CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 2 April 2004

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Witnesses

Mr S. Tait, Manager, Market Information and Research; and

Ms S. Atkins, Manager, Education Design and Quality Assurance, Le@rning Federation.

The CHAIR — The Education and Training Committee is an all-party joint investigative committee of the Parliament of Victoria and is hearing evidence today in relation to its inquiry into the suitability of current pre-service teacher training courses in Victoria. I advise all present at this hearing that all evidence taken by the committee, including submissions, is subject to parliamentary privilege and is granted immunity from judicial review pursuant to the Constitution Act and the Parliamentary Committees Act. I welcome representatives from the Le@rning Federation. It is traditional to ask the witnesses to make a brief statement about themselves or the terms of reference of the inquiry and then we will open up for questions. I ask you to give your name and title for the benefit of the transcript.

Mr TAIT— My name is Stuart Tait. I am the manager of market information and research for the Le@rning Federation. If it is fine with you, we would like to give a brief overview of the Le@rning Federation and give some examples of what the Le@rning Federation is doing, because it will impact on what we believe pre-service education and training requires for the future.

The CHAIR — Excellent.

Ms ATKINS — I am Susan Atkins. My role is manager of educational design and quality assurance with the Le@rning Federation. I will be going into a bit more detail later on in terms of the pedagogical approaches to the learning design of the content we are developing.

The CHAIR — Is your presentation contained on the CD-ROM you have given us?

Mr TAIT — I will go through the pack for the committee.

The CHAIR — If you wish to table it, we would welcome that.

Mr TAIT — The CD-ROM we have given to committee members is a video presentation that gives an overview of the Le@rning Federation. There is also a pamphlet which gives an outline of the Le@rning Federation, and then this summary sheet is in essence what we will be talking about today.

Overheads shown.

Mr TAIT — The committee may or may not be aware of the Le@rning Federation, but it is a five-year initiative and is unique in Australian education in the sense that it works with all governments in Australia and in New Zealand. It originally started in June 2001. It is a project managed by two ministerial companies, Curriculum Corporation, which employs Susan and me, and an Adelaide-based company called education.au ltd, whose main brand is in the web site, www.edna.edu.au.

The deliverables of the Le@rning Federation initiative include delivering a body of online curriculum content. Susan will go into the nature of that curriculum content, because it is quite a change in thinking to traditional online curriculum content. Also an infrastructure is being developed to support distribution, access to the content and to digital rights management. In particular, the commonwealth, states and territories are interested in the digital rights and management aspect, which will introduce some thinking about the practice of user content for teachers in the classroom. Because it is an outsourcing project, its aim is to develop the multimedia industry marketplace in Australia and New Zealand, and we do a lot of supportive work with the private sector in that area.

There are six curriculum priority areas that it is focusing on. These were collaboratively developed in 2001 with the then CES CEOs, the Council of Education Systems chief executive officers, the curriculum heads of all the education departments, and they were looking at science from kindergarten to 10; mathematics and numeracy; language other than English — Chinese, Indonesian and Japanese; studies of Australia; literacy for students at risk in meeting the national goals in education; and innovation, enterprise and creativity, which is the creative arts, the technologies and the enterprise area of the curriculum.

I will briefly mention the infrastructure, because today we will talk mainly about the content, as that will have the greatest impact on teaching practice within the classroom and hence relevance to this subcommittee. The infrastructure that we have developed supports the procurement process. As I said, with a $70 million project it is a large-scale project, and at the moment we are managing 23 different sets of developments across those curriculum areas using the private sector to do that development work.

The principles about the development of this content are that it is the first time the education community has stood up and said, 'These are the specifications we would like content to be developed to', and that is both in technical and in educational soundness. Susan will go into that in more detail when she is talking. It is also about delivering a licensing system so we can manage the content a lot better, and it also assists the development cycle for this content because it is a very user-focused and user-centred development cycle. We are working closely with teachers and students in developing the content.

We have two major infrastructures: one is the central repository, called the exchange, which will house the thousands of learning resources that are developed out of this project; and then there is the process, called the basic e-learning tool set, which enables the teaches to gather this information, sequence it in a way that meets their requirements and reconceptualise the content so it meets their students' needs. That is an important component of this project.

I will now hand over to Susan, who will talk about the curriculum content. As illustrated in the summary notes, we focus on two types of content: one is called 'learning objects' and the other one, which I will talk about a little bit later, is called 'resource assets'.

Ms ATKINS — What I would like to do primarily is show you some of the learning objects that we have been developing. So that we are clear about what we are talking about, we are really talking about learning resources which are focusing on aspects of content to be delivered to students K–10. The word 'objects' is purely a technical way of describing them.

What is important is that the objects are small enough to stand alone but they have educational integrity, so that a user — that is a student, primarily — in engaging with one of these learning resources is adequately catered for in terms developing understanding in a new idea. It is actually integral that that this the case. So their learning objects generally are focused on a particular performance objective or a particular learning outcome. We do a lot of evaluation and testing to determine that users of the material do achieve and can translate the learning from the resources.

We are concentrating on creating these resources in such a way that they will engage the students straight up. Therefore they are very student-centric, both in terms of the context described within the learning objects and the focus of the language and the visualisation and exploitation of the media for that particular age and stage of schooling. They are teacher-centric in the sense that they are fundamentally designed to deliver content that has application to the curriculum requirements of teachers in classrooms all over Australia and New Zealand.

The key to what we are developing here is in the instructional design. It is focused very much on how this would be utilised within the classroom. I should also state that we are not trying to create content that is just as easily delivered within a normal classroom context. We are actually trying to focus on exploiting the media to enhance learning opportunities. If it can be done without multimedia, we do not want to be building it.

The next screen is quite a good learning object to describe the complexity of some of the learning objects within the context of the pedagogical thinking that has gone into its design. It is very much based on a real-life case study. It is about the green and golden bell frog, based on a particular wetland in New South Wales. So the data is real and authentic, but the virtual exploration is that of the student in terms of their manipulation of the data in this learning object. It models for them what they would absolutely need to do within the context of going out into the field and doing a comprehensive inquiry to determine why this particular organism is perhaps in decline.

I will go through the very quick quiz at the beginning so that we can get to the main body of the content. This particular object is aiming at students in about years 7 to 9. We have actually trialled it with students much younger than that, and if they have had a lot of contextualised learning around this whole issue of environmental habitats and so on, they absolutely cope with it quite well. The students who are less familiar with the terminology are highly dependent on the information contained in the particular learning object.

The way we have developed this in terms of the particular application is that the particular screen you can see at the moment can actually be discovered, if you like, by an end user, a teacher or a student, independently of the whole contextualised scenario. So it is actually exploiting the media in that way so that the parts that make up the whole can be used independently and stand alone.

We have done a lot of work on seeking appropriate video to engage the students and give them an authentic understanding of the organisms they are dealing with, as well as providing some other information. It has a whole series of data tools which absolutely model what you would be doing in the field in terms of collecting data on the water quality. There are three hypotheses associated with this object, one of which is absolutely more correct, but given that the herpetological world does not yet know why southern bell frogs are declining absolutely although they have a number of theories, that is the sort of practice and process that we want these students to be going through — analysing information and considering what might be, if you like, the most likely cause of their demise.

In terms of a teacher utilising this in a classroom, they can be using it in the context of enabling students to introduce themselves to these ideas or alternatively to have it as a follow-up in terms of work they have already done in a real-life situation. There is information on the food web and the food cycle, and this has been based absolutely on what actually occurs in the wild. We have a modeller which says: I'm going to increase the populations of, for example, beetles, and I'm going to determine what happens after a few weeks and after a longer period of time: what is the impact on other organisms in the environment et cetera? All this data, as it is being collected, I can be putting into my notebook as I move through and compiling that finally in a report. Then we do some counting of the organisms. As I am counting the number of these organisms I can record it into my table and do some comparative analysis to determine what is going on. Finally, I have a reporting mechanism towards the end to determine what is actually happening and I can build my own report. It would have all the food webs that I have put in there and all the data, and I can actually come into it and start modifying the sorts of observations that I have taken. So it is very much trying to simulate what you would actually do within a real inquiry.

The next learning object in literacy has been developed for students particularly at risk in the middle years of schooling. What was really important in this context was to develop content that would absolutely give students the skills and processes and strategies that most of us take for granted with respect to being able to deal with the various different textual forms. It is very much focused on grammatical understanding — knowing the difference between verbs and adjectives — but, as you can appreciate, many of these students are somewhat disengaged from learning. It is very much about trying to engage them in a process of using textual information to gain a greater understanding of textual forms. We need to go into the security booth. We are looking at a type of text which is doing a recount of what absolutely happened within the context of the paintings being stolen from within the gallery. Students are observing this video and then are being asked to look at notes and then determine which of these particular things are the most obvious that happened. Unless they are absolutely able to understand and interpret the information and use the texts that are provided in the learning object, they cannot actually solve the problem. So the whole crime scene is set up in that way so that they must have really interpreted the data in such a way that they can make sense of it. This particular learning object has proved incredibly successful in re-engaging students in the act of understanding different textual forms.

One of the biggest issues that we have is that we are finding that, when we go into classrooms with this really rich multimedia, teachers are finding it increasingly challenging to deal with it because their level of computer competency is not the same as that of students. They are having to move into a way of dealing with information and knowledge that is somewhat alien to them. Students navigate around this sort of program very easily; teachers find it somewhat more daunting, particularly in some of the 3D. That is an area that we believe needs close attention in the context of pre-service education.

The next one is a mathematics learning object, which is currently in development, so it is not a finished learning object. It very much focuses on 3D visualisation in relation to 2D. We have a reference picture which is like you have taken a photo from a particular angle — it could be in a cityscape or something like that — and the user is asked to try to determine at what angle the camera was in terms of being able to create that particular picture. At this stage it is fairly simple, and even I can do it reasonably well. The students are generally somewhat more proficient and seem to get this a lot more quickly than many of the adults. I think that has something to do with the fact that the ability of students to think about things differently is greater than that of adults, who are quite practised at seeing things within particular frameworks.

They will explore these a lot more easily and come to terms with how the different angles and perspectives work. I can then check my picture and determine whether I absolutely got it correct, and I did manage to without thinking too much. As we move through the different levels in this program you actually start to have pictures that you have taken from a whole range of different perspectives. Here on this screen you are looking down on something and

things will be hidden. Your reference pictures are always two dimensional so it gets quite complex. I think that is basically it in terms of giving you a taste of the type of rich media that is being developed in learning resources.

