C O R R E C T E D V E R S I O N

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 18 May 2004

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Dr B. Cherednichenko, faculty head;

Associate Professor A. Kruger, chair, pre-service program;

Dr M. Cacciattolo, coordinator, bachelor of education partnerships; and

Dr J. Martino, coordinator, graduate diploma of secondary education partnerships, school of education, Victoria University of Technology.

The CHAIR — The Education and Training Committee is an all-party joint investigatory 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 those 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 school of education, Victoria University of Technology. The normal practice is for you, if you wish, to make a short statement about either the terms of reference or what you are doing in terms of education and what is important to you. I ask that each person identify themselves.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Thank you. We will introduce ourselves first and I will make a short statement. My name is Brenda Cherednichenko. I am the head of school and am happy to be here.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — My name is Tony Kruger, I am the chair of the pre-services program in the school of education and I have been in the school since 1987, so I have been around for the whole partnerships thing we want to talk about today.

Dr CACCIATTOLO — My name is Marcelle Cacciattolo and I am the coordinator of the partnerships in the bachelor of education program. I have been at VUT for one and a half years.

Dr MARTINO — John Martino, I coordinate the graduate diploma of secondary education which is a one-year program.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — We just wanted to open with some more information, which we have circulated to everyone. The cream document is really a collection of notes and documents that we have written and compiled over the last few years around our partnerships. When we received the invitation to attend this committee, most of the things the committee seemed interested in, in our mind, hung around our work on partnerships.

The school of education at Victoria University sees its work in teacher education in particular, and not teacher training specifically. It is really connected to the notion of partnerships, the notions of practice theory, and the notions of the achievement of social justice in and for education. With that in mind we have constructed teacher learning, both pre-service and graduate, at Victoria University around the question of: what is it that school students need? How do we enhance the learning of school students? We talk about the pre-service teacher being very important in our program, but the centre of our program is actually the school student with whom those people then go and engage, and their learning. With that in mind we have developed from international research and from research of our own practices a set of structures and a framework for engaging in teacher learning and teacher education that starts with the idea of how to enhance the learning of school students. We keep putting that on the table first and foremost. Our pedagogy, our practices, our explorations as we try to develop new things, really come from answering that question in the classroom, or wherever the classroom might be in the education setting.

That is really all I wanted to say at the outset. We can go on and talk to you about various aspects of the program and how we manage and work with university colleagues or, if you like, teacher educators who work with our students, both in schools and in the university, around mentoring, which is a really significant component of our work, around various forms of partnerships. We can talk with you about B. Ed teacher education or more embedded partnership-based teacher education, and we would be happy to talk about things like connecting knowledge, career change, people, the sorts of questions I think this committee has indicated it is interested in hearing from us about.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Just for clarification, these partnerships are only done in the final year?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — No, our first years have begun their partnerships already. So we have two key pre-service teacher education programs. We have a P-12, which is a B. Ed and is a four-year program, and the Dip. Ed that John coordinates. The student teachers commence their working partnerships halfway through first semester of the first year. They are in partnerships for the entire length.

Mr KOTSIRAS — This is a new concept to me. Can you give me an example? If I enrolled at the university for a four-year course, I used to do teaching rounds after the second year, third year and fourth year.

Dr MARTINO — It is teaching rounds plus.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — It is actually more integrated than that. We begin our idea about how to engage with the question: what is it that school students need to enhance their learning? We invite schools to let us know about the learning needs of their school students. From that information we negotiate teams of pre-service teachers to work with the teachers in the school and the students in the classroom to enhance the learning of school students, to improve what is going on, to meet those needs. So our student teachers are connected to schools across the year. They have extended periods of time in the schools. They normally attend one day a week and for block periods of time. During that time they engage in curriculum inquiry, applied curriculum development and teaching practice. So there are those three components to the partnership.

Mr KOTSIRAS — So if a school wanted, for example, an accelerated program, that could be one project?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — We have several hundred different project focuses that student teachers commit around. The team might consist of people with expertise in that area. They might have a major study in mathematics and it might be around developing mathematics in the classroom. There might be a couple in the team who are really keen to improve their mathematical skills, so it is a mixed team often. It is about enhancing the skills of everyone involved. The student teachers might develop a set of tasks around maths, discuss with the staff around how to use these materials, and teach them in the classroom. The year level of the students also depends on the complexity of the partnerships.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Do student teachers still serve their minimum requirements of teaching training days at school?

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — What you find is that over the four years of the course our students are in schools for somewhere between 130 and 150 days, depending on how university semesters fit with school terms, and all that kind of thing. As you would know, the minimum requirement is 80 days.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Does it start in their first year?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — They started last week; is that right, Marcelle?

Dr CACCIATTOLO — The first years start today.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — An example of partnerships is in the document we circulated a couple of weeks ago. On page 18 there is a case of what we call 'Breaking Out' at Fawkner Secondary College. That indicates how partnerships can flow over the year, how formal supervised teaching practice becomes integrated into the ongoing engagement of the pre-service teachers, with a high-priority program in the school and how the pre-service teachers support that, and how that ends up being valued by the school.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — And how it is actually. Getting back to your point about teaching rounds, because that is how I did it, and I had a supervisor who watched me and I had to be as much like them as possible, and I had a university lecturer who did not know me often and who came in and wrote copious notes about how I managed Johnny in the back corner, the way we have constructed it is much more about a learning arrangement for all people. After three weeks I got to go away and never saw those kids again. We ask student teachers to make a commitment to the learning of school students. They have to turn up next week and the one after and the one after, and then do three weeks. It actually requires an intellectual, social and emotional commitment to the act of teaching. It also requires me to be able to build a relationship with my mentor/teacher, who truly becomes a mentor, not a supervisor. It also requires the university colleague to help me engage in the kind of educational conversations that I might need that sustain my learning as a pre-service teacher over time. It is not this, 'Go in, perform, get the tick and leave' — to trivialise what we did somewhat. But it really is about changing the notion of the relationship between those new professionals, experienced professionals, and the teacher/educator to engage in an inquiry about all the work of teaching and learning, not just classroom management and content delivery.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Have you found that the four-year course or the three-plus-one-year course delivers better teachers? That is an easy question.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — They are different. Our four-year program is P-12, so we graduate secondary teachers. They are all secondary qualified as well as primary qualified teachers.. Particularly in the last semester of their programs they do work together quite a bit, the strength of the three-plus-one teachers is the strong discipline-based knowledge they bring to what they are doing. The strength of the P-12 teachers is their strong focus on the individual and the learner. They bring different things. They actually get a lot from each other, we believe, by working together in that last semester.

Mr KOTSIRAS — That is a nice way around answering the question.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — Could I just add something on the partnership question? In 1998 and 1999 we were awarded a project from what is now DEST on innovative approaches to site-based teacher education. The findings from that were that when we locate teacher education in schools and we find a way to engage teachers in teacher education then teacher education becomes personal, it becomes local and it becomes based in relationships. The sign of the that kind of teacher education working is that the pre-service teacher, becomes committed to the interests of the school students. That is what turns on the successful partnerships in site-based teacher education. One element of the data we collected was 'I had to turn up to school because the students were expecting me. I could not stay at home. I was feeling ill, but I had to turn up to school because the program depended on my being there'. It is that kind of, if you like, developing professionalism which supports the pre-service teacher — that is, developing competence and being able to work with colleagues at the school in teams in the interests of the school students. That is at the heart of the kind of partnership stuff that we are doing. Without the support from the site-based teacher education program we can only do this in a kind of partial way. A lot of our work depends on the goodwill of our colleagues in schools. That is because we do not pay for the 150 days; we only pay for 80 days. The other 60 or 70 we say, 'Find a way for the pre-service teachers to make a contribution to the school. We hope that the contribution the pre-service teachers make to the school will repay you the extra effort in mentoring'.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — There are two other components to the partnership that we must not neglect. One is the role of the university colleague — that is, the teacher/educator who visits the school every three to four weeks and meets with the team and student teachers, pre-service teachers. In some cases it is Dip. Ed. and B. Ed. students in the same school and the same project team and those conversations. The other part of it is what they do at the university. The partnership is not just time in schools; the partnership is the whole construction of professionalising teacher learning as practice theory. Tuesday is normally our partnership day when the whole place is out in schools, unless they are in at some kind of other negotiated partnership, and we do that to. But then on Wednesdays and Thursdays they come back to the university and they meet in these mixed teams with university colleagues and a group of peers about their experiences and what they have learnt and experienced. They try and unpack that and search for the theory that supports and builds their knowledge as practitioners. So the partnership is all those bits; it is not just what we do in schools.

Dr MARTINO — I will not buy into who produces better students.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Come on! I want an answer!

Dr MARTINO — I want to make the point that they are different kinds of students. In the Dip. Ed. I would say about 40 per cent of our students are professional, mature-age people who are coming back wanting to take on the teaching profession. When they come to a Dip. Ed. I would say they have got their heads around what they want to do very quickly, and they know what they want to get out of that one-year program. The kinds of students are not the same, so the end product will not be exactly the same.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I want to tease out a bit further the costs. You said you paid 80 days — that is, the teachers in the schools — what about the university lecturers? Do they get paid for their supervision? How much do they do?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — There is a school visit rate, so they get paid notionally a half an hour a week per school for the semester.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Do they get paid for all of their visits or just some of the visits.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — No, all of their visits. If something is amiss and it requires some extra time by the university college we pay them for that too. We have a kind of standard arrangement, and then we move that according to the needs of the partnership.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — It means that with half and hour per school per week we can have a one-and-a-half-hour visit every three weeks or a two-hour visit every four weeks to a school.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — With a group of students in a school.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I take it these are fairly local schools? Do you go out into the outer-suburban or the country areas?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — We have about 220 or 230 schools that we work with each year. We span the western region, some of northern region and a sprinkling in other spots where schools have come to us and said, 'Hey, we want to be in this'. So we have a few in the east, the south-east and a couple up in the hills in Mooroolbark and beyond.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — Berwick.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Yes, I know it well.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — We have a significant country partnership that operates each year. We work with five or six country schools, and we have a whole program that we set up around that.

Ms ECKSTEIN — It has been put to us that teachers should consider taking students as part of their responsibilities to the profession, to nurture the next generation. I would add to that — and it has not really been added in evidence — that perhaps it is the same responsibility of university lecturers. What would your views be about that? And not get paid and that money used for other purposes?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — We have full-time staff and sessional colleagues who teach in the program. We need to pay people for their work, so we do not have a problem with paying people to teach. This is teaching for us. If you come to work with us 6 hours a week, to teach in some of our partnership subjects and you are visiting three or four schools, then that is part of your teaching. To us that is teaching work. In terms of full-time staff members, we do a couple of schools for nothing. Beyond that, if we add in more schools, we count that as part of our workload because it is time and it is teaching. It is really critical. We want to value it as an essential part of our work.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I mean the practicum. I mean the time in schools.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — No, that is what I am talking about. It is teaching.

Dr MARTINO — As full-time staff it is part of our normal teaching load. Brenda was referring to contract employees.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I did catch that. Yes.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — To us it is our teaching. We cannot do our work unless our students are supported by our colleagues in their learning. To us it is a three-way partnership.

Ms ECKSTEIN — That leads me to the question of how you can afford it? Other people have said that the cost of the practicum prevents them from sending lecturers out. We have heard that it is problem in schools, but you are saying, 'It is not a problem; we have got the money, we can do it'.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — It is a priority.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — Yes, it is a priority. So you could imagine there are trade-offs. I have no idea what other universities have in class sizes, for example.

Ms ECKSTEIN — What do you trade off in order to do it?

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — I think it is possibly the size of class. I do not know what other universities' class sizes are.

Ms ECKSTEIN — So do you mean you take more students to do it, or less?

