4. Option units in interest and recreation areas.

Professional curriculum courses aiming to equip the student for primary teaching must necessarily be concerned with a wide span of subject method but to attempt to cover all areas results in a fragmentation of the courses and wasteful overlap. It seems more realistic to devise a basic curriculum component closely linked with the practice and methodology of teaching involving practice, and micro-teaching which will ensure a sound general competence and, at a basic level, show how subject methodology is a specific application of general teaching techniques. This proposal implies a considerable involvement of subject departments in practical teaching courses and would ideally involve the type of group practice discussed above. The main difference from the many existing systems is that basic subject methodology would contribute to a cohesive and extended programme of practical teaching rather than constitute a series of separate curriculum units.

Complementary to this basic curriculum/teaching course it is proposed that there should be two groups of combined curriculum and subject courses. The first group would comprise language arts and mathematics, subjects which form the basis of the primary school curriculum. In both areas a series of curriculum units would be associated with subject units allowing a degree of student choice compatible with the aim of relating competence in the teaching of the subject with a secure understanding of the subject. Units could be linked to give a major or minor concentration and it is suggested that students should study in both areas, one at major level, the other at minor. A possible major/minor pattern

for language arts is contained in Appendix II.

A similar pattern could be established in the other subject areas with again a major/minor choice. Several ways of structuring options could be devised, but if major options were valued at 2 credits and minor at 1, a possible requirement would be a 4 credit programme allowing 2 major options, or 1 major and 2 minor and so on. (It is not to be inferred from the use of the term 'credit' that a commitment to a credit point system of assessment is being advocated).

The other core component would parallel the existing education and psychology courses and associated with it would be elective units from which the students would form one concentration of two, or three 45 hour elective units.

The last component of the course would offer students opportunity to select from a series of general interest/recreational units and it is suggested that although these be recorded on the transcript, they should not be assessed on the normal pattern and should perhaps not be included in the calculation of grade point averages.

Such a programme (outlined in Appendix I) would achieve greater cohesion in the overall course while still allowing a reasonable degree of student choice and staff flexibility. The implementation of this programme would involve considerable re-grouping of current core and curriculum elective courses while courses in subject areas would probably need, in some cases, considerable re-thinking.

The advantages of this type of programme are:

1. it achieves an organic relationship between subject and professional curriculum courses,
2. it places professional training and practical teaching at the centre of the programme,
3. it minimises fragmentation of the course programme,
4. it ensures that students have an in-depth acquaintance with the core subjects of mathematics and language,
5. it ensures that students have understanding and special competence in at least two further primary curriculum subjects,
6. it involves the student study at different levels within any subject area ranging from principles and advanced content to practical application in school,
7. it would link easily with in-service and degree programmes.

That there are several other alternative structures is obvious but this proposal is an attempt to apply the general principles and ideas examined in the first part of this paper and it is hoped that at least it will focus attention on the central issues involved in framing pre-service teacher education programmes.

APPENDIX I

Time allocation – contact time

Note: It is assumed that the sub-units within each component would be 45 hours, i.e., 3 hours a week over a 15 week semester.

1. Core Studies

(a) Basic Curriculum Studies	270 hours + T.P.	
(b) Teaching Methodology		
(c) Education and Educational Psychology	225	
		495 hours

2. Curriculum/Subject Studies

(a) Language and Mathematics (one at major, one at minor level)		
Major	495 hours	
Minor	225 hours	
		720 hours

(b) Other Curriculum/Subject Studies (two at major level or one at major, two at minor level)		
Major	270 hours	
Minor	135 hours	
		540 hours

(c) Recreation Studies	90 hours	
		90 hours

TOTAL	1845 hours
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APPENDIX II

Major/Minor programme for Language Arts: possible outline.**(a) Major Study**

Time available — 495 hours

1. Curriculum:	Language	60
	Reading	90
	Writing	45
	Oral English & Drama	90
	Children's Literature	30
		<hr/>

Associated subject Studies

choice from:

Language	
Children's Literature and Adult Literature	
Oral English	
Film and Drama	
Communication Studies	
	<hr/>
	180 hours

(b) Minor Study

Time available — 225 hours

1. Curriculum:	Language	45
	Reading	75
	Writing	30
	Oral English & Drama	60
	Children's Literature	15
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