What I think we need to be able to do is to engage teachers to understand how they can absolutely integrate a resource like this into a teaching and learning program. That is not just about building competencies with ICTs; it is also about absolutely understanding this from the point of view of a pedagogical application and the learning process.

Mr TAIT — The other type of resources that we are providing are what we are calling resource assets, which are useful things from within the archives of cultural institutions. We call them useful because we do a lot of checking with teachers and program developers across Australia to see what sorts of resources they would like to have that are authentic to allow teachers to be able to use those as stimulus, but also to enable teachers to develop more extensive programs. In this instance what we will provide in working with the National Archives of Australia is a digital copy of this resource that a teacher can then start to build their own program out of.

We also provide aggregates of these sorts of useful resources. Some of those resources will be just images, others will be film, others be sound bites, and each one of them would have that authentic component that teachers are asking for so that they can work with their students. One of the things that we will be asking teachers to be able to do would be to engage in rudimentary authoring; to cut and paste pictures into Word documents or to link files and sounds in Powerpoint, just like what we have done here. We believe this will be one of the great challenges for teachers in the future.

The other component too, as mentioned in our summary, is that we would like teachers to extend that practice of collaboratively developing things as they do, particularly in the primary area, but to do it in electronic form where it can be stored and found by other teachers in the same school or in other schools, so that they can share that information rather than keep repeating and reinventing the wheel. That requires a certain amount of technical confidence and it requires a certain amount of understanding about the way that this sort of information is stored.

What we thought we would do to finish off this presentation is to give you an example of the ways in which one of these learning tools is being used in the classroom. One of the things that I really like about this is the mix of experiences that students are engaging with in this particular lesson.

I think that video explains what Susan was talking about; these are additional resources rather than replacing resources in the classroom. That was our presentation. I am more than happy to answer any questions.

The CHAIR — That was good. I just want to clarify whether this program is already available to teachers or whether is it coming online progressively; is it out now or is it coming out in 2006? What is the current status?

Mr TAIT — Is it out for trial at the moment?

The CHAIR — Is it in selected schools?

Mr TAIT — It is out in selected schools. The Department of Education and Training is engaged in some trials, particularly at the end of last year. The content is being progressively rolled out, but there are some delivery issues to the schools which the education department is working through at the moment.

The CHAIR — So it is out at schools at the moment. If I am a teacher out at Strathmore, for example, can I log on or can I not?

Mr TAIT — No, you cannot at the moment. It is still on trial.

Mr KOTSIRAS — I recently went to Singapore and I saw this in action — the students were actually doing this. When I spoke to some of the members of the department the biggest problem was that teachers are not comfortable when using this tool. Have you got any views about what needs to be done in pre-teaching to get these teachers, when they come out, ready, able and confident to use this tool? Also have you any views about experienced teachers who might feel uncomfortable using this as a tool?

Mr TAIT — I will make a couple of points and then Susan can follow on. One thing is exposure to the content within the pre-service educational institutions. I have not been in one for a long period of time, but I know

that when I was doing my diploma of education the availability of those resources was very limited and we would have seen the exposure to those resources as being very good.

One interesting anecdote about older teachers is that there are a group of older teachers that are very comfortable with their pedagogical approach and want to be challenged. It is a different way of thinking about it. They are the ones who are becoming the early adopters. There are a large number of teachers who feel a bit threatened by this technology, but it really is about enabling teachers to have the confidence that they can do minimal troubleshooting. I think that is probably the greatest benefit that we can get out of this service training.

Ms ATKINS — Further to what Stuart is saying, I think within the context of the pre-service training component that it is exposure that is required. Pre-service teachers are currently developing curriculum programs which they are taking to schools to their pre-service rounds of education. They are fundamentally starting to work with this content when they think about teaching and learning right now. With the teachers that are currently in schools, they have to learn something new and that is a big barrier. The usual complaint is that it takes time, but the other complaint is that they feel a lack of confidence in relation to what the students can do, so we have to try and break down that particular barrier. Where it is most effective is where the students are actually leading what is going on in the classroom and the teachers are helping to facilitate from a learning perspective as opposed to having to worry too much about the technology itself.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Have you had any feedback from the institutions about what they think about introducing this in their teacher pre-service courses?

Ms ATKINS — To date we have not. I should clarify this a little bit; there has been some interest in being able to do so. The primary objectives of the initiative in the first instance has been to develop content for the education department in respective jurisdictions and in some ways their relationship with the educational institutions is through that means. The Le@rning Federation has not had direct discussions or communications with universities with respect to pre-service education; it certainly has in relation to the learning theory and the pedagogical applications that we are employing in the context of design. It is something that we need to start doing.

Mr TAIT — We have briefings with the deans of education about the project.

Mr HALL — Thank you, Stuart and Susan. It was terrific to learn about some of that new technology that you are developing. When teachers are training they need to train for not only what the classroom situation might be almost immediately when they finish training but also for 5, 10, 15 years down the track. What do you think the classroom might look like 10 or 15 years down the track?

Ms ATKINS — I would hope in some ways it will still look a little bit like what we saw at the end of that video with the students doing a range of activities — practical activities — but that a large component of technological applications is such that access to resources can be greater than the immediate walls of that particular classroom. One thing that we absolutely do know out of the work we have been doing to date, particularly in working with students, is that in the K–10 area they are still very much learning about how to learn, and the opportunity for learning, therefore, needs to be fairly rich and varied. That does not particularly mean doing everything in a digital context, if you like. It certainly does mean that the digital environment — the digital world — has to be a very large component of that.

I would like to say that I think the classroom in some respects will look somewhat similar, but the opportunity — the access issues, the amount of computers that might be available and the sorts of workstations in which that computer lies and the fact that each student may be able to extend what they are doing back into the home as well through these communications mediums — will be a larger component.

Mr HALL — The vision we saw there was basically every kid in the classroom sitting down with a PC in front of them. If you walk around a school today that is not the typical classroom situation. Sure, there are a few rooms dedicated where they do IT sort of stuff and computer pods are attached to each room, but every classroom is not a networked situation with 25 PCs sitting in front of students. I suppose one of the inhibitors to many teachers using IT stuff is the lack of facilities in schools.

Ms ATKINS — I would say that best practice objectives would have students working on a number of activities within a classroom at different times and, dare I say it, primary schools tend to do that in a lot better ways than do secondary. If you think about that model and if you think about it in terms of workstations as opposed to a

one-to-one relationship between a student and a computer, you probably have a better opportunity for more effective learning, you have social collaboration still absolutely paramount within the context of the classroom environment and you are not spending millions of dollars on hardware that you will have to keep replacing. It becomes a more manageable cycle of activity. I would suspect that it is not desirable to have every classroom wired for sound, so to speak. It is important to have access to enough of the hardware such that when you really want to use that it is available and there is enough to go around.

Mr HALL — If my memory is correct there are some schools — I can remember one in South Australia — where the PCs are networked at home as well.

Ms ATKINS — There are quite a few in Victoria too.

Mr TAIT — Yes. Our anecdotal information suggests that students engage with this content better when they are in pairs. When they get into threes or fours we start to see some students being excluded. As was shown in that clip, the engagement thing is the really important thing — the collaborative learning that they get out of that.

Ms ATKINS — In some of our evaluations, students working with some of this content has created the stimulus for them to collect the equipment to try to replicate what has been happening in terms of a real life situation. That is fundamentally the sort of thing we want to have happen, not for them just to be totally immersed in this digital world with no connection to what is happening in a realistic situation.

Mr HALL — I do not believe kids have any trouble at all in adapting to this technology. I sit down with my seven-year-old nephew as he is going through all those fractions, words and process writing stuff that is commercially available now, and he has no difficulty at all. I have some difficulty in keeping up, understanding and following it. Surely our challenge therefore is not for the kids themselves but for the teachers, which is the purpose of our inquiry — that is, teaching teachers the IT skills necessary to apply them, but also the skills necessary to incorporate the IT component into a curriculum. There probably needs to be some emphasis put on that, too, as to how teachers can best use technology as a teaching tool. Does the Le@rning Federation have any brief to do that sort work too, or do you see that as an area that others need to concentrate on?

Mr TAIT — We are working closely with the eastern states and territories to develop programs around that, but when the chief executive sat down and looked towards the Le@rning Federation as being an initiative one of the stimulus of this was that people were asking what were the impediments of adopting ICT in schools. The bean counters were saying, 'There's a lot of money being spent on hardware, but are we seeing a realisation of that?'. They brought out three main issues: available bandwidth to get content into schools; professional development; and content. They said, 'Let's use the content to drive the other', because they wanted to give teachers a reason as to why they need to go through all that extra planning — that pain sometimes — to use this content. That is what this content is providing for them. The notion of learning objects legitimises in electronic form what teachers have been doing all their lives — they are magpies, they pick up pieces and put them in a context, which is the classroom — whereas the previous resources like web sites and so forth were just large blocks of content. This content is designed to fit into a classroom environment.

Mr HALL — You are working on that third impediment essentially, that content?

Mr TAIT — Yes.

Mr HALL — Is there not a fourth one — that is, facilities and infrastructure beyond bandwidth?

Mr TAIT — There is, but it was not one of the things that was under consideration at that particular time.

The CHAIR — Just on that, is there a systems minimum requirement — that is, is there a set minimum requirement to use it?

Mr TAIT — Yes.

The CHAIR — What is it?

Mr TAIT — We have that published on our web site, but in terms of the software it requires a Flash plug-in player into Browser version 6 and above; the Flash plug-in version is, I think, one version below what is

currently available. Those specifications do not come out of thin air; we do not make them up. We sat down with the departments and had a very long and considered discussion around that. Maybe not so much in Victoria but particularly in New South Wales they are very concerned about any upgrades in technology, because they do not have the infrastructure to support that.

The CHAIR — The average home computer, say, Pentium 2, Pentium 3?

Ms ATKINS — Yes.

Mr TAIT — Pentium 2, yes.

The CHAIR — Pentium 1, no, Pentium 2, yes?

Mr TAIT — Yes.

Ms ATKINS — You need a certain amount of processor speed to be able to work with the media as it is being delivered.

The CHAIR — At home, a Pentium 2 user could use it?

Mr TAIT — Yes.

Ms MUNT — Thank you for that, it was really good. I particularly like Australian accents coming out of the players rather than American ones. It looks like fun; I would like to do it myself.