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — We would most likely have larger classes, I would think.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — And one of the ways we can do it is that in the partnerships we tend to have substantial teams of students in schools, so from 4 up to 18, depending on the circumstances. So we work really for 800 students, we work with maybe 250 schools, and they are there for the year; so they are not constantly placing people all over the place and trying to get out for the one visit. Colleagues build a relationship with their schools. We stay with our schools over time. I am sure that people put more time in than we pay for; I am quite sure of that. But we pay them a fairly token amount really in terms of the goodwill that you build when you build a relationship with a school and the staff in the school as a university colleague. All those things provide some supporting financial mechanism, some cost opportunity, if you like, for doing the work and doing it better.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — I think the substantial resource question in partnership-based teacher education is supporting colleagues in schools. The great question our pre-service teachers have is: when can we have good conversations with our mentors in schools, because on the Tuesdays there might be staff meetings and the mentor teacher has to rush off to the staff meeting; so there are other meetings going on at lunchtime, and the pre-service teacher finds it very difficult to have that conversation on a Tuesday. Finding resources to support those professional inquiries at the school is, if you like, the next big discovery that we need to find: how we can resource that, because we cannot resource professional conversations with 800 or 900 pre-service teachers in 250 schools every week. That requires release of the mentor teacher from the classroom under normal circumstances and that is big dollars. That came out of our site-based teacher education project. We did a kind of a back-of-envelope calculation on what might be possible after consultation with colleagues in schools.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Before you get too excited I would say that it is very expensive, and one of the concerns I have had in the last few months while the Australian Education Union has been considering a claim for doubling the payment rate is that that would send our school broke in six months, and we would have to make some other statements about priority; we would need to consider that.

Ms ECKSTEIN — What I am trying to get to is a better use of that resource.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — I suppose also one of the reasons why we are able to sustain visits to schools is that we have a phalanx of sessional staff who teach in our program. We are a school of education with about 1000 students — that is, 1000 equivalent full-time student units (EFTSUs) — and we have 24 or 25 full-time staff. That has costs in terms of our research effort, the administrative load that we all share, and now our attempts to keep in contact with schools in other ways, in personal development and in development projects.

The CHAIR — Can I just clarify something? In practical terms you have students for about 25 days, 7 days in the class in a school and one teaching round a year roughly. So it is about two and a half terms: the first term maybe not that much; the second and third term one day a week, they might go on camps, excursions or hang around; and they will then have one teaching round at that same school.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — They will have a block time in the partnership. It is important that it is not seen as sitting around.

The CHAIR — They have a block time over a couple of weeks at the same school. Presumably, whoever has not had that block time their supervising teacher kind of mentors them a bit, and they do that as part of their commitment and they get the money in most cases from the school?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — That is up to the schools. We pay the schools. It varies in schools.

The CHAIR — That is pretty clear; I just wanted to clarify it.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — Our fourth years in the B. Ed have a continuous six-week block in second semester.

The CHAIR — So it is a bit more.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — So for the other year levels you are right.

The CHAIR — And most schools would expect a visit from Victoria university once a fortnight, or once a month, roughly?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Once every three or four weeks, yes.

The CHAIR — Do they stay at the same school for four years or is each year a different school? What happens? Is each year in the bachelor a different school?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Yes, each year is renegotiated.

The CHAIR — I wanted to clarify that.

Mr SCHEFFER — Brenda, I wanted to come back to a point you made earlier about the student teachers coming back to the campus and then reflecting on their experience and then that driving their theoretical explorations, so it is student driven in a sense. How is the theory that is then looked at different to perhaps more conventional courses? Do you arrive at the same point or is there a different body of work?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — I think there are two things happening. I would think it is probably not much different at the end of time, but it is like school student learning. Everything we know about school student learning is that when the school student owns the question and inquiry, the learning is richer and deeper and stronger. It opens up the opportunity for a teacher in a school to add what they want to add too. It is much the same thing. It is good pedagogy, we think.

Mr SCHEFFER — You mean the teacher from the university?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — In a school classroom, yes. So in a university classroom, the same good pedagogy you apply within your own learning is that when I own an inquiry I bring that question to the table. It is challenged by my colleagues. The lecturer's role is to add, direct, guide and facilitate, but also to add bits that are missing. So it is not like if there is something clearly missing, or a student who comes back thinking that it is okay to beat kids into learning their tables; that might be a valid inquiry because it might be what they wondered about. So you send them off to inquire about it. But as a lecturer my responsibility is to add value to that as well and to add the theory that I know is out there. It is about a pedagogical approach that is valid and consistent with what we know about how people learn.

Ms MUNT — I am interested in your view on the recruitment of mature age students into teacher training. Do you have a particular point of view on that and do you think it is a good idea? How do you go about it presently or think it should be done?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — John might talk about the Dip. Ed.

Dr MARTINO — We have been doing that consistently for at least the past five years that I have been involved in the graduate diploma in secondary education. I think about 40 per cent of our cohort are mature age professionals wanting to go on and become teachers. It is through that program that we do a lot of that, and they add a richness to the program and are welcomed into the program, just as someone who has come straight from a three-year bachelor degree. The groups we have working, which are a mixture of the students who have just come through working with people who have been architects or scientists, or whatever their background, are quite effective in what they do both in the university and out in the schools.

Ms MUNT — Do you give them any recognition for their life experiences or prior learning or anything like that? Do they have to do the full course?

Dr MARTINO — That really depends on a case-by-case basis. To be perfectly honest, in the past we might not have done a really good job at recognising that prior learning, but the sheer numbers of people who are showing interest in going on to teacher education means that we are having to, as I said, take a case-by-case approach and prove our ability to make judgments on that.

Ms MUNT — How do you make your selection process then if a lot of people are showing interest and you do not give formal prior recognition?

Dr MARTINO — We go through a detailed system using the VTAC process, where they have to document their qualifications. We also have a supplementary form of our own that we have developed which asks detailed questions and gives them the opportunity to present their case. We also interview people, and I think that is pretty unique among teacher education programs in Victoria. That is where people are able to make those points

about their experience. So it is quite a complex process and there are lots of opportunities for that evidence to be unearthed.

Ms MUNT — What sort of weighting then would you give that interview in the selection process?

Dr MARTINO — If you do not do well in the interview it plays a big part in the Dip. Ed. in getting into the program. Looking at the paper-based requirements is not enough. In a one-year program where they only have that short period of time — I think the B. Ed can speak for itself — if we did not sit down and all we did was look at their paper requirements, we would be making a lot of wrong decisions. We have almost a 98 per cent pass rate.

Ms MUNT — That is extraordinary. With the mature age students?

Dr MARTINO — With the mature age students and across the whole program in Dip. Ed. That is to do with the culture of what we try to do in that one year and the recognition that both the people coming straight through, and also the mature age students, are wanting a particular thing out of this one- year program and you have to be supportive, you have to have a humane environment for them, and a recognition that most of the mature aged people are professionals who are coming back and who have a lot of experience. It comes to bear with the way they work with students in schools and also back at the university.

The CHAIR — Is it not the case that they vet all applicants for both the bachelor and the Dip. Ed. on the basis of application, rather than the ENTER?

Dr MARTINO — Not purely ENTER.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Not on that basis.

The CHAIR — What you are saying about mature age students or the diploma course actually applies to some extent to school leavers going into the bachelor course; is that correct?

Dr MARTINO — It is the interview.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — Brenda was mentioning the other day that 50 per cent of our students are non-VCE transfers in the B. Ed.

The CHAIR — But even for those, do you interview them? Do you have other factors?

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — We have 3000 applications for 150 places.

The CHAIR — So 50 per cent get interviewed; are there other factors?

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — We have a supplementary form. The first step in the selection process is the reading of the supplementary form and the establishment of a priority list. That priority list is what we take to the VCE scores.

The CHAIR — What sort of factors are there in that?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — In a reading of the applications we look for things like their understanding of the commitment of the course they are coming to and the work they are going to be doing. There are opportunities to tell us about that in the form. We look for their academic record and their capability to take on university studies, and we look at their knowledge and understanding of working with young people, bearing in mind that the course is P–12. We are not just looking for people who babysit their cousins, but who have had some engagement with young people in a range of settings. We also, because the course is P–12 and has some specialist general studies areas, and they apply for those, there are streams they apply for — for example, outdoor education or the creative arts — we look for their interests and background and capability to study in those fields as well. Why would you be applying for the outdoor education stream, for example, if you are a violinist? We look for that.

The CHAIR — So a kid could have a ENTER score of 85 and not get in because they have not shown you they have the aptitude for it.

Ms MUNT — And then it goes on further to interview for the mature age students; is that correct?

Dr MARTINO — For the Dip. Ed., but not for the bachelor.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — We have so many applications for the B. Ed that we stopped interviewing a couple of years ago.

Ms ECKSTEIN — So you do not interview any for the B. Ed?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Only if we have a few places and we are trying to check out those last few.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Yes, around the cut-off. Do you interview them all for the Dip. Ed.?

Dr MARTINO — For the Dip. Ed. we have about 600 or 700 applicants for about 80 positions. We read all the supplementary forms. Somebody reads everyone's supplementary form, and then we have a group that will interview. We interview something around 120 people out of that larger group.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — I just wanted to add another piece to the B. Ed program, which is our pathways group, so we do have a significant number. Each year we take about 15 to 20 people who are graduates or almost graduates with degrees into the four-year program and we give them credit for their general studies — and we get them out in two years. We have actually been doing that for a number of years now, and we have got better organised at doing it over the past couple of years. We also have a number of people articulating with TAFE qualifications, and we apply credits in consultation with the VIT which it will recognise for teaching in certain discipline areas. We give them appropriate credit, so it could be a year or a year and a half, depending on what they have done.

The CHAIR — Does it help the joint sector and make it easier?

Prof. CHEREDNICHENKO — We are working on it.

The CHAIR — What sort of arrangements do you have for getting feedback once a student is finished and is working in a school? What sort of formal feedback do you get from both the students and the schools in terms of, firstly, whether they have a job, and secondly, how appropriate the teacher education or learning was to their occupation and how they are performing?

Prof. CHEREDNICHENKO — We have had 100-per-cent graduate employment for the last few years, and that data is collected by the university. I might ask Marcelle or Tony to talk about the review process we have been going through over the last 12 months for our pre-service programs.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — We do not have an ongoing process — we might after this meeting, of course!

The CHAIR — Let us report to the Parliament first.

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — It is partly because there are 25 staff and 1000 students. Tasks get done in priority order, and setting up an ongoing process for the following of graduates and finding out their satisfaction rate is not something that has been at the top of our priority list. I think that is the explanation. But in the last two years we have had a review of our pre-service programs, and the main aim has been to see how we can strengthen partnerships post-teacher education. In the last three years we have had an online survey of graduates and of principals who have employed VU graduates. So we have done some work in trying to find out people's impressions of the course via principals' views about how well the graduates are going and how well the graduates themselves think they are going. The response we had was that that our graduates were highly valued for their pedagogy across all courses. Dip. Ed. students especially, because of the variety of their backgrounds, were regarded as bringing something extra to schools, and the B. Ed. students, because of their P–12 background, were valued in primary schools because they brought strong generic skills and also because of the general-studies backgrounds that they had. The striking thing that came out, though, was the support for partnerships — the sense that our graduates had a strong grounding in practice which enabled them to be adaptable. Our review pointed out a problem with the B. Ed. in particular, which was that we needed to strengthen the secondary component of the course, which is what we are undertaking in the next iteration of the bachelor of education.

Ms ECKSTEIN — In what respect?

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — While the current version of the course provided the practical experience required for teaching in the secondary schools there were alignment problems with what secondary people call methods and what was being taught in the course. The redesigned program will ensure that those alignments occur and will also ensure that there is a much stronger inquiry into practice at all levels as well as at secondary level. We are confident that we have the relationship between the practice in the school and the inquiry and the answering of questions at the university pretty well right in this new version.