A few years ago there was a program that was kind of an interactive learning program that was rolled out into some schools in Victoria called SuccessMaker. SuccessMaker's limitations were, I think, that the context of the learning did not interact with the curriculum at the time. There was no crossover. The other thing was the licence fees the schools had to pay. Basically, my first two questions are: is there a cost for this to the schools, and does it relate more fluidly with the curriculum as it stands at the moment?

Mr TAIT — There is no cost to schools. The contents are being delivered free of charge to all schools in Australia and New Zealand, including the independents and the Catholic sector. The purpose of the licensing arrangements will enable teachers to reuse the contents in a variety of ways. There will be some restrictions on commercial gain out of that — they will not be able to build their own thing and include learning objects and go off and sell it. The taxpayers of Australia would get a bit upset about that.

Ms ATKINS — With attending to the curriculum fit, if you like — you need to appreciate that in the first instance it is an international project so we had to do some extensive mapping of the curriculum, the respective curriculum frameworks around the country, including New Zealand. What we are focusing on is the main knowledge, skills and processes in terms of the learning of resources being developed. So we are not trying to get a direct relationship with a specific outcome, say, for example, in Victoria's CSF, but what we will do is map back and create a curriculum organiser so that this particular learning object, say, biological sciences, year 7 et cetera, and we will look at the curriculum created and map all the curriculum outcomes from Victoria, New South Wales and Northern Territory and we will have an algorithm that sits there that applies to that. When a Victorian teacher is searching the contents they will find outcome 5.4, which happens to be about habitats, ecology or whatever, which will enable them to select say the frog pond learning object.

We will do a focus on content body of knowledge — the focus in New South Wales, Victoria and Northern Territory is the same; the principles are behind that. We are not really saying there is a differentiation, but what does differ is the level of complexity of the age and stage of schooling and you want to apply to that particular phenomena, but we do that with the base curriculum.

Ms MUNT — Does it have levels of difficulty and how interactive is it? If a child goes through different levels of difficulty does it keep taking them through the different levels of difficulty or does it just have one level? Some children work faster than others.

Ms ATKINS — We have worked with developing multi-pathways and recognise that students learn in different ways. We want two things — we want the content to support them and use their strengths to build new knowledge and construct understandings, which is the constructive approach. We also want to challenge their

comfort zones and in certain situations force them to use different ways of knowing and working within the conceptual domain. Some learning objects will have far more coherent level of learning where students are dealing with different phenomena but within a particular level. In others we actually constructively scaffold the pathways through the learning object in such a way that as soon as the learner manages to complete a little the learning object pushes them into the next level of complexity. If they are not understanding that the feedback is constructed in such a way that they are put back into a level so that it is easier for them to comprehend what is going on. It is very much scaffolding and constructive learning which is the basis of the design of these things.

Ms MUNT — Another issue that came up with SuccessMaker was parent reporting. Parents want to know how their children are developing and managing this and progressing. The reporting system was computer generated and no one could work out what it meant. Will this be plugged into the general teacher reporting or will it have its own reporting so parents will know what is going on?

Ms ATKINS — Generally speaking it is plugged into the general teacher reporting. A lot of assessment tasks are integral to the learning resources we are creating, but it is the teacher's decision how to use those tasks and whether they use them as an assessment task and then report on to parents. For example, the construction one that I showed the committee with the 3D shapes has levelling behind it and there is some conversation at the moment as to whether we track it in terms of giving it assessments and so on, so that you could have a mark at the end. We tend to shy away from that at the moment because teacher assessments are variable around the country. From the point of parents at this stage the focus of the material is not something that they will be using directly with their students so that is not to say it will not be, so we have not really considered it in the light.

Mr TAIT — I want to mention the body of work that is happening in the international environment that enables systems to talk to each other — for example, there is consideration to have systems such as learning management systems where the content can sit in and you can generate reporting. All the content we are developing meets those international specifications and enables one application to talk to another. SuccessMaker was a proprietorial view of the world and could not talk to anything else. That is where technology often becomes a very expensive exercise because once you have committed yourself down the pathway you cannot move to another pathway because it is so difficult to move information from one system to the next. What we are doing is building the system so you can transfer information from one system to the next.

The CHAIR — Australia has been negligent in developing content and systems right through this century. We developed systems in the 1970s, but then it became too hard. So I very much congratulate governments and yourself for this project. It is important from a cultural perspective as well as educational. That leads into the fact that six years is a long-time in information technology. In 2006 you will have the product up and running. How quickly will that be accessed and how rapidly will it be produced — whether they are intensive programs or other subjects is the key. Could you comment on that side. I guess what I am really saying is how do we become internationally competitive? How do we stand now and where will we be in the future after 2006?

Mr TAIT — The Le@rning Federation has been a change agent in dramatic terms. It is getting the supporting infrastructure and people are saying now why there is a real need to get the supporting infrastructure in place. We are seeing a large amount of activity across all states. Each state has its own level of progress. As a change agent it is putting in place exactly what you are asking. We cannot shy away from the fact that technology changes. The way the content is being developed means that the data that sits in it can be changed very quickly. There has been a lot of thinking about what happens in the future. The Australian Education Systems Officials Committee secretariat has commissioned an international person in Canada who was asked whether the Le@rning Federation content met the standards or specifications for schools in this environment, and his report was very favourable, and said that the federation was actually establishing the standards. When you are thinking about where Australia sits in this environment at the moment, this content is well regarded. Of course we will say that, but all I am saying is that everybody else seems to be saying it as well. It has placed Australia back on the map in that environment. The multimedia developers who are working with us are now starting to gain export market, particularly in England, because of the quality of the content they are developing through this process.

The CHAIR — Is it a 'Field of Dreams' approach — if you build it they will come — or is there an implementation strategy to get schools to take it up and implement it?

Ms ATKINS — There is very much an implementation strategy in which the Le@rning Federation is working with all of the jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand to help that implementation. It is true — —

The CHAIR — You would not expect it to be static like that, would you?

Ms ATKINS — It is not, it is happening — take Victoria for example. As Stuart said earlier, there are some small trials going on around the state at the moment in relation to using this content and that is helping Victorian departments, for example, to get an understanding of what the barriers are in terms of infrastructure, professional development, and I suppose pedagogical wherewithal for their teachers and so on to be able to utilise this content in an active way.

Different systems are doing it in very different ways, and we are working to provide shared information and knowledge about good models for implementation. The key will be sustainability of that beyond 2006, to ensure that it is just not a very good idea that happened for 5 years, and then there is nothing as you were absolutely alluding to — that notion that we will do a big sort of professional development and implementation run and then it just peters out.

The CHAIR — 'Where's Wally?' stuff for 20 years.

Ms ATKINS — Yes, and the Australian Education Systems Officials Committee group is currently addressing that sustainability issue from a whole range of levels, and in particular what needs to happen in terms of implementation — that is key.

The CHAIR — On that subject, the Victorian Minister for Education and Training, Lynne Kosky, announced last week a review of the Victorian curriculum, the thrust being not so much on content but a more general look at the curriculum from CSF content to skills acquisition, approaches to getting knowledge, and personal skills, civics, the way students present themselves. I assume that you will feed into that review. Is that likely to happen, or will the education department take on board what is happening there?

Mr TAIT — We work closely with both the infrastructure and the curriculum people in the education department and we briefed Lynne Kosky probably about a month ago on the project. In fact we gave her a CD to take home for her children.

The CHAIR — I was not quite sure what you said before about how much use of this technology is happening with teacher training. Right now I can see that once the project is finished you will try and make sure it is implemented, our recommendations or whatever, in teacher training. But how much is it used now in our teacher training institutions, how much do students do in terms of ICT, learning how to teach the pedagogy et cetera?

Ms ATKINS — From my knowledge of what is currently occurring in teacher education I would say that a fair amount of effort is being put into developing ICT competency and in relation to the various applications that would be part of a normal classroom. I am reluctant to say, thinking about things from the point of view of learning theory and pedagogical application, that there has been the same emphasis in terms of developing and designing curriculum and learning programs relating to using resources such as these and I think that is something that needs to be addressed.

Until recently the resources such as you are seeing today were not available. If you log onto the Internet you might find some fairly simplistic programs — and I say simplistic not because they are not clever in their simplicity, but they are fairly linear in their presentation of information in a digital context. But there has not been a lot of resources which are fundamentally developed with a learning theory, if you like, being the underpinning process of the functionality of how the object actually plays out. That is the key that we have now, and if we can provide access to those pre-service education institutions we can actively participate in that and it can play a greater part in their training program than in the past.

Mr HALL — Going back to the question I asked; when you said that there is probably not enough training, the technology part of it is not all that difficult, is it? Most people can run a program. As you said there is a bit of cut-and-paste sort of stuff and any person going through training nowadays should be well versed in those skills. Is it not more the ability to slot and utilise that as a teaching tool?

Ms ATKINS — That is right. It is really an effective curriculum design for a particular learning purpose. How do you assess the students that are sitting in the classroom and design a curriculum that will meet the needs of that particular group of students or cohort at this particular time when you might have another group over here who could need a slightly different application? That is not new, that is what teacher education is all about. The

difference is that it is this type of resource and sometimes these programs have been built purposely with a particular learning audience target in mind — and that is a different thing. Resources teachers would normally use are fairly flat and not necessarily developed in a way that focuses, for example, on second language learners and the skills that they need, or mathematical concepts in the same way that at year 3 we know they are fairly concrete learners; therefore there is a huge emphasis on visualising things based on what they know and understand. It is just a different perspective.

Ms MUNT — How is it being received in the pilot schools it has gone out to so far?

Mr TAIT — Very positively.

Ms ATKINS — Incredibly positive — and, of course, we would say that! But if you have a look at the web site you will see that we are increasingly putting information on it about teacher and student responses to these things. We are collating the information from all of our in-school evaluations.

Teachers are saying it is fantastic; they are nervous about their professional development. Students are saying, 'Can we have some more?'. The other interesting thing is that students are aware that this is not the same as the games world they have access to outside the classroom. They do not expect it to be a CD-type of thing that has cost $2 million; they are quite happy with that. So it has been received extremely well. When we go out and do in-school evaluations we have students who say, 'Can we please stay and work with this some more?' — it is lunchtime or whatever — 'Can we stay back and work on this particular object?'. It might be a maths object. Students are saying things like, 'Well, maths can be fun, I guess, if you have more of this stuff'. They will make those sorts of flippant comments about it.

There are students who are not familiar with computer technology — the games — they are not familiar with it. Not every child in an Australian school has access to this sort of technology and so on. For those students it is more daunting in their first instance, but once they get in there and work with their peers it seems to work very well. But there are reports being generated on that subject that will be on the public web site.

Ms MUNT — And that will be integrated back into the program when it goes out — all that information?

Ms ATKINS — Yes, we have release notes which talk about that, and also provide information on how you implement it and the professional development that is required.

Ms MUNT — How will this work for children with disabilities or impairments?

Ms ATKINS — I did not show you today, but one of the things that has been incredibly difficult — we have an obligation because we are using public funds to meet the requirements under the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission standards for accessibility. The challenge for us has been to look at those requirements for accessibility because most of the standards have been developed for web sites as opposed to highly interactive multimedia. So we have had to do an incredible amount of work on creating new specifications to meet those needs. All of our content can be interacted with, independent of any device.

So you can tab even around that learning object I showed you with the frogs — it has got all these different things. You can tab and arrow all through that. You can connect it to another assisted device so if you need to use it, it can act as a tab to move through, and so on. So we cater very much for physical impairment. We are certainly catering for hearing impairment. So where you have got reliance on audio, particularly in terms of providing information to users, we would have an alternative version of text translation and machine-readable objects, so that it can read it out and you can create it as text.

The biggest challenge for us — and I will be quite honest about this — is that we are trying to exploit the visualisation component. So for people who are highly visually impaired, I would not say that these resources are going to be that much use. We are looking at ways that the information that is contained in these resources can be provided in an alternative format so that those people who are visually impaired can have an audio translation, if you like. But you have to ask the question: do we just create that audio translation, or should there be some other interactive device? We have been doing a lot of work on that. We have complied with W3C guidelines, and we will start trialling some of these concepts specifically with people who have those particular physical disabilities.

The CHAIR — Susan, thank you very much. It has been terrific. I am sure all of us wish it well. It is a terrific thing. If it okay with you, Nick might contact you later, because it would be useful to know what schools it is being trialled at. We might go out and talk to some of teachers who have student teachers — —

Mr KOTSIRAS — And students.

The CHAIR — And with students to see how that is going in terms of our inquiry, if that is okay with you.

Ms ATKINS — That would be fine.

The CHAIR — Fantastic. Thank you very much.

Witness withdrew.

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 2 April 2004

<u>Members</u>

Ms H. E. Buckingham   Mr N. Kotsiras
Ms A. L. Eckstein   Ms J. R. Munt
Mr P. R. Hall   Mr V. J. Perton
Mr S. R. Herbert

Chair: Mr S. R. Herbert
Deputy Chair: Mr N. Kotsiras

<u>Staff</u>

Executive Officer: Ms K. Ellingford
Research Officers: Dr N. Fischer and Dr G. Berman

<u>Witnesses</u>

Mr C. Stevens, Team Leader, Teacher Skills and Professional Learning; and

Mr G. Whiley, Education Officer, Catholic Education Office, Melbourne.

Representing the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.

The CHAIR — I welcome the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria to the inquiry. We are very pleased you are here — the Catholic education system is a large part of our education in Victoria, and as such the quality of teachers teaching in that system is important to the outcomes for students. I wonder if you would like to perhaps begin with a short statement either addressing the terms of reference or about the commission's work; and for Hansard, if you would not mind, introducing yourselves and your titles for the record.

Mr STEVENS — My name is Carl Stevens. I brought some cards that may be useful. I am the team leader, teacher skills and professional learning.

Mr WHILEY — My name is Greg Whiley. I am an education officer. Part of my responsibility is the induction and mentoring of graduate teachers.

Mr STEVENS — We both work in the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne. There are four Catholic education offices in Victoria servicing Catholic schools, but our office is an administrative arm of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, hence we are here. We have an apology from Paul Herrick, who is the manager, leadership and accountability, in our organisation. He wanted to come, but he is at a briefing at the Victorian Qualifications Authority at the moment. I apologise for having just given you our written submission. We have only just had it signed off. Our Director is overseas, and so is our Deputy Director, so one of the assistant directors, Garry McLean, has signed off on it. I will begin and then Greg will talk us through some of the points. We are effectively going to walk you through some of the main points in the written paper, if that is okay, and I expect you will ask us some questions.

As the Chair has already said, we are one of the major sectors of schooling in Victoria as well as Australia. Collectively the Catholic sector in Victoria is the fifth largest system — if you would like to call it a system. There are some figures in the paper which show that we have roughly 180 000 students in Victorian Catholic schools; 93 secondary schools, 387 primary schools and 7 special schools. There are something like 13 500 teachers across the four dioceses. I am not sure whether people are aware that the Catholic Church in Victoria is organised into four dioceses: Melbourne, Sale, Sandhurst and Ballarat. The CECV is a collective representation of the diocesan authorities, the bishops, the teaching orders, parent representatives and so on. The Executive Director is Susan Pascoe.

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission, both a written and a verbal submission. Through its work of education in schools, the Catholic Education Commission is obviously committed to professional training, induction and teaching service of the highest quality. It clearly has a vested interest in the quality of pre-service training, which are the key terms of reference. It is probably worth mentioning that the CECV and the four diocesan Catholic education officers work in partnership with schools, with research organisations and with universities in the area of teacher training — some to a greater extent than others. In particular, it is worth mentioning that there is a strong relationship with the Australian Catholic University in that many of the graduates from ACU find employment obviously within the Catholic sector. That is particularly true of primary schools, but we have graduates in the Catholic sector from virtually every teacher training institution.

We will not attempt to go through every aspect of the paper, I imagine that it will be read carefully at some later time. I might just get down to the notion of Catholic schooling before handing over to Greg Whiley. Our expectations of graduates and of teacher training would be grounded in our philosophy of education that sees Catholic schooling as part of the mission of the Catholic Church so it is very much a Christian-values, gospel-values basis, and in particular, focuses on the formation of the whole person or the whole student — physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional and so on. That is what we would expect teachers in our schools and graduates from teacher training institutions to understand, support and be part of.

Whereas we go through some of the typical skills and characteristics of teaching that some of the published documents talk about such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching standards of professional practice and the national framework for professional standards for teaching — which the task force has produced and which I am sure the committee here is aware of, and I refer to page 4 — further on we list some of the skills and knowledge of teachers we would specifically be looking for over the next few years because that is one of the terms of reference — that is, what sort of expectations are there of graduates of teacher training institutions — and these have been derived from some of our goals and priorities that are being developed.

Certainly the sorts of things we would expect from a graduate would be an understanding of the Catholic school — this person may not necessarily be Catholic of course — values and the place of religious education; the Catholic sector's policies and priorities that are published; particular strengths in curriculum standards; understanding about standards of teaching and standards of curriculum and assessment procedures; legal issues affecting schools; teaching and learning strategies — the use of information technology in particular is a strong focus in our sector at the moment.

Another important focus, and again this is common with other sectors we admit, the recognition of multiple pathways; that schooling leads to a variety of futures and that there are different ways of going to those futures; incorporation of workplace competencies in curriculum; attention to and promotion of safe school environments and student wellbeing; attention to civics and citizenship education, and integration of that into the curriculum; links with the wider community and an understanding of the impact of national and global trends on school programs. We would expect any teacher in our schools to be up to speed on those areas, and we provide a great deal of professional development to try to reinforce those areas amongst our teaching staff. Now I will ask Greg Whiley to deal with the next section.

Mr WHILEY — The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria wants to make a number of points, however, regarding pre-service education. It is important at the outset though to acknowledge that over the last few years, school principals, both primary and secondary, have detected some improvement in the quality of graduates entering the profession. This could be due to pre-service training and the calibre of the students themselves. The type of person presenting for employment is generally of satisfaction and they appear to be of excellent character and strong commitment to the profession. There are a number of specific criteria relating to those types of people outlined on page 5, but I do not have time to go into that at this point. However, it needs to be noted that there is some limited knowledge and understanding of a number of areas, including current curriculum documents, lesson planning skills, testing regimes, assisting students with special needs — and that is a particular concern in the classroom where not all students are the same; graduate's ability to respond to student welfare issues and classroom and student management which is high on the agenda for graduates as it is a significant problem; also, assessment and reporting issues and dealing with parents.

The view of some principals is that the bachelor of education graduates, especially those from the Australian Catholic University, are better prepared for teaching than those with a different undergraduate degree with a Dip. Ed tacked on to the end of it. Four-year trained teachers tend to have a better grasp of classroom management issues and seem to be generally more committed to the profession. Considering those, there are implications for pre-service preparation. There are many demands being placed on teacher education courses obviously and it is unreasonable to judge on the calibre of students entering universities and on school demands, but we believe there is an interconnected role of shared responsibility between teacher training institutions, schools, education authority and governments. There are key questions to be considered regarding the apportionment of that responsibility.

Nonetheless there are some concerns about the quality and relevance of pre-service education. The DEST report of 2002 confirms that there are some continuing concerns and they have been confirmed by teacher-satisfaction surveys that have been undertaken in the last 10 years. The strongest aspects of those as outlined on page 6 are that the best institutions are doing well in effective teaching and learning strategies, preparing students for teaching strategies in the particular content areas and organising student learning. However, there are some areas of concern particularly in the area of managing student behaviour, inclusion of students with disabilities, communicating with parents and report writing.

Another area of concern is the whole issue of university pedagogy. In an ideal world university teaching would better reflect the school classroom-type of practice. Clearly, lecturing has its place in universities but it is not ideal that it be the dominant paradigm for people entering the teaching profession as it represents a poor model for graduates. However, the most prevalent concern is the perennial issue of insufficient time by students in school practice. We are of the belief that learning to teach is very much one of handing on the craft and students need to be in the classroom considerably more. I mentioned earlier the 2002 DEST study. A survey was undertaken and supervisors in schools were asked how they thought pre-service training better prepared teachers for their first year. Over 60 per cent believed that there was a need for extended practica or internships; 26.4 per cent thought there needed to be a better link between theory and practice, and just over 16 per cent thought that there needed to be a stronger emphasis on classroom management and student behaviour. The experience of schools also indicates that there is a degree of unevenness of expectation in requirements and structures which the different universities have

of their graduates, and this produces a degree of confusion in the minds of schools particularly where schools take on graduates from a range of different universities and institutions.

In terms of addressing the issues, universities cannot produce a finished product, and I draw your attention to a quote on page 7 from the Ministerial Council of Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs 2003 which states:

> Graduate teachers ... distinct from newly accredited or newly appointed teachers because their essential qualification lies predominantly in study rather than professional practice. While practice is an essential component of theoretical investigation, reflection and learning in preparation for teaching, a graduate is not yet recognised as a competent and capable practitioner with full professional standing.