The CHAIR — Could a summary version of the survey be made available to the committee just for us to look at by way of comparison?

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — Sure. Yes, I imagine so.

The CHAIR — Do you have regular meetings with other deans of education and discuss these issues across the universities or schools of education?

Prof. CHEREDNICHENKO — The Victorian Council of Deans of Education meets every two months; the heads of department from schools and deans get together from across the state every two months; there is an annual meeting of the Australian deans; and various other impromptu meetings occur from time to time, maybe one or two nationally in a year, so we do talk about these issues. In fact at the last Victorian deans meeting we had a conversation about the number of inquiries that are going on into teacher education at the moment and how nice it would be if they all asked the same questions so we had to do only one report.

The CHAIR — You will find that we are working with the VIT fairly closely.

Prof. CHEREDNICHENKO — I know, and they mentioned that. The VIT were there, so they talked about that. We also talked at the last meeting about the idea of career-change professionals coming into teaching and the issues and problems that they might find, like giving up income and how to address that. At that meeting there was a very strong voice, which I would agree with, that it is important to be able to attract career-change people to teaching, but we do not just want them for their content knowledge. They really have to be able to understand appropriate learning approaches and appropriate pedagogies for teaching young people in new ways. One of the great things that these career-change people bring is a non-segregated knowledge base. If you have been an engineer or a pharmacist, for example, and you decide you want to come and teach maths and chemistry, you have been working in a world where knowledge is connected and not where knowledge is segregated. I think there is an argument for rethinking the secondary school curriculum in particular so that there is a more connected view of learning and knowledge rather than a disaggregated one, and these people bring that as a strength. What they do have is their history of being at school, which is not necessarily the ideal way for all learners to learn. They are the success stories of schooling, and the people at this table are probably the success stories of schooling, so the way we were taught worked for us. But there is a very large group of people for whom it does not work, and teaching in better ways would improve our experience of schooling, too, I would argue. It is that kind of knowledge and learning that is critical for these career-change people.

The CHAIR — What formal structures do you have with the education department in regard to curriculum change? If the government decides on the curriculum for VCAL or for maths–science specialists for the middle years or whatever, what are the formal links that you have with the education department to ensure that, notwithstanding what we said before about how you teach, your lecturers, your teachers and your educators incorporate quickly into your curriculum a change in what is happening in government schools. How do you do that?

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — Partnerships is the answer. I will give you an example from my own teaching. I teach in the third-year secondary component, and in the last two weeks we have had what we call middle-years forums and post-compulsory forums, where we have had students from a government secondary school come and talk to our year 3 students about what it is like to be a learner in the middle years and the post-compulsory years, and we have had teachers responsible for, say, VCAL and the middle years come and explain what they are doing and how the changes are affecting practice in schools. It is our responsibility to locate those developments within the broader educational programs that each of the pre-service teachers is undertaking.

The CHAIR — You do not have a formal connection with the education department?

Assoc. Prof. KRUGER — No.

The CHAIR — When they are developing programs you do not have a formal sit-down and talk with them about what is going to happen across the state in relation to what is selected for particular programs and then feed that in? You do not have that formal arrangement?

Prof. CHEREDNICHENKO — We do not have a specific meeting stage, but we do have our ongoing engagement with our region and with the consultants in our region. That is part of our work. For example, a number of us are working with the consultants in the western region in a pedagogy network, where we are working in a collaborative teaching environment with teachers around pedagogy.

The CHAIR — Yes, I understand that. I will give you an example. We are short of time, so I will be fairly brief. The Innovations and Excellence program places 300 teachers in 100 underperforming or disadvantaged schools, or whatever you want to call them, under a range of criteria in an approach to put extra resources into those schools to lift their performance. How did you find out about that? How did you find out which schools were in it, and how does that link to your curriculum, given that you are providing student teachers who will hopefully transform those schools to meet that government objective of putting three extra teachers in? That is as an example.

Ass. Prof. KRUGER — Thanks for that. Some of us were invited to a meeting at 2 Treasury Place where innovations and excellence was outlined, and we provided our names to the database to be one of the critical friends. John is a member of one of the teams.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — We get invited to all the launches and to be part of those information sessions.

The CHAIR — Yes, but that is not quite what I am talking about. I am talking about a partnership with the whole of government in terms of the specific programs so they can have them quicker rather than slower, that is all.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — There is no formal mechanism except through the network — —

The CHAIR — You are part of a group but there is not a formal sit down pattern to it, where someone says, 'This is the target program for the government; let's work through it'.

Dr MARTINO — Something like that happens. Some formal structure is created, because it is all through back channels. Tony alluded to a program — that is, a school ringing me up and saying, 'John, can you come and work with our cluster on this grant that we have?'. That is how that works.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Just to add just one point — I agree with you — —

The CHAIR — I am being specific.

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Yes, I know you are being specific, and that is great. One of the things that we are in the middle of developing at the moment is an agreement with our regional director around exactly that, so he is aware and we are aware that we need to have a much closer formal relationship that gets that conversation happening earlier, so I am working on that document as we speak.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Is that western region or northern region?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Western. So I take your point about the whole of government — no.

The CHAIR — Okay. Thank you very much. It has been great. I wonder if some member of the committee could visit you in the future and have a look at what you are doing. Would that be suitable ?

Dr CHEREDNICHENKO — Absolutely.

The CHAIR — I will be one of those, and I look forward to coming out and seeing you some more. Thank you very much and good luck for the rest of term.

Witnesses withdrew.

C O R R E C T E D V E R S I O N

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 18 May 2004

Members

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Witnesses

Mr T. Hayes, executive officer, Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria; and

Ms M. Manning, chair, Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria, and executive officer, School Library Association of Victoria.

The CHAIR — Welcome. Would you start off by introducing yourselves, give a short statement of what you do, and your views relating to the terms of reference. Thank you.

Mr HAYES — I will pass around a back-to-back document which I will use as the basis for talking to. My name is Terry Hayes. I am the executive officer for the Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria. It used to be known as the Joint Council of Subject Associations of Victoria, so a lot of people still know it as the subject association peak body. I have also been a kind of 25-year member of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English. I have a background in subject association culture and I am also a council member of the Victorian Institute of Teaching, so I have that kind of perspective on this too. I would like to introduce Mary Manning, who is the current chair of the council. Mary is also the executive officer of the School Library Association, an honorary position. One of the things about subject associations and professional teaching associations is that they draw on a huge volunteer work force across the three sectors. My position is a paid position; I am the only employed member of the council itself. I suspect what we will be talking about specifically are issues to do with curriculum and pedagogy — what the 21st century might require of them. This document is an attempt to be an amalgam of just a call sent out to the 40 associations that make up the council and the responses they have made to it. As I made clear in one of the points there, several associations have sent to you very extensive submissions of their own that relate to how they see it and their subject-specific or curriculum initiative issues. I know several people here. John Scheffer is my local MP.

Ms MUNT — And a very good one, too!

Mr HAYES — And I have met Anne through a range — —

Ms ECKSTEIN — Previous lives!

Mr HAYES — DEET kinds of connections. Before I go on with this document, could I just say before I forget it that last consultation you asked the VU people about the formal connections. I think that is one kind of abiding concern of many organisations related to DEET at the moment — that is, where you formally get the knowledge about the new structural arrangements. You mentioned the 300 teachers out of Innovation Excellence; you could add LLENs to that: you could add networks, you could add clusters. That is becoming an increasing concern of my members about where you might go to one kind of source in the department that could provide you with the knowledge. We know where the regions are, we know where the contacts are, but there is an increasing kind of concern about where are the other kinds of structures and infrastructures that we might relate to. I do not think one exists at the moment, and that might be something that comes out of this investigation.

I will not go on to read this document, but they are reference points to the kinds of things you want to talk about. The first three points really establish some of the context out of which we work. As I say, we are across systems; we draw on primary, secondary, tertiary, educators and teachers. They all make up the membership of the association. No-one has ever tried to work out how many individual members there are across Victoria — someone once said 35 000. We can draw on 35 000 teachers, and we draw on many of them for their professional knowledge and for their professional expertise in delivering programs.

We have international and national connections, so we have those kinds of perspectives on what we do as well, and if you look at point 3 there we represent both subject-specific disciplines. I was interested to hear what the VU people are saying about how they are feeling at the moment; they are a bit light on in delivering those subject-specific kinds of methods. We also deal with what you might call cross-curriculum initiatives — library, ICT, literacy, career education, cultural diversity through VATME. So it brings together what you might call both the old notion of knowledge, I suppose, and the evolving notion of knowledge; and that is becoming an important issue for almost every association.

We do have a lot of pre-service education students as members, and the associations strategically target them as potential members for the future; so as well as having working-in-partnership initiatives we also have our own kinds of strategies for getting pre-service teachers on board; and also nurturing them to make sure they want to stay in the profession. That is an important point, that we do try to make sure that they feel like they are part of an intellectual community, and we try to do that with the pre-service students we deal with also. One of the things we keep insisting on in a variety of contexts about pre-service students is that they are closer to the new knowledge than experienced teachers, and any kind of program, whether it be the VIT Mentoring program or one of the schools that will individually take on new teachers, and they have to respect that fact about them, that it is a

mentoring induction kind of process for them that recognises that there is a kind of parity in it in terms of what they actually know.

As I said in point 5, several associations have made individual submissions and no doubt some of you have read them. Points 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 are really about the specifics of what the inquiry is about. I will do a quick synopsis of them. The basic concern in the kind of feedback I got from the associations is around the question of the decreasing opportunity for subject-specific specialisation in pre-service education courses. It came out quite strongly in submissions from the science association, art education, music — there are a lot of music associations, library, commerce — that certainly has implications for the delivery of a mainstream traditional senior curriculum, but some of them also argue it has implications for the way those sorts of disciplines get delivery in the primary area as well. You just cannot rely on a general studies kind of approach to primary school education if you are talking about, for example, scientific knowledge. So that point was made.

Just picking up the question I heard the Chair ask about where they hear about government initiatives, I think it is important that they hear about government initiatives because that is the way they take what they know as abstract into the particular kind of context that they have to work in. I use English teaching as an example. I would expect a decent English method course to recognise that any English method student might be called upon to teach in secondary education context in an integrated program in middle years, a mainstream English course or the new kinds of units being developed for literacy, communication et cetera in VCAL, VET et cetera. There is a sense in which those kinds of initiatives need to frame whatever kind of methodologies are being taught in schools; not taught as something separate, but taught as a way as though there is a very necessary interconnection between them. Do you want to say anything further on that point?

Ms MANNING — I was just going to agree in relation to the lack of some courses and opportunities for specialist teachers. In recent times, particularly in primary schools, the opportunities for people to specialise in those subject areas and those areas that are cross-curricular has been a difficulty — for people to get into courses that specialise and those sorts of specialist areas, such as art and library, for example. There are now problems in filling vacancies or even expecting to fill vacancies. Schools have got to the point where they do not expect to have necessarily those people with those skills on board in primary a lot of the time, so that is a difficulty.

Mr HAYES — And could I suggest that these are comparisons that the educators in the association set up? They are saying that this was possible 10 years ago, it is no longer possible now. They are commenting on not a lack of things but so much as a removal of things from what was an expectation in past pre-service education courses.

Over the page point 8 takes up the point about understanding government initiatives, but understanding them in ways that they are not just kinds of clones delivering them. One of the things we like to think about on subject association is that as professional teaching associations we are educational lobby groups and sometimes we agree with what governments do and sometimes we think that what they do can be finetuned and made better because of where we draw our research from. We accept the fact that knowledge is dynamic and that is why we keep using the term 'pre-service education' rather than 'pre-service training' because it is the way we think about the courses themselves. You want them to be, using the buzz words, 'reflective practitioners' rather than 'technocrats' when they come into schools. We also think, and this is the point that several associations made, that the history of education has gone out of the way young pre-service students are now being taught — that they do not have any sense of where they are now as having some kind of historical precedent and why things have evolved to the point that they have.