There is no other profession that I am aware of where the expectations of a person entering the profession on day 1 are the same as those expectations of somebody who has been in the profession for 25 years. Nevertheless the CECV believes graduates should be better prepared to stand alone and there is far more need for practicum experience. There needs to be a change of balance between university time and school experience time. I refer you to page 7 of the report for the specifics on that. Some even suggest that there should be a fifty-fifty division between practicum and university time.

The CECV also believes that there should be more use of university holiday time than is traditionally used and the rationale for that is outlined on page 8. Regarding partnerships and supporting students and graduates, as already indicated, there needs to be a shared responsibility, and with an increased call for changes to practicums and internships there needs to be a greater responsibility for teacher education not only by universities but also by schools to have an input into the structure and content of courses. There needs to be a greater continuum so that the whole experience of teacher preparation is one from pre-service through induction right through to extended professional development throughout their careers. Some suggested roles for universities regarding this are outlined on page 8.

The Catholic sector recognises the responsibilities of the profession itself and schools and systems to support graduates through effective induction. In Victoria, the Catholic sector has renowned induction programs for its beginning teachers both in primary and secondary areas, in time and financial support. Particularly in the primary schools funding is given to graduates teachers in their first year to assist them in the school-based induction program. The Victorian Institute of Teaching is currently undertaking mentor training and provisionally-registered teachers support. There has been a great spirit of cooperation between the VIT and the three sectors in the delivery of those programs and perhaps there is some potential for universities to have a higher profile in this area.

In summary, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria believes that pre-service education programs should recognise the changing social and educational environment; that there should be a substantial increase in the emphasis on practicum and provision of support for the practicum and graduates, and be based on adherence to common standards, requirements and structures in the management of those practicums.

Mr STEVENS — I just want to finish with a brief reference to one of the terms of reference regarding mature-age entry recruitment from other professions. We note that the commonwealth review of teaching and teacher education made some recommendations in this area and the CECV certainly thinks that is worth pursuing. Perhaps there needs to be more flexible recognition of professional learning from other professions and teacher training organisations, and institutions should allow certain flexible cross-faculty teacher pathways such as internships. We would support those sorts of initiatives, perhaps even some financial incentives.

However, we are aware of issues that schools and school principals foresee in recruiting from other professions. I suppose we would be concerned that such people would be entering teaching for all the right reasons; that they actually have a commitment to children and to education, not, for example, necessarily because they are an expert in a particular area or industry. Teaching is not necessarily just about being in possession of knowledge and skills; it is being able to convey them and wanting learners to learn. We think that there could be some impediments to attracting people to move to teaching such as perhaps the salaries and the status of teachers; work needs to be done on improving that. We are aware that there is a national agenda on that. It is possible that it might be easy to attract such teachers into the secondary school environment, and we know that there is potential for people with an industry background to teach our vocational education and training courses in secondary schools; that can be quite successful; also, perhaps looking at para-professionals in the school environment in either primary or secondary schools, supporting teachers and allowing teachers more time to devote to teaching.

There is just one other area that we thought ought to be at least recognised and thought about — that is, those people returning to teaching after an extended absence. Of course, that is often females who have families but it could also be people who have travelled, who have left teaching or perhaps feel the call to go back. We did a little bit of work on that a couple of years ago under the quality teacher program. In fact we produced a report, and I will leave some copies for the panel to keep. It talks about the mentoring process. We found that it was very important for teachers wanting to re-enter to have a building up of confidence and also a catching up of the skills and knowledge base. Often if you are out of the teaching force for 5, 7 or 10 years there is a loss of confidence and certainly a loss of contact with developments in education; education moves very quickly. We did a pilot project where experienced teachers mentored re-entry teachers. It was very successful, and we would recommend that as a model for attracting some of those in the teaching pool who are out there and no longer in the profession but who may be considering re-entry.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much.

Mr HALL — Thank you for the presentation. It is a very good submission you have made and we thank you for that. It addresses the terms of reference and will help us enormously.

Mr STEVENS — Thank you.

Mr HALL — Do Catholic schools provide practicum placement for student teachers from both the Australian Catholic University and from other teacher-training organisations?

Mr STEVENS — Yes, they do.

Mr HALL — Do the supervising teachers get paid for supervising student teachers?

Mr WHILEY — I have been in the office for only 12 months, but my recent experience in schools indicates that yes, they do.

Mr STEVENS — The school is paid. I think different schools have different policies about whether that payment goes to the teachers or not. I know from my more distant experience in schools that there was a school policy that the money went to the staff group as a whole.

Mr HALL — You made the comment in your submission that those who had undertaken pre-service training with the Australian Catholic University seemed to be better prepared for teaching than those from other organisations. I think you said they were the views of some of the principals. Is there any reason for that?

Mr STEVENS — That is not quite what we said. I think we said that those who have done a bachelor of education, which may be with ACU or with another institution, were better prepared.

Mr WHILEY — That was the intent.

Mr STEVENS — Yes. That is a four-year education degree as opposed to, say, a three-year science degree and a one-year Dip. Ed. So that was that point. Having said that, though, those graduates from ACU would tend to be more readily employed in the Catholic sector, for obvious reasons.

Mr WHILEY — I think that is the reason. Students at ACU do components of religious education, which makes them more employable, if you like, particularly in primary schools.

Ms MUNT — The submission does say especially from ACU.

Mr WHILEY — It needs to be clarified in that sense, though.

Mr HALL — Is the bachelor of education — being a four-year training program with greater levels of placement over the period of four years — perceived by you to be a better mechanism for preparing teachers for training in the classroom than just the one single year of Dip. Ed.?

Mr WHILEY — It depends on the model that would be established, but our position would be that irrespective of how that is done, a greater degree of classroom involvement is better. Whether that is done in blocks or over an extended period, that would need to be determined.

Mr HALL — You also made some comments about the internship as opposed to just shorter practical placement. Do you have any views about the internship arrangement employed by some training institutions?

Mr WHILEY — I am not aware of the full details, but I know that Melbourne University has an internship. I personally have not had any experience of it at all.

Mr STEVENS — We do not have particular feedback from schools about that model. It has been around for only a little while. Theoretically it looks good, and it has the notion of moving further into practical teaching with a two-year bachelor of education add-on — is that correct? — instead of doing a Dip. Ed.

Mr WHILEY — Yes.

Mr HALL — You mentioned towards the end of your contribution that bringing back into the work force teachers who may have been absent for a period of years and attaching a mentoring program to those teachers to help with their transition back into teaching has been very successful. What about with first-year-out teachers? Is there any mentoring undertaken by Catholic schools in respect to those?

Mr WHILEY — Absolutely. We have had a program of mentoring, particularly for primary teachers, since 1979, I think. First of all, there are central professional development days for beginning primary teachers, and on that day not only is the Catholic ethos and that sort of thing addressed but also how schools can establish school-based induction programs, and mentors are invited to come along on that day as well. Funding is made available for those mentors and beginning teachers to establish a year-long induction program. With the inception of the VIT, we have made some amendments to that, so that it becomes more of a seamless process and there is not so much duplication. In secondary teaching we have central professional development days for beginning teachers in the secondary area, and there is encouragement to have school-based mentoring processes, but it is not supported financially.

Mr HALL — Do starting teachers have a reduced workload in Catholic schools?

Mr STEVENS — I think the award does allow for that, but I am not quite sure of the details.

Mr WHILEY — I think it is 20 hours — I am not sure.

Mr STEVENS — I think it is 18 hours and 20 hours. I think 20 hours is the standard, 18 is for first year.

Mr WHILEY — I think it is 25 hours for primary and 20 hours for secondary. I am not quite sure on that, but there are reductions.

Mr WHILEY — There is about a 10-per-cent less load for the first year.

Mr HALL — How important is professional development for teachers in Catholic schools to assist them in the changes in teaching, et cetera? Is there a high emphasis placed on professional development and is it funded accordingly?

Mr STEVENS — Yes, there is.

Mr WHILEY — Yes, there is, and our office provides quite a diverse range of professional development programs on a whole range of issues — literacy, numeracy, induction and mentoring, leadership and so forth.

Mr STEVENS — And technology and science. The programs that are offered tend to reflect particular educational priorities at the time. For example, religious education is always going to be there. It is very important. Those programs have different models — some are one-offs and some have several sessions spaced over the year. There is also a lot of network support which we probably should mention too, and Greg has responsibility for some of those networks, involving deputy principals, principals, curriculum coordinators, religious education coordinators.

Mr WHILEY — And professional development coordinators.

Mr STEVENS — We find that is a very strong model for supporting key staff in schools.

The CHAIR — I have a follow-up question. We have heard from the deans of education — I do not want to verbal them, so I hope I get this right — that the practicums were important only inasmuch as they supported the theory. So the theory is very important and the practicums are important in that they support the theory, as opposed to what I gather you were saying in your submission — I have not read it fully — that the practicums are a central point in terms of the learning experience for teachers and that the theory comes into that. Is that a fair summary?

Mr STEVENS — I would think the practicum has much greater importance than simply supporting the theory. Anyone undertaking a postgraduate diploma of education or a bachelor of education would probably have a view to becoming a teacher, and one would think that preparation for the profession is a vital reason for undertaking a practicum, apart from the theory.

Mr WHILEY — And full preparedness to be a fully effective teacher does not end at the end of university, it does not end at the end of a practicum and it does not end at the end of their first year, because it is a continuing process. It is probably not until some years into their experience as teachers that people become very effective and well-rounded teachers.

The CHAIR — That poses significant problems in terms of the funding issue, which Peter Hall alluded to. If we extended the amount of time that student teachers spend in schools — call it the practicum — in the range of activities you have outlined, there would be a cost to that. Would that be a significant barrier, or how would you restructure things to get around those cost implications? You have 13 000 teachers, and that is a fairly big organisation.

Mr WHILEY — How do we answer one like that?

Mr STEVENS — It would be one of the significant barriers as far as the tertiary sector is concerned, I am sure. One of the points we make in our submission is that this area is one of those fairly complex issues where you need to get people around the table working together on it. There are roles for governments and education authorities — not just ours but other sectors — the tertiary sector, schools themselves and the profession. They need to be getting together, probably mediated by the Victorian Institute of Teaching — it would seem to be a good organisation to oversee such activity. I think different models would have to be trialled, I do not think this could happen overnight. There has already been some work in doing that with the teachers internship model. I think different models could be trialled and sectors and universities and so on could consider cost structures.

Ms MUNT — Like Mr Hall I was particularly interested in the paragraph on page 6 that says:

> There is a view amongst some principals that B. Ed. graduates (especially from ACU) are possibly better prepared for teaching than students with a different undergraduate degree with add-on Dip.Ed. They seem to have better grasp of classroom management issues, and seem more committed to teaching.

There are three things that interest me about that. What is it particularly that you think the ACU is doing that produces better graduates than other facilities? That is the first thing. Second, do you think it is true for primary and secondary teachers that it is best that they have the four-year bachelor of education rather than a primary degree and an add-on Dip. Ed? The third thing is why do you think from that that they have a better grasp of classroom management issues? An interesting part of a previous presentation from another group was that when the new graduates have been asked what their biggest problem is when they actually go out on the job it is that they do not have an adequate grasp of classroom management issues and they feel like they have just been dropped there. This paragraph seems to be critical to those three issues and I was wondering if you could expand on that for me.

Mr STEVENS — I might start, if you like, and Greg can follow up. I probably want to hedge myself a little bit. I think we said, 'There is a view amongst some principals' — —

Ms MUNT — I am just trying to find out what makes some courses better than others in the preparation of teachers.

Mr STEVENS — I suppose the view would be that if you enter a four-year bachelor of education degree you have some commitment to education as a profession immediately, whereas if you are doing an add-on Dip.Ed. you may not have even intended to do that when you set off on your commerce, arts or science degree. Teaching is sometimes seen as a fall-back profession for some people. I suppose it is that difference that might be picked up. This would not be universal; the add-on Dip.Ed. model could be perfectly well suited to a lot of graduates.

Ms MUNT — Is what you are saying true for primary and secondary teachers?

Mr STEVENS — In the primary sector most of them would be your B.Ed. model anyway. In the secondary one it is where they have obviously had a significant amount of preparation via a discipline degree and they may or may not have decided that teaching was the way to go and they have done a Dip.Ed. afterwards. There are some models where they are integrated for secondary, but mostly it is an add-on model. Of course some universities have a B.Ed. (Secondary) and in those cases one would think they have a certain commitment to teaching as a career. I would not want to give the impression that there is a universal view about that in the Catholic sector at all or that it is the same for primary and secondary or that it is the same for different discipline areas or anything like that as it would vary. It is just a comment that we did pick up from some principals.

Mr WHILEY — I would agree with that.

The CHAIR — It would be quite remarkable if we had that consistency anywhere in the education system given the diversity of students and schools.

Mr WHILEY — I agree. I think that paragraph needs further clarification. Before I came to the office my role was that of a professional development coordinator where part of my role was to coordinate graduate teachers in the school I was in, and I know that a significant amount of their problem was classroom management. In my current role, in looking after graduates in their induction phase and the mentoring areas I am in, I know that a significant aspect of their problems is classroom management. Each time I have an evaluation of each program and ask what they would like to have more of they always say they need more classroom management. The other point was about the ACU standing out. I think probably that relates to that issue of religious education because of the nature of the programs that ACU provides — it makes ACU stand out more so than the other universities.

Mr STEVENS — And we do have a bit of a closer relationship with ACU on a number of levels anyway apart from that. Research is an example. If their postgraduates are doing research into Catholic education they will very likely come through one of the Catholic education officers and then to schools. Similarly they have recently done a review of the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne, for example. There is a fairly close relationship between them as organisations in any case.

Ms MUNT — So the teacher training is better tailored to your requirements in the Catholic education office?

Mr STEVENS — Yes.

Mr WHILEY — One of the processes that we have for graduate primary teachers from ACU is that they voluntarily — and 95 per cent of them do this — attend an interview process with staff from the Catholic education office. It is sort of a preliminary interview before they actually apply for jobs in schools. That involves about 50 of our office staff. At the end of last year our office staff were saying how well these graduates were doing and how pleased they were in terms of their readiness for teaching.

Mr KOTSIRAS — I might be a bit biased because I did a four-year teaching course and I believe that having done four years prepared me much better than someone who did a science degree and then did a year of Dip.Ed. — but then again I am biased. On this, do you have any data to show — whether it is a four-year course or whether it is three plus a Dip.Ed. — how many of the students who come in remain as teachers and how many resign within a certain period, in order to ascertain some information to back that up?

Mr STEVENS — It is a good question.

Mr WHILEY — I wish we did.

Mr STEVENS — We probably could get some data — we have reasonable data for the current teaching work force, but I do not know that our historical data is all that good for being able to track when people resign and when they enter. We could probably get reasonable data.

Mr WHILEY — I am on a working party at the office looking at retention of teachers and so forth in the system and that is an issue we will be looking at in terms of trying to, possibly with ACU, undertake more research in the area.

Mr KOTSIRAS — The other thing is when I was doing my teaching rounds we were visited once per school by someone from the university who had no idea about the type of school we were in and they had set ideas about how I should be teaching the classroom without taking into account what type of students were in front of me. Do you see that as a problem these days? Has it improved? Do university tutors or lecturers go out more than once?

Mr STEVENS — I would say it is no better, personally. My recent observations would be that there are examples of some rounds where student teachers are not visited at all. I think it is a resource issue for universities.

Mr WHILEY — That was my experience the last couple of years when I was teaching in that area, and it might be a very cursory visit in some cases as well. The involvement of the Victorian Institute of Teaching and providing mentor training I think will address this issue much better.

Mr STEVENS — We are suggesting in the submission that there is scope for school-based personnel to become more involved in supervision. There is usually someone in the school who has to observe or be with the student teacher, but in fact there could be a stronger role and we could build a better partnership between the university and the school in working with the practicum, we think.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, your submission covers a lot of this. I note that on page 9 you make comment in relation to Nick's question and say that there was concern felt by some schools that they were unsupported by universities in their communication and visiting students in schools and actually watching them teach and dealing with unsatisfactory performance. They were issues that some schools had in terms of the supervising lecturer/teacher coming out during practicums. Just on that, while having supervising teachers in schools — mentoring is an alternative approach — what about in our teacher training institutions? Do you have recommendations for those people that are teaching the students in universities? Are there any recommendations you could make to us to improve that contact that is happening in schools? What are the needs, whether it be for performance, or whether it be how you handle young people for discipline, behaviour, or what is going on? Have you got any recommendations for the practices within universities and teacher training institutions?

Mr STEVENS — We would like to see staff in universities with a little more recent experience in schools themselves.

The CHAIR — So university lecturers doing some practicums, something like that?

Mr STEVENS — Well, that or some sort of flexible staffing arrangements whereby even practising teachers could be seconded for periods of time. I think that could have significant benefits for universities as well as for schools.

The CHAIR — What are you saying, that the teaching force in university tends to be too static? People go there and then do not go back out teaching? Is that what happens?

Mr WHILEY — That is the perception. Whether that is true or not I cannot say.

Mr STEVENS — There would be some tertiary education staff who have never been teachers, some who would be professional educators, researchers. It is partly to do with the university model of staffing which probably values research more highly than teaching.

Mr WHILEY — The other thing is I would be hopeful that university teachers would be very much au fait with the latest developments of educational needs and pedagogy.

The CHAIR — I think we will explore that further; you know, we have Deakin University and some of the others coming. Thank you very much. We will read your submission carefully and we may have other questions and perhaps Nick will come back and have a chat if that is okay with you. Thank you very much.

Witnesses withdrew.

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 2 April 2004

<u>Members</u>

Ms H. E. Buckingham   Mr N. Kotsiras
Ms A. L. Eckstein   Ms J. R. Munt
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Chair: Mr S. R. Herbert
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Research Officers: Dr N. Fischer and Dr G. Berman

<u>Witness</u>

Professor S. Grundy, Dean of Education, Deakin University.

The CHAIR — The committee welcomes Deakin University faculty of education representative Professor Shirley Grundy. Professor Grundy, welcome. As is traditional you might like to make a statement about the faculty of education or about the terms of reference and we will have questions. For Hansard could you give your full name and title?

Prof. GRUNDY — I am Professor Shirley Grundy, I am the Dean of Education at Deakin University. We do intend to make a written submission to the committee. We have not done that yet. We are in the middle of preparing for our five-yearly faculty review so we have been busy doing our self-review document. Hopefully that will be finished today and we will be able to turn our attention to making a formal submission. We will be following up with a submission rather than having one for you at the moment. But I do want to address some of the terms of reference. I left items 1 and 2; I guess you are doing your own research about the comparison between courses and international work et cetera.

The CHAIR — We try to.

Prof. GRUNDY — And when you have done that you can let us know, I guess, because we are always trying to do that as well.

I thought that I would just say some words about items 3, 4 and 5. My points are very general in nature but may provide an orientation for some of the things we are doing at Deakin. In thinking about the knowledge and skills required for teachers and therefore pre-service teacher education, at Deakin we like to talk about 'teacher education' rather than 'teacher training' because we see teaching very much as a professional mode of work for which one is educated rather than as a technical form of work for which one is trained. So you will hear me talking about teacher education as we go through.

But talking about the changing nature of education and the 21st century I thought it might be useful for us to think broadly about some of the things that are likely to change and some of the directions, but also to think about some of the things that we reckon will not change in education. I think there is a tendency to think somehow education will be completely transformed as we go into the unknown, whereas I think there are some constants that we can see from history and the way in which we approach things. I reckon that education will continue to be organised around schools. There is some notion that with technology somehow students will be out there in the future all working in their homes on their own computers. I ask: who is going to exercise duty of care for those? Who is going to give up their jobs to go back into the homes? Is it going to be the grandparents who are having to do it? That is not going to happen, so schools are going to continue to be a factor.

The other thing is that education will continue to serve multiple purposes as it does now. But in fact those purposes may well continue to increase. So the transmission of knowledge, which is judged to be of most worth to the society and the acquisition of skills needed to be functioning members of society, are still likely to be very much located in schools and part of the educational agenda. So we are talking about something that continues much as we know it today, at least in form if not in substance.

Addressing some of the things that will change — and of course who knows? — and these are very dependent. Of course information technology has already transformed schools and will continue to transform the way we think about knowledge, information and learning. Although schools will continue as fundamental social institutions, the boundaries between schools and their communities — that is, things like transition to work and bringing the community into the school — are likely to become more permeable. Actually I think that is how things are going and are likely to continue, but of course if we become obsessed with risk management, the boundaries around schools are likely to get tighter, particularly around primary schools. So as I was thinking on one trajectory about things opening up in education, I thought there is another trajectory that we can imagine around risk management, around threat, around security, where the boundaries are likely to get tighter. It is not clear how that sort of general social milieu is going to affect us.