The CHAIR — You have to know your past to know where you are going to. It was Bob Marley, I think, who said that.

Mr HAYES — Yes, exactly. A lot of it seems retro in some way, for those of us who have been around for as long as I have.

Mr KOTSIRAS — It must have been before my time.

The CHAIR — It might have been before your time.

Mr HAYES — ICT, for all the dough spent on it in this state, is still pretty embryonic in how it is being integrated into the structure of pedagogy and with every content matter. It was a point made by Ron Lake, assistant

general manager, innovations branch, at the Schools as Learning Organisations conference held back in March. He said he thought there were only two schools in the state that had integrated ICT effectively into the way curriculum and pedagogy had to be delivered, and I do not think that that is simply to do with the dearth of it. The apparent dearth of it in pre-service education is to do with the work force; it is still pretty resistant to it.

The next point is about the practicum. Almost everyone who responded to us who has dealt with the practicums in schools has suggested that there is insufficient time to give pre-service students hands-on learning. Some of them made the point that I made earlier about the fact that there has to be a real sense in a mentoring project, that these pre-service students have a parity in the program. They are not there just as clones of what we are doing; they bring new knowledge and therefore bring creative tensions into it.

The last point is about the necessity for developing some kind of synergy with the VIT program. The VIT program for mentoring and induction is a kind of internship. Even though it is mandated it is not mandated to the point where you feel like there is as yet a consistency about how it is being delivered. I have high hopes for that being the place where a genuine development of professional knowledge that might deliver new education might occur, and that of course is a resourcing issue. If that program is to work it needs some recognition of the fact that people give up their time to be in it, and young people need time to be able to reflect in it. That is where we are coming from, and we will take questions.

Ms MANNING — In relation to the practicums and time, when our association, for example, is contacted by a tertiary institution to place students, with the imposition that that seems to cause the individual in the school it, often appears that perhaps they are not being supported enough to be involved in teacher practicums — the individual teachers — and perhaps that is a time issue as well. Sometimes it is difficult to place the students in training.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for that. It was quite a detailed submission. One of the issues about how education is different is the language used. Before I was talking about how a program is passed through and you hear terms such as 'dialogue' and 'conversation'. It is how to work out whether you are talking about imparting information or designing systems, getting agreed approaches and ensuring that programs are in place to achieve agreed outcomes. I want you to comment on what you started off with in terms of my issue about how new initiatives — government priorities — are transferred both into teacher training in schools but also in teacher training, whether what we are doing is just an imparting of information or whether it is a systemic approach to ensuring that those teacher trainees come out with the knowledge to help transform a school, for instance.

Mr HAYES — I do not think there is a formal structure.

Ms MANNING — There is not.

Mr HAYES — I think it is done through networking.

The CHAIR — I do not want to be too centralist.

Mr HAYES — Organisations like us have to be very proactive about finding out where the bodies are buried and who the contact names are. I suspect it is probably the same for pre-service education organisations too. But you will also find, and I think this has to be accepted about the way academic — and they are academic — institutions are. They do not just take them on unthinkingly. They critique them, and that is what you find when you deal with tertiary educators. I am not going to tell you who said it, but I had a tertiary educator in my own base say that he thought the blueprint was an execrable document. He can say that, but the association cannot say that because we do not think so. You would have to engage in dialogue and ask what does he mean. If this is a blueprint that the bulk of Victorian schools are trying to implement, why does he say that? You have to take the issue on and debate it intellectually.

From our point of view our most immediate need, because we are also professional development providers, is to find out (a) what the structures are, (b) who is doing good things in them, and (c) whether we as professional development providers can draw on them. Take for example the Shared Learning forum run on 26 March under the auspices of the Australian government quality teaching program. They had lots of workshops for teachers. I made it very clear to my members, and 10 of them went along, that that is where they ought to be finding their next professional development providers — practising teachers who had been thinking about what they are doing with their subject in new contexts — and that there ought to be some kind of capacity for them to cross-fertilise that. I

would assume that the knowledge bank that gets talked about in the blueprint — as long it is promoted properly — will be a source of — —

The CHAIR — But doesn't that happen, Terry? Do the teaching institutions say, 'We want to jazz up our English, we want to jazz up our science, we have vacancies: who do you know who is fantastic out there, teaching'?. Does that happen?

Mr HAYES — Because of my involvement with English I know a lot of the English educators who work in education, and I think they are on the pace. I think there is a genuine interaction between knowledge and what they see going on, and they have influenced a lot of it too. You will find a lot of the initiatives are fertilised by their knowledge, and their knowledge is international, and interstate. Alan Luke — there is a name I can just give to you. He first surfaces in Victoria through an article in an English teaching journal. People start to sniff around, and suddenly you have hoards of teachers going up to Queensland to have a look at New Basics, so it works that way.

Ms MANNING — I think all the associations would see the tertiary educators who are in their area of expertise and interest to be the partners they would like to have on board and involved in what they do, so I guess from that point of view there is that cross-fertilisation. But the way that the associations work, as Terry said, is to hear about the initiatives, and that is where the council provides a bit of a conduit to the associations to find out about the initiatives that are happening, to look at them from the perspective of that particular teaching association and spread that out to the members, and I guess to that extent influencing the pre-service education indirectly, but there are not the formal structures.

Mr HAYES — And addressing government initiatives, I would have thought, too.

Mr KOTSIRAS — We have had discussions with the associations. Do you feel that primary teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach students? If not, what must be done to ensure that primary teachers are equipped?

Mr HAYES — You get a varied response from association to association. The big literacy association, which is ALEA, would say yes, they think they have covered all the bases in terms of what is required for primary school delivery of literacy. But in the briefs that they gave me the science teachers said that they did not think enough was being done in pre-service education courses to ensure that primary teachers themselves had a solid enough basis in delivering a science program in an integrated curriculum. That may change with the move to middle year if you have science experts based in transition clusters, because we are now finding that more and more teachers in those clusters are moving — we are finding that a grade 8 teacher will go and teach a grade 5 class, so that might occur.

Mr KOTSIRAS — I have seen some schools where teachers teach a very limited amount of science or mathematics and spend more hours on history and English, and I assumed it was because they lacked the knowledge in those areas to teach students any more.

Mr HAYES — I cannot answer how it goes on in the schools. I would not be able to answer it truthfully, except to say that from anecdotal stuff from association to association certainly the science people were the ones who seemed to me to feel that they were left out.

Mr KOTSIRAS — I am not sure whether you were here when the VUT gave evidence, but they have this partnership program going. Do you know anything about it, and what do you think is involved in this program?

Mr HAYES — Their partnership program with the regions is I think a terrific addition — the western region consults and they have close contacts with schools in their region also. But again, given that Victoria is divided on a regional basis, you cannot guarantee a tertiary education institute tied to each region. They have made a bit of a thing about working in the west and the north, where they have that kind of experience and knowledge. It is a good model.

Mr KOTSIRAS — A three-year course plus Dip. Ed. or a four-year course? Have you heard from the associations as to which one they prefer, or whether both are equally as good?

Mr HAYES — I think it is more a question of balanced theory and practice. That is why I like to know how the internship is developing. I think that should be explored — the relationship between what a year of doing that might add to what is basically a theoretical understanding of education.

Mr SCHEFFER — You have said some extremely interesting things there about subject specialisations. Just looking at the notes that I have made here, you talked about a decrease in specialisations on the side of music and science, for example. Then you also said that pre-service teachers are closer to the new knowledge — I am not quite sure what you mean by that. Then I saw in the newspapers recently a couple of articles about English teachers not teaching poetry any longer because basically they do not know about poetry and they do not understand about scansion and God knows what else, so there is a whole raft of things there. I had thought that probably teachers were doing a whole lot of other things that were equally as important and that I should not be an old fuddy-duddy and I thought these things were shifting, but you actually raised those things as very important.

Mr HAYES — That is right.

Mr SCHEFFER — My questions is: is there a decline in the requirements in pre-service training for the students to have excellent subject-based knowledge, and do you think this may be an argument — for example, we were just talking about VCE, where the demands of subject knowledge are very high — that there might be some special provision made to ensure that those teaching at that level are really well versed in the content?

Mr HAYES — There are special provisions in terms of guidelines given to schools, but they are only guidelines about what they need to teach. It is to do with the capacity of a teacher to deliver the diversity of a curriculum, isn't it?

Mr SCHEFFER — I am sorry, but the system delivers the diversity, not any one teacher.

Mr HAYES — Well, that example I gave was of an English teacher. You have to change gear a bit to think about how you work in an integrated curriculum from how you might be teaching a stand-alone VCE English course. The degree to which that extrapolates to all other subjects I do not know, but certainly the arguments coming through from those groups that I mentioned — science, art, music, LOTE, and the commerce subjects — were that they think there has been a real diminution in the capacity for students in pre-service education to go into the kind of deep knowledge for teaching those subjects that are drawn from their area.

Mr SCHEFFER — What about requirements for methods? It is a while since I was involved with schools but are there strict guidelines?

Mr HAYES — They are only guidelines.

Ms MANNING — You mean in relation to who should be teaching what?

Mr HAYES — The department issues guidelines.

Ms MANNING — There are qualifications.

Mr SCHEFFER — Are there one or two methods teachers generally come into schools with, if that is the case?

Ms MANNING — Generally the case.

Mr HAYES — I am not sure actually. It might be different for VUT. Given what they said it sounded like it was not method based.

Mr SCHEFFER — What are you driving at with guidelines? Are you saying they are not strong enough?

Mr HAYES — The guidelines are the qualifications needed to teach subjects at certain levels. I was on a committee that was reviewing that. There has been a change of government so I do not know what has happened to the review of that, I think the last was in 1992.

Ms MANNING — No, they were reviewed more recently. They were reviewed a couple of years ago, and they were published again: 'You are qualified to teach science if you have done this and that'.

Mr HAYES — Guidelines are not mandatory.

Mr SCHEFFER — Not mandated for schools?

Mr HAYES — No.

Mr SCHEFFER — Can I draw you out to talk more on that?

Mr HAYES — I do not know enough about what is going on in schools. All I know is it exists there, but the degree to which it is more honoured in the breach than in the observance — you would have to have a look at it school by school.

Ms MANNING — That is right. There are lots of people teaching outside their formal area of qualification, and there are people with formal teaching qualifications in one area who are teaching something else in schools. It is the practicality of how schools work. That is certainly the feedback which our association often gets. There are people in a school who are not actually doing the task they believe they were trained for if they are doing something else. It happens a lot in primary.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I return to something we talked about earlier, which is the relationship between subject associations and the teacher training institutions. Would the networking in that connection be more hit-and-miss depending on how active the subject association is, how active the particular university, the lecturer or course coordinator is?

Ms MANNING — Definitely.

Ms ECKSTEIN — If that is the case — and you are nodding furiously — that it is a bit hit-and-miss, should there be some more formal arrangement where those connections are made because it would seem to me that subject associations have a valuable input to make to beginning teachers and trainee teachers. How should that happen? Does the VIT have a role; if so, what is it?

Mr HAYES — I think the VIT has all kinds of things.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Are you critical of VIT?

Mr HAYES — No, I am not.

Mr KOTSIRAS — If you are, please tell us.

Mr HAYES — No. I am a passionate believer in VIT.

Mr KOTSIRAS — I am more than happy to take it on board.

Mr HAYES — No. I think VIT is a great organisation; it is a hard-working bureaucracy and is understaffed. It has got a structure in place; if we are talking about the value of having people with theory being able to put something into practice in a safe, productive environment, a mentoring project like that mentoring project is our best chance. We do not have the resources to do it, but the VIT may eventually have the resources. The VIT resources are partly to do with money, but partly to do with the endless goodwill of teachers who are prepared to serve altruistically.

Ms ECKSTEIN — What about the institutions at the other end?

Mr HAYES — The institutions at the other end — —

Ms ECKSTEIN — How do we get them to cooperate?

Mr HAYES — The institutions support VIT and are kind of on board with the accreditation of courses and are open to suggestions from professionals in the field about what should be in courses, so the connection is there.

Ms MANNING — It does rely very much on the initiatives taken by the associations often to contact and develop that working relationship, but that is going to be the role of the associations anyway and the ability for

different associations to do that does vary because some associations are not necessarily strong organisations; many have no paid staff to carry out those things. From the observations that I could make, the tertiary institutions are very keen to work with the associations where those initiatives are made and will continue to do so. There does not seem to be any resistance, but whether you could make it compulsory or not — —

Ms ECKSTEIN — So VIT could perhaps provide a forum within which some of those aspects could take place?

Mr HAYES — Can I also say that associations are basically groups of educators and teachers and — I use the English one which I know best — all the English educators of every university of the eight in Victoria are members of the English teaching association and so it is to their advantage as they are the ones who keep funnelling the young kids towards the association, telling them to go to conferences for a free day and they will get to meet Alan Luke on the next day. It is to their advantage too to keep the connection up with the associations.

Ms ECKSTEIN — One other issue: you have talked in your last point about insufficient teaching practicum, more subject-experienced teachers to be engaged in mentoring and to work with new graduates and so forth. It has been put to us that the role of training teachers and supervising practicum ought to be part of a teacher's responsibility in terms of mentoring the next generation. Would the funds currently used in that way provide for things like time release to enable some of these things to happen? Would that be a good thing? I would understand if you do not want to make a comment.

Mr HAYES — I do not think responsibility and time release are mutually exclusive — you have got to be responsible in terms of the range of things which you are asked to do in any kind of job.

Ms ECKSTEIN — What I am trying to say is that the money we currently pay to supervising teachers in schools to take trainees, would that be better utilised to provide time release to enable those teachers to work with those students?

Mr HAYES — I think it is probably not an either/or solution. Immediately you look at a year-long program, given what schools are and how complex teaching is, it seems to me to be an immediately better kind of model for initiating people into a profession and determining their competence, rather than the kind of stand-and-deliver things you get in practicums nowadays, and it is a way to use your resources.

Ms MUNT — I think a lot of my questions have been covered, especially the last question when you talked about mentoring and it was said associations do not have the resources to help in that area themselves. I am interested in that a lot of professional associations do get involved in mentoring within their professions. They do not do it necessarily for money but as a professional responsibility within the associations, and I am interested in your views on that as the umbrella organisation for the teaching profession, more or less. Do you see your responsibility — particularly since you already have developing strategies for initiating new teachers and keeping them in the profession — that mentoring would follow on?

Mr HAYES — We do; what we do not have is the capacity to do it in sustained ways. The other thing I would argue, which may be arguing against my bread and butter here, is that I think the associations have to come on board with the VIT program. I have made the point to my associations that they had better know which of their members are putting their hands up to be mentors, and if they are not putting their hands up perhaps they ought to be working within that structure. The association can provide mentors in other ways, on networks and things.

Ms MUNT — There are two parts of mentoring as I see it: there is mentoring of the mentor teachers in the schools and there is also the mentoring of the new teachers who are coming out of college. From all the hearings so far, the new students who are coming out say emphatically that they feel they are on their own and adrift in a sea. It seems a very big opportunity for a professional association to take up if that is what the new entrants to its profession are saying.

Mr HAYES — Is that the evidence coming from the pilot project? I would have thought — —

Ms MUNT — No, it is face to face with new teachers.

Mr HAYES — I suppose what an association does provide is networking and funding. What an association can finally say is, 'We want you to stay in the profession, here are the kinds of thing we offer you

professionally and because you are new and beginning, here are extra things we offer you too'. In some associations we run beginning teacher networks where they bring them together to support one another, so there are different strategies there.

Ms MUNT — It seems from the evidence we have been hearing it should be a focus. The other thing I would like to note is that it seems from the evidence that rather than having separate primary and secondary teaching training courses, the courses could be merged into one and simply have one teacher training course which covers prep to year 12. Do you have a view on that?

Ms MANNING — Do we have a formal view?

Mr HAYES — Going back to what I said about the capacity for teachers to deliver a diverse curriculum — and I suppose we have to look at what they need to know content-wise, with pedagogy and their ability to read the context in which they have to deliver it — if you take science as an example, can they deliver year 12 physics, or what has to be done to transform into a teacher for that; what does it mean if they are also asked in the P-12 school to teach combined grade 3-4-class science and how to make those judgments?

Ms MANNING — Yes, I think in the context of the middle years curriculum and in the way that primary and secondary schools, for example, are working more closely together, but also the fact that so many schools are organised on a P-10 or P-12 arrangement, it would be a good argument. So you have two arguments there that would be very positive. However, I have heard members of our association being very critical of young or new teachers coming into their school who have had 'I can teach at any level' training or pre-service education, saying they do not really have a depth of knowledge. There is a little bit of a difficulty with the concept.

Ms MUNT — So basically you are saying it could work, but there needs to be a tweaking in the actual application?

Ms MANNING — Yes, I think so.

Ms MUNT — And then if you add your internship idea into it as well, would we be coming to an outcome that would be okay?

Ms MANNING — Certainly the mentoring concept is something that is well worth talking about.

Ms MUNT — We have also heard about a maths and LOTE shortage; do you have any thoughts on how that could be addressed?

Mr HAYES — I do not myself, but a maths submission that addresses that is actually being written.

Ms MANNING — And a number of the associations might have pointed out that there is a lack of courses in some areas. You are not going to get lots of people training to do something if there is no course to do it or if there is only one course to do it, and I think those associations would have put forward those recommendations.

The CHAIR — Excellent.

Ms MUNT — Thank you very much.

Mr SCHEFFER — Terry, you mentioned you have a lot of pre-service teacher members.

Mr HAYES — The associations do, yes.

Mr SCHEFFER — Yes, the associations do. Do you do anything special with them or for them? Do you historically target them? That is one thing. The other question is: what is a quick profile of the associations in terms of government and non-government schools and spatial distribution?

Mr HAYES — That would be too hard.

Mr SCHEFFER — Is it? Do not worry, then.

Mr HAYES — What I would say is that in a sense it is not to our advantage to look at that too clinically, because the basis of bringing people together is the professional knowledge and not the system they serve. As far as

the pre-service students go, I think you would find the associations have a whole range of things. Again, I keep using English as a basis for my comments because I know they invite them down to the association, they give them a $20 joining fee which costs anybody else $99, they get the full range of journals for the year they are there, and they get invited to work and participate in the state conference. So they are practical things they do with them. I will answer your question about new knowledge and poetry before I leave, too.

Mr SCHEFFER — Okay.

The CHAIR — You can perhaps talk about that another time.

Mr HAYES — Okay.

The CHAIR — One last question. Everyone accepts that to be a teacher you have to both be able to teach across a diverse range of abilities and have a deep understanding of your subject matter. You have talked about the issue of deep understanding of subject matters, which seems to be dropping off a bit. The other point of discussion in education is the ability to break the barriers between primary, middle and senior education — that is, to see it as a smooth continuum and to be able to teach within ability ranges. That goes into the how-to-teach factor, I guess you would say, as opposed to having a deep understanding of your subject. Where do you think things are going? How do you think things are going in teacher education in terms of that balance?

Mr HAYES — Do you want to try to answer that?

Ms MANNING — I was actually going to put my perspective. I do not think we should overlook the ability to learn how to learn. I think that is really the issue: you cannot know everything about your subject discipline, but if you could impart to students the ability to want to learn, to know how to learn and to have the skills that take them across all the different learning areas, that is really important. I think those two things need to go hand in hand, and I do not think we should get bogged down into an article about not teaching poetry. People need to feel very comfortable and to feel like they have had the necessary grounding and the expertise in their pre-service education courses and the ability to actually build on that. I think that is an issue.

Mr HAYES — I do not think the how-to-teach learning is be done in the abstract. By that I mean that pre-service education services should really focus on the tangibles of what the Victorian landscape is.

Ms MANNING — Yes, I agree.

Mr HAYES — If there is a thinking-oriented curriculum and an essential learning framework, young students have to know not only what it is but why it is there, and they have to be able to understand it and realise that it underpins whatever they are doing with deep subject knowledge, delivering an integrated curriculum or whatever, but that should not be done in a way that makes it look like everything becomes top-heavy with extra knowledge. That seems to me to be the framework. You say to the kids, 'You are going out into this educational world with these things being developed. Why are we thinking about them? Why are they different to what you had to think about when you were in school? Why are we suddenly putting an emphasis on metacognition, learning styles and all the rest of it?', so that they can see that it is interesting in itself but that there is a kind of pragmatic point to it. And it is not only the state system — it has been shaping Victorian education for years. We are just catching up with it.

Ms MANNING — Terry says it so well, really.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Terry and Mary. The committee very much appreciates your contributions to this inquiry.

Ms MANNING — Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.

C O R R E C T E D V E R S I O N

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 18 May 2004

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Ms M. Fraser, innovation and excellence educator, Dromana Secondary College.

The CHAIR — Welcome to this hearing. We very much appreciate your comments, and I will hand over to you.

Ms FRASER — I am a bit out of my comfort zone here. I need 30 kids in front of me to be comfortable! Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. I hope you do not mind if I read out my submission. My name is Marnee Fraser and I consider myself fortunate to have been appointed as an educator for the innovation and excellence program in the middle years of schooling. In this position I am to act as an agent of change in encouraging and supporting teachers of middle year students to reflect on their pedagogical practices, to improve student learning outcomes and better engage students in these critical years of education.

After teaching at all levels form prep to year 10 over the past 30 years I am acutely aware of a crisis in state school education. Dr Jean Russell's middle years research and development (MYRAD) findings highlight this crisis. She determined that students in years 5 to 9 were at risk of being disengaged from their schooling and that teachers must address this disengagement and the changing needs of adolescents to affect school retention rates, absenteeism and more successful learning outcomes. Although there may be a wealth of experience in our teaching service this has not necessarily translated to effective learning outcomes and increased engagement of students in their learning. Recognition of this problem has resulted in the resourcing of professional development and in-service training courses for teachers. These aim to better inform teachers of effective strategies for the engagement of their students and to encourage them to adopt reflective practices in their teaching. Innovation in education is being implemented in Victorian state schools at this moment; and innovative practices, assessment strategies and curriculum content are being explored. It is a very challenging but exciting time for both primary and secondary teachers across the state.

Unfortunately trainee teachers are not always provided with the same opportunities to explore these innovations and must wait until placed in a school before their real learning takes place. Effective teacher training should focus on reflective practice and the needs of today's students as they become part of a constantly changing global society. Today's students need to participate in decision-making, take risks with their learning, be technologically competent, literate, numerate, socially competent critical thinkers, problem solvers and, above all, lifelong learners.

What we as teachers need to become more aware of are the changing needs of today's youth — physically, socially and emotionally. Today's youth are very different beings to the youth of 10 or 20 years ago. They are constantly challenged by a society that has become dominated by a mass media that has brought global crises, violence, greed, environmental destruction and mixed messages into their living rooms. These youth are constantly juggling issues associated with morality, civic responsibility, substance abuse, value judgments, sustainability and are trying desperately to determine their position on such issues and concerns. They need to connect with their world and determine their own place in it. They do not wish to be part of the knowledge society but rather play a part in a thinking society where their opinions are valued and they feel they have a contribution to make globally. We as educators are beginning to recognise the importance of this connectedness as the most important element in a student's education, whether it be to their family unit, their community, their school, their teachers or to their global environment. Just how do we propose to impart this connectedness to teachers in training; how indeed do we plan to measure it and assess its effectiveness?