Another thing that will really be important is setting up our students in schools and hence teachers for lifelong learning — that the school/rest-of-your life dichotomy is not going to be as strong. That is really important. There are a couple of other things. One is mobility — students, we know, nationally are already very mobile. Within a global context schools, students and teachers are likely, if we continue along the trajectory that is established at the moment, to be even more mobile. The notion of the global education community is much more important in relation to the local.

What are the challenges then for teacher education? One of the challenges that we always find is the notion — and this is likely to be even more intense for us in the future — of preparing for the immediate or for the long term. 'Your graduates have been with us for three weeks and they cannot do this, this and this. You did not prepare them to teach properly'. We have our eye on a career. I have been talking to our incoming students this year and been reminding them that while my educational history was in the second part of the 20th century, the students who come to us to do courses will graduate in 2008, will start teaching at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. They will be in mid-career around 2028. Those teaching in primary school then will be teaching students who will only be about 80 years old, and by then it will be 'only', at the turn of the next century. The students that we are teaching now will be teaching the people who will be in the prime of their lives in the middle to the end of this century. Now, of course, that is just playing with numbers and centuries and changes, but when we think of the span of what we are educating teachers for, it is pretty challenging for us. Whether we are actually teaching teachers for 2009 or for 2015 or 2028 is a big challenge for us. As you can see, I can go on and on about these things.

I can talk about term of reference more if you are interested about attracting people from other professions — that is clearly really interesting. I think again it is part of the trend that we are likely to see increasing. But I would like to pick up in closing on some of the things that we are doing at Deakin, some of the initiatives that perhaps indicate how we are trying to respond to these changes and challenges that we see ahead of us. First of all, we are trying to prepare our teachers for both the long term and also the local as well as the global. In fact we have a considerable cohort, 78 Canadian graduates who have come here this year to Deakin, to do their teacher education. Most of them will teach back in Canada, or elsewhere. It is very clear we are not just preparing students for teaching in the Victorian system. Many of our graduates go overseas, at least initially; many of them come back (it depends sometimes on whether they get married in those first crucial years while over there). That challenge of where will our graduates be located is a very real one. We have a series of international practica that we are now organising for our students. This year we will have students going to do practicum experiences in Canada, Vanuatu, India and Ghana. Next year we are hoping that we will have students doing a practicum experience in Japan as well. We are trying to expand the international horizons for our teacher education students.

In terms of lifelong learning, we always talk to our students about teaching as a career and the long term; and the importance of teacher education while also trying, of course, to prepare them for the first Monday of 2009 when many of them will be out there on their own. We are making a lot of use of online teaching and learning resources. Deakin University has introduced a policy this year — we are the only Australian university so far to have taken this initiative — so that all of our undergraduate students who enter Deakin this year will during their course do at least one unit completely online. That is a way— because we reckon a lot of that lifelong learning is likely to be online — to prepare our students to be independent online learners. We are saying that students will do one unit online.

The other thing is about building discipline knowledge. I want to talk about our Bachelor of Education Primary degree. Although that is a four-year coherent B.Ed. primary degree, during that degree we still try to build discipline strength. So about 48 per cent of that degree is actually studied in other faculties. As well as doing another major in another faculty, a major relevant to education, we have also highlighted maths, science and literacy education, which are studied in the faculties of maths, science and arts ,as specifically tailored units that our students do. So again we are building strength in there.

The last thing that I wanted to pick up on that we are doing at Deakin — and this again is for us to confront that school community and school transition to work — this year we have a project where we are working with the Victorian Institute of Teachers, the Victorian Qualifications Authority, local schools, the education department and our Institute for Koori Education developing a program, a teacher education course, to prepare students for teaching in the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning. So far there is no initial teacher education course for teaching in VCAL, so VCAL teachers are really having to be retrained within the system. That professional development work is being very successfully undertaken, but we think it is important that there is a strand of pre-service teacher education that prepares teachers to be able to adequately teach in the applied learning area. This initiative addresses that school community link, permeating those boundaries between school and community. We are quite excited about that. Of course we do not know whether it will get accreditation from VIT yet; we do not know if we will get places for it — we are applying to the commonwealth for some of the places that have been allocated to Victoria to give us the places for this course. There are a lot of unknowns, but we see that as one of our responses to those challenges around those borders, making those borders between school and community more permeable.

The CHAIR — What campuses does Deakin have for teacher education?

Prof. GRUNDY — We have three which situates us very well to be a metropolitan provider, a regional provider and indeed a regional-rural provider. We have large education courses at our Melbourne campus at Burwood, at our Geelong campus at Waurn Ponds and, since I have become dean, we have re-introduced teacher education to our Warrnambool program which is in its third year — we will not have any graduates out of that program until 2006. We now have teacher education provision across those three campuses.

Mr KOTSIRAS — What is the ratio between lecturers and teacher training students? We used to call them teaching rounds.

Prof. GRUNDY — Sorry, I thought you were talking about staff-student ratios.

Mr KOTSIRAS — No, I am talking about lecturers, going to a tutorial and lecturers going out to the practicum in schools.

Prof. GRUNDY — This is an area for improvement for us. We are working on improving it. During the 1990s when we had the real downturn in teacher education, Deakin had to make some hard decisions about where it would put its resources. It went for a model for the practicum that was a partnership that said we will do the on-campus teaching and learning for teacher education, and we will partner with our teachers in the schools to do the school part of it. Now that is a partnership, but not a good partnership, because it is a separation sort of partnership — 'we will do this bit and you can do that bit'. We regard the teachers who work with our student teachers doing the practicum as teacher educators. They are employed by us — or at least they are given an allowance, small as it is, by us— to do that. We regard them as teacher educators doing teacher education work. We are aware that that sort of partnership — separation partnership — is not adequate, so we now make it a responsibility of all teacher educators who are involved in pre-service courses to make liaison visits to schools, and then we have provision for troubleshooting where students are in difficulty.

Mr KOTSIRAS — How many times? Do they go out to school once a term?

Prof. GRUNDY — No. We are not funded to enable them to do that. We really have to rely upon teachers in schools to be teacher educators around the practical teaching experience. Our funding for the practicum does not allow us to do double supervision — that is, to have a teacher in the school supervising our students and to have a university lecturer also supervising.

Mr KOTSIRAS — For a student to successfully complete their course, there are no set days they have to complete in the school?

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes.

Mr KOTSIRAS — How many days?

Prof. GRUNDY — It is a standard number — I can never remember the number.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Approximately.

Prof. GRUNDY — I know for our two-year course it is 45. I think it is 90 days.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Ninety days over four years?

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes, I think it is.

Mr KOTSIRAS — And in those 90 days, how many times does someone from the university go out and just observe the student?

Prof. GRUNDY — No, we do not.

Mr KOTSIRAS — You do not do that at all?

Prof. GRUNDY — We do not observe the students and therefore double up on the work that the teacher is doing. We say the teacher has the expertise with respect to this student, so our people would see themselves as liaising. They will liaise with the teacher in the classroom to be able to advise the teacher about what might be done; they will liaise it with the student, but they would not be in there supervising and therefore either counteracting or doubling up what supervision the teacher is giving.

Mr KOTSIRAS — So the classroom teacher will assess the student, and the classroom teacher passes the assessment onto the university?

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes. We value and recognise the professional judgment of teachers in relation to the preparation of incoming members of the profession, yes.

Mr KOTSIRAS — And lastly, do you see that this is a good program or do you think the university should have an input?

Prof. GRUNDY — I think valuing the judgments of the profession is very good. I think that more and more we are seeing — for instance, through the federal initiatives and around the Victorian Institute of Teaching — the profession having input into assessing and evaluating incoming members of the profession. I certainly think that is good.

Do I think we liaise sufficiently, however, to support teachers in being able to make those assessments fairly in relation to where the students are at in their programs? No, I do not think that we do sufficient in that.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Can I just clear this up? Students at the university do their maths, science, English or history as their core subjects also do education subjects, I assume?

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes. Let us talk about maybe the primary program, shall we?

Mr KOTSIRAS — Okay. Those teachers in the university who are teaching their students to become teachers do not see them out in the classroom, they do not see them out in the schools. Those lecturers who are teaching — how long have they been out of a classroom themselves, on average?

Prof. GRUNDY — On average, 60 per cent of our faculty are over 50. This is small in relation to faculties around the country; this is pretty standard for faculties of education. Many of them have not taught in classrooms for a long time, however they are all teaching. A few years ago I was seconded, when I was in Western Australia, to the education department of Western Australia. I came straight out of a university having not been a schoolteacher for a long time. I actually found, in talking to the principals of schools, that I had more recent teaching experience than 95 per cent of the teachers in my district, that I had taught more recently — and understood what it meant to teach a class — than most of the principals in my district. Sure, it was in a university context — it was in a different context — but I was able to talk to those teachers about teaching and other things.

That is a red herring, but I say it because we think that there is a great division between teaching in schools and teaching in university, and in one sense there is, but there are certain principles of teaching and assessment, for instance, that in fact are common.

The CHAIR — Can I follow up on that? This is a central point — or one of the points — if we say a teacher is important to students, then a university teacher is important to a trainee teacher.

Prof. GRUNDY — Absolutely. Yes.

The CHAIR — So I guess we start at that starting point. I am just interested in the last observation. I will just use the example of myself. I have been a teacher. I then worked for the manager of opposition business and the Senate spokesperson on education., doing an amazing amount of research — Senate estimates, papers et cetera — for the senate education and training committee and on policy forums. I have also worked for the education minister here, and so for the last 50 years — you know I am getting close to 50 — I have — —

Prof. GRUNDY — I remember it well.

The CHAIR — The age cohort of your lecturers — but I spent a lot of time on education, on what happens, on the theory, on what is important. But I say to you that going back into schools, whilst I have that

knowledge it would be very difficult, in my opinion, to teach, because what actually happens in schools has changed rapidly. You do not get that from the theory. For me to be a good teacher or to pass on my knowledge to others, I could pass on a lot of theory, but I probably could not pass on — I would be out of touch with — what is happening in schools, the changes that are happening and the problems that are there. Back to your point, in terms of principals and teaching, given that you said that none of your lecturers, your university teachers, actually go into schools — —

Prof. GRUNDY — No, I did not mean that. If I said that, I am sorry.