Over the past two years I have worked part time in the university system, lecturing to trainee teachers in the area of society and environment. Unfortunately I have come to see teacher training courses as focusing too heavily on theoretical content rather than on effective pedagogies and the process of teaching and learning itself. Teacher trainees are expected to be passive learners and have little opportunity to take an active role in the education process, so what sort of model is this providing them with? These trainee teachers spend precious little time in schools undertaking practicums and yet as graduate teachers they are expected to begin their teaching career flying solo in a class of up to 30 children from various socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

Graduate teachers often speak to me of their frustrations associated with classroom and behaviour management, school organisation and effective classroom practice. They are poorly prepared for the demands of curriculum planning, assessment techniques and report writing. Most graduates have been given little or no background to the current middle years initiatives and priorities. I believe the universities need to forge stronger relationships with practising teachers in the training of their students. A doctorate does not necessarily equate with teaching experience, classroom management and an informed perspective of school organisation. While pre-service teacher training courses do need to develop students' theoretical knowledge and the productive pedagogies that underpin it, they must also provide opportunities for this theory to be transferred to effective practice.

The current system of remuneration for teacher educators in schools is unsatisfactory as it places a financial burden on the universities that restricts the time allowed for practicums. I would propose a change in the current promotion system that would allow an incremental adjustment for teacher educators that recognises their commitment and experience as well as the demands on their time that teacher training dictates. In the long term it is in the best interests of the school system and its students that graduates arrive in schools well prepared for the rigours of classroom practice. Such remuneration should be the responsibility of the school system and not of the universities. Teacher educators could also have built into their role a mentoring responsibility with a respective time allowance for continued supervision during the first year of a graduate's placement.

It is often said that a good teacher is born, not trained — a statement that in my opinion has a certain degree of accuracy. However, universities continue to demand high ENTER scores as the sole requirement for entry into a teaching course. Many of the most committed graduate students I have had the pleasure of working with have gained entry to their course through the back door, so to speak, spending time voluntarily working in schools after undertaking unrelated courses in other areas. The universities maintain that an interview process to determine suitability would be unwieldy considering the present number of applicants. However, courses for medicine, law and art require such an interview and those university departments are prepared to undertake the lengthy process. My own son undertook such an interview process for graphic design where hundreds were interviewed for only 40 places. I am also aware of many high achieving students who give teaching away after only one or two years into their practice as they find themselves either unsuited to the profession or the teaching conditions are too difficult to sustain the required commitment.

In conclusion, I believe teacher training courses need to ensure that their students undertake maximum practical classroom, experience so that they may effectively develop their understanding of pedagogical practices that support effective teacher-student relationships and successful learning outcomes.

The CHAIR — You mentioned you were at the Frankston forum?

Ms FRASER — Yes.

The CHAIR — Which forum I think probably reinforced some of those views for you.

Ms FRASER — Yes, it was wonderful going there first.

Mr KOTSIRAS — From what I understood, you do not believe the universities are providing skills to our student teachers.

Ms FRASER — Not practical teaching skills, I do not believe. A few students spoke to me last year. A comment one of them made was, 'The university teaches us why we teach, but not how to teach' and that is the way they view it at the moment: that they are getting plenty of theoretical background to education and teaching but not getting hands-on, how to put it into practice, how to achieve it, how it works, how to manage the class of 30 children at the same time as delivering the wonderful content.

Mr KOTSIRAS — What is the solution?

Ms FRASER — Increased time in schools — practicums. They do not spend enough time in schools.

Mr KOTSIRAS — VUT has a partnership program whereby it doubled the number of hours students spend in schools — have you heard of this?

Ms FRASER — Who did?

Mr KOTSIRAS — VUT. You have not heard of this?

Ms FRASER — No. But it certainly needs to be done.

Mr KOTSIRAS — I will leave that for now and come back to it.

Ms FRASER — Right.

Ms MUNT — It is interesting that you were at Frankston because I found Frankston probably the most interesting day that we have had with this committee. It was very interesting to see the new teachers, new professionals, stand up and say what they actually thought. It reinforced to me that there seems to be a disconnection between the new teachers and the institutions that are teaching them. There does not seem to be an effective dialogue going on. Our last witnesses talked about an internship and I was wondering whether you have any views on internship as being a way to increase the practicum time for new teachers.

Ms FRASER — I think that would be wonderful. I have quite often thought of teaching perhaps becoming an apprenticeship-type of situation which would be the same thing. I spoke to a friend's mother who was a teacher before she retired many years ago. She told me that when they did their teacher training, they spent the whole of the first year in schools, before they went anywhere near what was a teachers college in those days. In speaking to her about this she said it was wonderful because then when they approached the theory they had the practical knowledge to relate back. An Internship? Absolutely, they need to spend more time out in the schools.

Ms MUNT — I also asked the professional association that was here before you a question about P-12 degrees. I was wondering whether you had a view on that being in a secondary school; do you think this is a good way to go, or not?

Ms FRASER — Absolutely, because what I am finding in my position at the moment is part of my job requires me to get communication happening between the secondaries and the primaries, and to, hopefully, work out a better, smoother transition across both, and what we are calling at the moment a seamless curriculum. The primaries that undertake a four-year teaching degree are in a lot better position than a lot of the secondaries that are doing a one-year graduate diploma on the end of a normal degree in another area. The thought of just doing one year of teacher training cannot possibly ready them sufficiently. Although I am working with some fantastic secondary teachers, I mentioned earlier that the thing I love about working with them is that they are like sponges and are not aware of a lot of the innovative practices that are happening in the middle years, and they are extremely keen to take them on board. The secondaries avail themselves of a lot more professional development than the primaries do, which I think it is a reflection of their need to find out more.

Ms MUNT — By the same token, if you have a student who has done a degree, they are a great resource not to then bring into teaching because they have learnt how to learn and they have great pedagogical knowledge.

Ms FRASER — Yes, they do and they need that knowledge too. Prep to 12 would be great to be able to do, but we are working at the moment on a shadowing system between the secondary and its feeder primaries, where the primary teachers are coming over to spend time in the secondary classrooms and vice versa, which is wonderful. The dialogue that comes out of those sharing of practices is really constructive.

Ms MUNT — Here is a question right out from left field and also from Frankston because I was having lunch with one of the new teachers who said that apart from the actual teaching aspect — the practicum, the pedagogy, all of that sort of thing — the demands now on teachers in a lot of areas are very much social-worker demands. They have very complex problems to deal with, really outside the range of teaching. Do you have a view of that aspect?

Ms FRASER — I do not know whether formal training as such would assist with that aspect. There are some people who do very well without any formal training in psychology or behaviour management. I think it is one of those innate things that perhaps some people have going for them.

Ms MUNT — So that probably would be helped by mentoring?

Ms FRASER — Absolutely. I was going to say if you get those people to share what they are doing, share what worked for them, it comes back to that reflective practice again: in what worked for me, how can I extend this further?

Ms ECKSTEIN — You talked about the current promotion system recognising the role that teachers have in taking trainees and so forth. Can you explain a little bit more on how you see that working?

Ms FRASER — At the moment? I know that when I was working at the university I asked them why the kids were not spending more time out in schools. I was told its budget is $2 million per year to put the kids in schools because teachers are paid, as you know, to have the trainee students in the classrooms. As a teacher myself

I do not think we should be paid to have those students and I know a lot of my colleagues would knock me down for saying that. I do not think monetary compensation is what should be expected. It probably works out to $100 a week.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Before tax?

Ms FRASER — Yes. So it is not an astronomical amount of money and I do not think money helps the situation as far as time goes because when you have a student teacher in the classroom it is a time allowance thing as far as sitting down and planning with them, reflecting on what they have done et cetera. But also to have a good student in your room is an asset to have them there, particularly if you have a classroom of 30 children. To have an extra person is wonderful. It is not as if you are being compensated for this being foisted upon you and you cannot put them to use. I find it wonderful to have student teachers in the classroom, because you learn from them as well as them learning from you.

Ms ECKSTEIN — How would that work?

Ms FRASER — The current system of levels of leading teacher, perhaps. I have heard people say that perhaps one of the leading teacher's roles could be that they take on mentoring — they take on the trainee students. The leading teachers are already doing an awful lot of work as far as curriculum planning and design goes. I think there should be an option there as a leading teacher — for instance, as a leading teacher I am going to work on curriculum planning across the school, or I am going to be in charge of mentoring these student teachers who are coming in.

Ms ECKSTEIN — So extrapolating from that a bit, you are saying that the funding that currently goes into paying teachers might be better used in other ways such as providing time release and that sort of thing?

Ms FRASER — Yes, I know they talked about that at Frankston. I wondered about how that would actually work, because schools are wonderful places for a robbing-Peter-to-pay-Paul sort of a thing — moving money around. Some time ago a lot of schools took the position that the money the university sent for teacher training was put into a PD budget within schools, the actual teachers were not paid, and there were all sorts of problems with people saying, 'I refuse to have a student then if I'm not being paid'. So just providing money, I do not know whether that would work. Once again in a leading teacher situation there is a certain time allowance that is built into their promotion position, and then we could argue that that could be used for planning with teacher trainees.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Can you elaborate a little more about interviewing or other ways of selecting prospective students. Surely if you have, as we were told this morning, 3000 applicants for 150 places, it is a bit hard to interview everybody — however desirable that might be — especially if you have maybe a couple of days to get — —

Ms FRASER — To get through them.

Ms ECKSTEIN — And make that selection. How do you do it?

Ms FRASER — It is difficult. I do not think I have all the answers there by any means. It does worry me that the sole requirement is the high ENTER score, and that does not necessarily equate with someone becoming an excellent teacher or someone having the required skills to communicate with kids.

Mr KOTSIRAS — You are saying that supervisor teachers should not get paid, the money should go elsewhere, whether it is for PD or to the school. How many supervisor teachers would drop out if the money was not there?

Ms FRASER — I would say quite a few. That is why I say that a lot of my colleagues would not be happy with my saying that.

Ms ECKSTEIN — It is a changing culture, is it not? It is a change in the way you look at your role.

Ms FRASER — It is in our best interests as teachers to have these trainee teachers spending more time with us because eventually when they go out — —

Mr KOTSIRAS — I agree, but I remember some years ago when I was teaching there was not one teacher who would take on a student unless they got paid.

Ms FRASER — Yes, and that is a worry.

The CHAIR — You were just a bad student!

Mr KOTSIRAS — I used to get as many student teachers as I could.

Ms FRASER — Perhaps it could be built into the promotions, so there is somewhere on that incremental scale that says this person has applied for this position knowingly taking on the role of mentoring student teachers. There may be people in the system — I know there would be — who would prefer to do that rather than becoming involved in curriculum planning. Everybody has their own area of interest or expertise.

Mr SCHEFFER — I just wanted to take you back to talk a little about the teachers themselves and who mentors the mentors, and how we ensure improvement in the quality of teachers in their teaching of pre-service teachers.

Ms FRASER — I think the opportunities for professional development have never been better than they are at the moment, but once again it is one of those things that cannot be measured as such. There are teachers out there who enjoy, who just naturally are suited to, a mentoring process. Most teachers have come across those people over the years whom we have taken on as our mentors even though they were not officially known as such.

Mr SCHEFFER — Sorry to interrupt, but we know that in any profession there is a variation of skills and quality.

Ms FRASER — Yes.

Mr SCHEFFER — And that would apply to teachers as well, so how do we ensure that teachers are skilled up to work properly and get the best out of pre-service teacher training?

Ms FRASER — I suppose through professional development.

Mr SCHEFFER — Are there courses that can assist teachers to do that work better?

Ms FRASER — There are a lot of mentoring PDs out there at the moment.

Mr SCHEFFER — Specifically for pre-service training?

Ms FRASER — Not specifically, but those ones that are out there at the moment could begin to address that in what they are doing. There are mentoring courses for aspiring school principals, et cetera, why could there not be mentoring courses — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Do you think that would be beneficial?

Ms FRASER — I think it would, and perhaps if people who were interested in pursuing that could spend some time at the universities too. In the last couple of years I have learnt an awful lot from working sessionally with the students at the university. I often think it is a shame more people in my position — in a teaching position — do not get that opportunity.

Mr SCHEFFER — Does your school evaluate the experiences of both the pre-service teachers and the mentoring teachers?

Ms FRASER — No, I do not think they evaluate the mentoring teachers, certainly the pre-service teachers.

Mr SCHEFFER — How they found the experience in the school — it is not done from the teacher's point of view?

Ms FRASER — No, which is interesting.

Mr SCHEFFER — I am just interested in the practicalities: do the mentoring teachers in the school work together; do they have a support group?

Ms FRASER — I know in the primary school they do; in the secondary school they do not. I think just the structure and size of a large secondary school does not allow that really.

Mr SCHEFFER — And yet you do not think that is all pretty haphazard then?

Ms FRASER — It can be. I am thinking of students who were out in the secondary school recently. We have a wonderful principal at our secondary school, and he makes it a point to meet with the pre-service students on a regular basis and ask them how they are going, what they see as their needs, how everything is working out with them. So it is a managerial role there that perhaps is looking at that more than the classroom teacher who is mentoring them on purely curriculum issues.

Mr SCHEFFER — Thanks.

The CHAIR — I might nail you down to some absolutes in terms of comments. You have talked about the orientation — not quite right — the subject mix in teacher education courses: subject needs versus theory or knowledge of what you have to teach. What changes would you suggest specifically? How much practicum exactly do you think students should have, or are they getting too much theory? What changes would you like to see?

Ms FRASER — I would like to see a lot more teacher educators in the university system. At the risk of sounding awfully critical, there are a lot of university lecturers lecturing trainee students who have not themselves been in schools for a long, long time, and I see that as being a problem.

As to how much time should be spent on a practicum, if we look at the school terms they should be out in schools for two weeks per term at least. I think they also need to do it in blocks. One of the unfortunate things happening at the university I went to was that one group of kids — they might have been the graduate diploma kids — was going out one day a week for the term, and I just thought that with only one day a week on its own there was no continuity there. It just did not make sense. I think they need to do the practicum in blocks so they can understand about building up a rapport with students. As I said, connectedness with students has been proven to be the one factor that influences effective learning above all others, and a student teacher who is out there one day a week is not getting that at all. They can build up a rapport when the practicum is done in blocks. In the primary system I have had students for a couple of weeks, and the kids do build up a rapport with that student, and that is wonderful for them. And the student teacher will often opt to come back of their own volition in their uni breaks and what have you to work with the kids.

The CHAIR — You have spoken about the practicum payment from a teacher's perspective, but VUT, which does large practicums, talked about the cost to teacher educators in their system, because they have large classes to cover and it takes a lot of time to go out and see individual students. Do you think that is appropriate, or do you have any ideas about how you could cover those teaching institute costs? Do you think it is important for lecturers to go out?

Ms FRASER — I do not know how long ago the system changed, but I know that many years ago we were paid by the education department for having the students in our classrooms, and at some stage that changed.

The CHAIR — No, I am talking about the cost to the institution. If you had two-week blocks every time, you would assume that the teacher educators — the lecturers, for example — would have to go out and visit the students.

Ms FRASER — And supervise.

The CHAIR — They would have to supervise a lot more, or at least check out how the students are going, and that would be a cost to the institution. But the VUT is trying to expand that, and it says that adds to the cost of lecturers.

Ms FRASER — If a group of trainee students are out in the schools doing a practicum, the lecturer's time is loosened up because the kids they would normally be lecturing are out in the schools, so surely that gives them the time to go out and supervise those kids in the school.

The CHAIR — I do not know about that.

Ms FRASER — I know they used a lot of people like me with more flexible loads to do teacher supervision, and I know that on the peninsula they are using retired principals to go out and supervise the kids in the schools, which I think is fantastic, because those retired principals have a wealth of experience there.

The CHAIR — That is a very good idea. Is that spreading? Is that happening everywhere or just on the peninsula?

Ms FRASER — I am not sure whether it happens elsewhere.

The CHAIR — Because I think we have heard that some do not actually send lecturers out.

Ms FRASER — And I have heard the students complain loudly about that. They say, 'Look, I have been out for three practicums and I have seen a lecturer only once for an hour', and they will complain about that. But as I say, I would not see it being an added cost on the university's behalf if they could just organise their timetabling schedules better.

The CHAIR — Okay.

Ms FRASER — That may be a bit simplistic.

The CHAIR — The people from the Catholic Education Office — I am paraphrasing them, so I hope I get it right — suggested that in fact there was far too much time spent in theory in institutions and that those trainee teachers should spend the majority of their time in classrooms. I think they were suggesting that the teaching part of that teaching traineeship could happen in the classroom. So instead of people like yourself — I am not sure if this is exactly what they said, but it was around this — going into an institution and teaching students, that in fact you could be employed to teach them in the school?

Ms FRASER — Yes.

The CHAIR — You could not only be a supervisor or whatever, but you could actually do some more teaching practicum in the school. What is your response to that as part of the mix?

Ms FRASER — If it was part of a mix, yes, I think it would work very well. I think they still need the theoretical background to underpin what they are doing or to relate it back to it, but that sounds very worth while. But that happens, really. If you were talking about it being more formalised in the classroom, there is a danger there that that mentoring teacher would be taken away from the children themselves a little too much.

The CHAIR — You might do half a dozen students.

Ms FRASER — Okay.

The CHAIR — You said there need to be more teacher educators, and that is practising teachers coming in and doing sessions; is that right?

Ms FRASER — Yes, I think so.

The CHAIR — Do most teacher training institutes have classes after 4 o'clock?

Ms FRASER — I am just trying to think what my load was.

The CHAIR — I was just thinking if that is the case, then it is easy.

Ms FRASER — It could be, too; yes.

The CHAIR — If you had classes at 6 o'clock, it would allow mature-age students to have other jobs and to do teacher education, but it would also allow a lot more teachers who perhaps cannot get or do not want time off to come in after work and lecture. Does that happen? Is it that flexible?

Ms FRASER — No, I do not think it does happen. When I was working I dropped my time fraction at school back to 0.6 and I was doing 0.4 at the university, and I think my latest lecture went until 4.00 p.m., but I know there were still classes being taken after 4.00 p.m. at the university, so that idea definitely has potential.

The CHAIR — It is just that there are two issues: one is getting the mature-age students in — people who virtually have to quit their jobs, and they could have more flexible arrangements to do it — and the other is getting more teacher educators in.

Ms FRASER — Absolutely, yes. You would perhaps have to look at the load on those people.

The CHAIR — Of course. We might look at that a bit more.

Ms FRASER — That is interesting.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. If we get out to Dromana we look forward to coming in and having a chat with you.

Ms FRASER — Yes, please do. Thank you.

Witness withdrew.

C O R R E C T E D V E R S I O N

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne - 18 May 2004

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Witness

Professor T. Seddon, associate dean, research, faculty of education, Monash University.

The CHAIR — The committee welcomes Professor Terri Seddon. Can you give the committee, and Hansard in particular, your full name and title? You might then like to give a brief outline of what you do and what you would like to see happening in the world of teacher education, and then we will go to questions.

Prof. SEDDON — My name is Terri Seddon, I am professor of education at Monash University, and I am also the associate dean, research, at Monash University in the faculty of education. I currently have close to 25 years experience working as an academic in university contexts. The initial part of that was focused on school education; more recently I have been working with a stronger focus on the realm of adult vocational education and training.

I started out as a schoolteacher in secondary schools in New South Wales and Canberra teaching science, and I moved on from there into a range of interests that partly related to education policy and curriculum questions. I also considered the way curriculum and pedagogies shape what is learnt in educational contexts, and I also focused on the impact of change on the work of teachers and managers, both in schools and in a range of post-school contexts, including TAFE institutes, public and private training providers, workplaces and community settings. I was involved in the team that did the evaluation of the first phase LLEN back in 2002 and so have quite a lot of experience engaging with those interesting pathways that are developing in and around education. I was interested to come and talk to you, partly because I think I come with maybe a slightly different perspective which is strongly cross-sectoral in its concerns. For the last three years I have been school council president at my daughter's school so I have a fairly close involvement in public education in the school sector in Victoria, in addition to my normal work, but I also obviously bring professional expertise to these questions as well.

I really want to make five main points and I have got some notes here which I am happy to pass on. They are probably cryptic as a straight document, but I am happy to give them to the committee. My first point is that the structural reform of education and training has shifted the parameters of school education and the teaching within it. Yet I am not convinced that teacher education has really attended properly to those changes and the implications for teachers who are now going out into that changing landscape and facing a career, however long it might be, in the school sector. Some of the changes which I am thinking about here are partly related to the growing emphasis of lifelong learning, the way education and training and other kinds of learning in other learning sites are supporting the development of a knowledge-based economy and the way schools are playing a part in that process. I think there are important sectoral changes and changes in the relationships between sectors which I do not see picked up very well in teacher education programs. It seem to me that there is a move to encourage learning that is much more network based, whether those networks are in and between providers in education and training, or whether they are in the community sector, or whether they are across boundaries with industry. Again, I do not see schoolteachers well prepared to take up the challenges of that kind of border-crossing work.

I think there have been important changes in terms of decentralisation of governance and this places considerable demand on teachers and on the administrators that work in schools. Again, I do not see our teacher education programs really taking up some of those challenges so that student teachers go out into the field well prepared with a sense of the challenges that they are going to face. There is a move to decentralise decision-making; there is a move to evidence-based practice and policy development. Those are all important issues which I am not convinced that teacher education properly acknowledges or supports in teacher preparation. My sense is, again building on a range of experience both personal and professional, that schools are still places which focus very strongly on children and on adolescents. I think that is a good thing, so I am not against it, but I also think the world of children and young people is changing in important ways. In a whole range of respects I think schools are struggling; they are moving, but in some ways are slow to change to take up the challenges, not only of the change in learning environments, but also of the challenges that kids today are facing. That is my first point, and I am happy to go back and elaborate on these.

The second point I want to make is that the structural reforms that we see encourage close relationships between schools and community organisations, but teacher education does not really support teachers to develop the capacities and capabilities necessary to work in and across those institutional boundaries. I have done a number of research projects and have involvement in a professional capacity with a number of community organisations; these include the LLEN, but also other kinds of community partnerships that have been supporting young people, particularly those who are less keen on schools to go through into further education training and employment.

My sense is that those community partnerships are doing splendid work — work that in some ways is under-acknowledged, both by the system and by the resourcing base on which people work. I think that partnership

work is extraordinarily complex and I do not think we, as a community of practitioners and policy-makers, have a very good handle on the complexities of that work and the challenges it presents to those people who are trying to generate opportunities when it comes to young people in those contexts.

We are involved in one project where we are talking about the visible and invisible work of LLEN. It is very clear that the LLEN reporting requirements focus strongly on youth outcomes, but what is missed in the picture is the whole range of ways in which LLENs are supporting community building in regional areas and are engaged in managing, in complex ways, both a volunteer and a paid work force. I think there are a lot of questions we need to ask about how we sustain and support those initiatives and I do not see them being asked. My point in relation to teacher education is that I do not see teacher education really taking those issues up. There is a changed landscape and yet the strong focus is very school-based.