The CHAIR — So it is an important part of the process. I am just trying to work it out — do you see a role in teacher training of ensuring that those people who are teaching teachers actually have some hands-on experience in schools as a regular part of the process of bringing along new generations of teachers?

Prof. GRUNDY — Let me just correct the record, because I have given, obviously, a wrong impression. Members of our teacher education faculty are in schools a lot. They visit schools, they do that liaison work. I have said we could do it better, but I am setting high standards for ourselves. We have many staff who spend a lot of time in schools, as I said, visiting schools — many of them are on school councils themselves et cetera. We also are a very active researching faculty, and the research we typically do is research in schools, so many of our staff spend a lot of time in schools doing research — talking with teachers, observing in classrooms et cetera. So our staff are very connected with schools: I would correct that impression that they are not.

In relation to what counts as teacher education, we would have a view around teaching that is not just about modelling; it is not 'Repeat what I do', although that being said, our teachers are very concerned that they model good practice in their lectures, so we are very concerned about what good practice is. We would not accept the view that in order to work with a group of teachers in early childhood education every one of those lecturers has to be a model early childhood education performer, and that if they cannot perform in that context they have nothing of value to say to those early childhood teachers — although we do not have the term 'early childhood' — for instance, we might say junior primary — teachers in the early years.

The CHAIR — I understand that. It's just like parents and we value the primary education process, but I guess the question I am really trying to get to — and I think we have been skirting it a bit here — is that all of us, or most people, would accept that your job is to do best practice in terms of preparing teachers with best practice?

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes.

The CHAIR — But a crucial part of that is to ensure what they learn — you talked before about the long-term and immediacy?

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes.

The CHAIR — It's not just best practice for the long term but in their having the skills and the understanding and the ability to teach in the current circumstances they find themselves in. I guess that is where I am coming from, just to ensure that there are planks within our structure of teacher education that ensure that the pre-eminent teachers of teachers have a great understanding of the changing nature of schools as well as a theoretical level. I am just trying to see whether there is anything built in, formally, you know?

Prof. GRUNDY — Well, I guess it is. We had a member of our staff who was nominated by the university for one of the national teaching awards last year. She was nominated for the work she does with her students in a school-based program. She does not go into a school and do demonstration teaching. She takes her groups of students into a school; they work with the teacher and observe the teacher; they then bring the teacher together with the students and the teacher educator, and they have a three-way conversation about what went on. The teacher educator respects the professionalism and the expertise of that teacher and believes that the students can learn a lot from that. She has particular skills; she is a pre-eminent teacher herself and is incredibly innovative. The students are inspired and learn from her how to be innovative in whatever situation.

The CHAIR — Yes, I have done it myself.

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes. — are about being able to draw out the experiences and make that real and rich learning for the students, where they are able to build their own professionalism.

The CHAIR — Would you say that is the norm at Deakin, the normal kind of thing that happens?

Prof. GRUNDY — Well, this person was nominated for a national award for teaching, so we could not say that it is the norm for every one of our teachers to be eligible to be nominated for an award, no. But we do have very close relationships with schools.

Ms MUNT — I would like to take a completely different tack, if that is okay. First I would like to acknowledge that a few people have taken me to task with the naming of the reference as teacher training, and have pointed out that it should be teacher education, so I acknowledge that point.

The CHAIR — I am guilty of that.

Ms MUNT — It has upset a few people already. You were talking about life-long learning and the preparation of teachers. A week or two ago I went to a very interesting interactive lecture with Richard Tees who had his colleagues there. He was talking about work they had done with students to find out how they view the world, how they view their education and their career. Students have an entirely different view of the world and of education and careers than our generation did. They see their career virtually in two to five-year blocks, in which they might have a whole different range of occupations, not necessarily connected. I think this has very big implications for the way we view teacher education. Part of the concern is always that we are educating teachers and they are not staying in the profession, that we are not educating them correctly. But they have an entirely different view of the longevity of the education we are giving them. I think that will have a real impact on that form of education. I was wondering about your comments on that. That is the first thing: we are not training people for a life-long career. They do not see it that way, so it has to be much more general, perhaps broad-based education.

That fits into what the previous people here were talking about — whether you should have a four-year bachelor of education or a degree with a diploma of education. They said it was different for primary and secondary, because one is a bachelor of education, and the secondary is a different thing altogether. I notice here that you have actually got a bachelor of teaching (post-graduate, primary and secondary) which kind of combines those two things, or — in a different stream altogether — a bachelor of teaching concurrent with another degree, or just a straight-out bachelor of education (primary), so I am also asking how they work in preparing your students to be teachers. Does one work better than another? Have you had any feedback from the schools they are going to?

The third part of my question is this: the VIT also talked about standards of graduates and how to measure those standards. Bearing in mind all of these different ways to get a result — and are we getting the right result? — how do you then measure that standard for the VIT, and for all the different institutions? Is that too big a question?

Prof. GRUNDY — There are three dips for the whole pot, yes.

Ms MUNT — Because they all seem to be linked in.

Prof. GRUNDY — They do indeed, yes. I think you are right about the way in which we talk about life-long learning. I was talking to the first years about that, saying ,'You will still be teaching in 2008', and I had my fingers crossed behind me because I know that some of them will only teach for five or six years. However, in relation to that, one of the most important things for us to recognise is that teacher education, as we see here, does not go astray. The skills that teachers have — communication skills, organisational skills, management skills, planning skills, all of those things — are the very skills that are generic to other areas and provide a good stepping stone. I think our notion now, that people are somehow 'only teachers' and say, 'I can only be a teacher', is, I hope, beginning to be eroded as we see how teachers step out. The big challenge for us is to attract people back into teaching, and in fact to attract some of those who have stepped out and have had their careers enriched by other experiences to come back to teaching. I do not think we have solutions, especially to that second one of attracting teachers back in again. I think that is a big challenge for us, to understand what we are talking about here in terms of a career span.

In terms of the degree structures, we at Deakin believe one year of teacher education is barely enough. I have to be careful how I phrase this because we have two diplomas of education but we make those available only to our international students. We are able to do that because we can charge a fee for those and we can add things in. For instance, our primary Dip. Ed. is an 8-unit or a 1.25-year course, not a one-year course, and because it is a full fee-paying course we can then add some things into it. Within what universities get for a one-year Dip. Ed. you

have to annualise all of your recruitment, marketing, enrolment, progression and graduation costs, so it is very difficult to make the money go far enough to provide an adequate preparation.

I know there are thousands of people with diplomas of education who are perfectly good teachers, but we reckon you need a minimum of two years' teacher education, so all of our programs have a good solid two years of teacher education. Our dual degrees are done in four years because if you overlap in four years some of the requirements for each degree, you can satisfy the requirements of two degrees within a four-year program. Therefore, we do the dual degree program — that is very popular; and as you rightly pointed out, our two-year graduate entry program is again a very popular program, so really we are saying that two years of teacher education is the minimum needed.

In terms of standards, let me just quickly say we take those standards very seriously. In our re-accreditation processes all of our courses are dual accredited, one within the university to meet the university quality assurance standards, and one with the Victorian Institute of Teaching to meet professional standards.

Ms MUNT — I think they are investigating a review of those standards at the moment.

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes, that is right, but there is now, and even before VIT there was a teacher education accreditation committee that accredited all teacher education courses, so we do have that dual accreditation.

The CHAIR — I will finish off. You spoke about ICT and VCAL and innovations. Have you any others you might like to tell us about? I am thinking about the shortage of maths and science teachers — I was out at Deakin's maths-science day a couple of weeks ago. I have two questions: firstly, what innovations are there? Secondly, is there any way that education interacts with science and maths in view of the fact that there is a shortage, to try and encourage some of those students to do Dip. Eds?

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes, a number of things. I will go back to the other examples in a minute. In terms of looking at addressing areas of shortage, you might be aware that Deakin University has just taken a decision to remove HECS from the science units of the dual degree for people studying to teach mathematics and science. At the moment we, like everybody else, have small numbers because there are shortages; but Deakin University has made that powerful gesture to say, 'Given we are now in a more flexible HECS environment' — there are pluses and minuses in that — 'one of the initiatives we have taken is to take HECS off those science and maths courses for people who are doing teacher education'. HECS has not been taken off the educational units, but the HECS on those is pegged anyway.

As far as other initiatives are concerned, I will talk about some of the research that we do. As I said, our research is strongly based in schools, and we do a lot of partnership research with the Department of Education and Training. We have what we call a consultancy and development unit within the faculty that manages our commercial contracts. We have been doing the consultation for the post-compulsory initiatives. We have a new pedagogy program: we did the middle years pedagogy program and the early years pedagogy program, so when we are talking about the relationship between teacher educators and whether they are up with what is going on in schools, we must realise that a lot of these initiatives that have come into schools have actually come out of the research of many teacher educators. We have been very strongly in there, working with the education department to support the initiatives with our research.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Would you give your view of whether you think supervisors of student teachers should get paid or whether you think that it is part of their job or their daily routine and therefore they should not get paid twice?

Prof. GRUNDY — In the best of all possible worlds I think this would be regarded as a service to the profession — as a professional obligation, in fact. However, I do not think we work in the best of all possible worlds, and I recognise that this is an extra thing that teachers take on. So I think, working within the current context, that it is entirely appropriate that they get some sort of monetary recognition. It is only small — most would say it is not worth having — but in a way when it appears in the pay packet it is a case of, 'Okay, I did that and although I am not being recompensed for that, it is being recognised'. Should they get more? We cannot afford it. We cannot afford what we pay now, and you would know it is a very fraught area.

Mr KOTSIRAS — But some argue that the teachers are already getting paid for the work they do in the school and it is part of the job.

Prof. GRUNDY — Yes. As I said, ideally that is what the position should be, that this is a form of professional service. Teachers learn and gain a lot from supervising students, I certainly did when I was teaching — ideally, yes. I am not going to come out and say this should be taken away from teachers because firstly, I do not think it is feasible to do, and secondly, it is just some recognition, however minute.

The CHAIR — That is a very diplomatic answer and a good one. Professor Grundy, we appreciate very much the input you have given us today, and we look forward to your submission. Part of our task is to have some understanding of how the system works at the university level. Perhaps we will even get out to Deakin and have a chat to some of your staff down the track if that is appropriate.

Prof. GRUNDY — You would be more than welcome, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today.

Committee adjourned.