My third point then is not only that teaching and teacher education is strongly school-based, but I think over the last few years we have seen a narrowing of the focus in teacher education and in teacher preparation so that there is a stronger focus on the technical dimensions of teaching and less acknowledgment of the broader profession rationale for teaching. An example of this comes from one of my doctoral students who is assistant principal at a Catholic school who has been reading the VIT's teaching standards document. He said to me, 'Look at this document. My mature-aged, middle career teachers look at this document and they look at the standards and they say: "We can do all this" and they put it on the shelf. My first-year-out teachers who are struggling to get a handle on what it means to be a teacher look at this document and they say: "Is this all there is to teaching, a range of relatively specific technical tasks that need to be done and done well; is there not more to teaching? Why am I a teacher, what am I doing as a teacher, what is my role and contribution as a teacher and how can I develop a sense of professional identity and professional capacity without some extensive consideration of those questions"'.

This particular doctoral student's concern — as I say he is a student but also an assistant principal — is that in teacher education we are not addressing some of those broader questions. That the kind of systemic pressure for a somewhat narrower teacher education and teacher preparation — a relatively narrow conception of what the work of the teacher is — is running against some of those broader questions that sit, in his view, at the heart of teacher motivations. His view is that teaching is a heart job rather than a technical job, and so one of his challenges as an assistant principal is to build the kind of heart connection with his young teachers to the occupation of teaching, as well as dealing with the technical questions. My concern then is that teacher education is — for a range of very complex reasons — partly linked to policy, partly linked to funding, partly linked to the prevailing culture. Education and training at the moment is being pushed towards a narrower sense of the job than is actually good for teaching or for teacher education.

My fourth point is that with all of these changes in both the structure of education and training and also its culture teachers need the knowledge and skills in order to make sense of it, in order to work out what is going on, how best to position themselves and how best to serve their students. My sense is that over the last 20 odd years there has been a narrowing in teacher education programs. We have had a stronger focus on certain aspects of teacher preparation and less of a focus on some of the bigger questions that actually do enhance a teacher's professional identity and sense of who they are and what they can do as a teacher. It seems to me there is a place for looking at the history and politics of education in order to enable teachers as practising professionals to make sense of how best to act. There is a need to start to unpack the unhelpful stereotypes that exist within education and training that are based on a legacy from when school education was seen as a generic provision for young kids and increasingly an academic provision for older kids. That model is now outdated, and yet you find the cultural legacies, those mind-sets, every day. I was at a school not too long ago where one of the deputy principals was joking. He said, 'Oh, look, these days they are trying to tell us that VET in Schools is not for dummies'. I found that a fairly offensive comment, but it seems to me that that is just one very trivial example of the kind of mind-set which I do not think helps either students or education and training as a system in the world that we are in where lifelong learning and all of that is so important. So there is a need to look at what teacher education courses are actually inducting student teachers into, what kinds of knowledge and skills they are developing. That needs to be looked at harder.

Finally, teaching is in a sense a very composite occupation. For historical reasons schools have operated with a large mass of teachers, a principal and a few leadership positions that sit between them. If you look at the higher education sector or at TAFE institutes, large and complex organisations that are dealing with learning, you find that the role of teacher has been broken up into many different functions — for example, there are people who will be specialists in student support services; other people who will be specialists in particular teaching areas as we have

in the schools; people who are specialists in various kinds of counselling brokering partnerships, development activities, and so on. It seems to me that one of the benefits of this somewhat disaggregated model of a teaching work force, which acknowledges the different roles and responsibilities and the different functions that are served within the broad domain of teaching, is to start to enable the development of very specialist skills and expertise by the people who are working in those areas. When you have somebody who sees themselves as a teacher, who is primarily focused on teaching and learning in classroom settings, anything that is over and above that becomes an add-on. If it is an add-on, it is not something that you put substantial time and energy into learning about, developing the skills to do, refining the kinds of expertise that will enable not only troubleshooting and problem solving, but also innovation and other kinds of development.

It seems to me that there are some quite strong arguments for why certain kinds of functions within the broad category of teaching might be taken out and developed as specific specialist areas, tied to specific career paths, potentially specific preparation programs and possibly served by programs that tap into particular kinds of mature-age entrants who bring certain kinds of work experience with them. I guess I am thinking here of a student I taught some years ago who had been an accountant, wanted to become a teacher and saw that she had a very special contribution to make as a bursar, so her ambition was to be a very good bursar. We now have a very large range of mature-age students coming into teacher education with enormous professional experience in a vast range of fields. Indeed you could see how building on that kind of professional background could facilitate the development of particular capacities to serve particular functions in the schools. I know the question of teacher preparation and work force development is a sensitive one and that the industrial issues related to that are quite complex; but on the other hand I think there could be benefits for schools, for students and for the society that we live in if we were to open up that sort of question. So with that lecture over, I will leave it to you.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for that detailed insight. You have many years of experience at the senior level policy, and we shall try and delve into that insight with some questions.

Ms MUNT — I found that very interesting, thank you very much, and I would like to congratulate you on also being a school council president. I was for many years, and you get a very intimate knowledge of what parents, students and teachers want when you are doing that job. I was interested in your comments about the increasingly narrow focus of teacher training. I was wondering if you have specific ideas on how to address that. If the focus is getting narrow, is that because of the teacher trainers themselves? Do they need to retrain on the training that is required? How do you address that?

Prof. SEDDON — There are two levels at which I would like to respond in relation to that question. The first level is that for various often funding-related reasons there is a squeeze on provisions within teacher education programs and so learning support gets squeezed in that. It does not usually get cut because most faculties of education are very committed to servicing the preparation of teachers and will draw resources from other parts of their work in order to support that activity. In some ways that is partly tied to what I would see as a focus on the technical dimensions of the job rather than on the broader social and community dimensions of the job. That has been pushed a bit by some of the market policies that have been developed in recent years, because there is a critical question for a school, which is how do you get your numbers; as soon as your numbers start to wobble you are in trouble. There are reasons why that narrowing has occurred.

The other level at which I would like to answer the question relates to my first point, and that is that we are dealing with a rather different landscape for education and training. If we start to talk about the way learning is developed and supported across the whole community through a range of very different kinds of learning sites, through different kinds of providers and so on, it means that the whole concept of learning is opened up in a way that is rather different from the way it has been institutionalised historically in schools. The old saying about this is that schools front-end load learning; they plug it into kids when they are young and that is enough to see them through. But we are increasingly dealing with a system where people of all ages are learning in formalised and recognised ways throughout their lives.

In some ways part of the narrowness is because there is not sufficient acknowledgment of that diversity or recognition of the contribution that these different kinds of learning make to the community and to the individuals. There is really a sense of almost having to look out from the school system to say, 'How can we contribute to, engage with and build on the richness that exists if we take that very broad view of learning?'. In that respect I actually think because most teacher educators, just like most teachers, have been formed in a system over the last 25 or 30 years where school education has in some ways been a bit disconnected — not entirely but a bit

disconnected from everyday life, community life, the zest of communities and so on — there is a sense in which there are certain stereotypes, certain fears among teachers and teacher educators about this big world out there. I do not want to spoof it, but I do get a sense that there is an uncertainty in the profession about this larger world of learning and how schools as they are reconfigured in this environment can make a contribution but also gain from the richness that exists out in that broader world. I do not know if that answers your question, but I have this quite strong sense of that, so I think there is an issue about professional development for teacher education as much as for teachers in that.

Ms MUNT — It is an interesting question, because parents now have very specific expectations of what they want from teachers and what they want teachers to teach, and I think that is narrowing as well.

Prof. SEDDON — Yes.

Ms MUNT — I know from personal experience of where my children go to school, for instance, that the range of subjects has narrowed down from the broad humanities to business and maths. So I would imagine it would be very difficult to broaden everyone back out again.

Prof. SEDDON — Yes, although I think what is interesting is that in many schools there is a sort of a segmentation of a child's career through the school — and I am thinking secondary here rather than primary — and there is now such a focus on the middle years where often young people are engaged in really quite diverse programs such as city programs where they come into the city and troop around and learn as they live in the city. So there is a sense in which there are moves to broaden and to connect up, as well as the issues, as you say, at the VCE level where, because of expectations around performance and admission to university, clearly there is a narrowing.

Ms MUNT — It narrows right down.

Prof. SEDDON — So it presents really interesting challenges for the schools, because it means they have to not only focus on the general group of students but also try to tailor learning to some quite different groups and to make it explicit that their focus is on care, community development and supporting kids as they work in the community as well as on excellence. And I think that is reasonable. I want my year 12 daughter to have support and to be pushed, frankly, but I am very happy for my year 8, 9 and 10 daughters to explore and learn in a broader way.

Ms MUNT — Talking about the range of the years and the different expectations for the different ages and stages of children and young adults — the students — what do you think, as I asked a couple of previous people who have come in to talk to us today, about prep to 12 teacher training degrees?

Prof. SEDDON — Prep to 12; that is quite a challenge to run it all together. I was involved in a teacher education review at the University of South Australia two or three years ago. This was an in-house review, but I was one of the externals on that panel. Where they went was to try to acknowledge the age ranges, but instead of having programs that train teachers for early years, primary and so on, they tried to group two bands of ages together. Rather than putting it all together — prep right through to year 12, where you are dealing with enormously different issues — what they did was to chunk it. They had a 0 to 8 category — I cannot remember the exact categories now — but they certainly had a band for the older students which nested post-compulsory school education, years 11 and 12 or the VCE equivalent, and adult education. They tried to develop teacher education programs that straddled some of the conventional boundaries and enabled student teachers to develop skills and capabilities that were on either side of the old divides, and they had a specific program that focused on middle-year provision. I do have that report if it would be helpful to have a look at it.

Ms MUNT — Thank you very much.

Mr SCHEFFER — Thank you very much for your presentation; it was very arresting. You have set up the problem very powerfully, and in your answer to the second-last question that Janice asked you partly started to open up what I wanted to ask you about. In my electorate there is a particular school I have been doing work with which is taking up the challenges you describe very, very strongly, but against overwhelming odds. It is looking to see how its curriculum and teaching practices are connected to the organisations and institutions in the local community and how that can be brought into the school. You touched on that slightly with the city campus program, which I am aware of with another school in my electorate which is doing that as well. Could you expand a little bit more on some of the ways through for schools beyond the city campus?

Prof. SEDDON — Yes. I do not want you to take the view that I do not acknowledge that schools are doing a lot of innovative work; I think they are. I think, though, because I am coming increasingly from an adult context, I see in some ways greater innovation and diversity being possible in those contexts than I do in the school sector. So I think there are questions about why that is the case. But I do know there are schools that are engaged in various kinds of networks and community partnerships that are doing very, very interesting things.

Mr SCHEFFER — But against overwhelming odds.

Prof. SEDDON — Often against overwhelming odds, yes. Often there might be one or two teachers who put their life into these things, often not resourced and often not really acknowledged, and the danger with that sort of thing is that as soon as they burn out or move on you have lost it.

Mr SCHEFFER — Precisely.

Prof. SEDDON — In a way that is where I think the LLEN is a really interesting initiative, because if you leave aside the question of how many young people the LLEN has got into training or employment, which is a really hard question for LLEN to answer, and if you look instead at the way LLEN creates a structure that enables schools, industry and other community agencies to work across the boundaries, you will see they are brokering the relationships and they are building the relationships. The LLEN project workers are often very active in moving between the schools, working with principals, working with careers teachers and so on, and working with local industry and other community groups to see what is going on and what kinds of issues can be addressed.

I did some research in a LLEN out in the far eastern area where manufacturing was a major industry, and the employers were saying, 'We can't get kids into our jobs. We have got jobs, but we can't get kids into them'. So what the LLEN was doing was taking that information into the schools, talking with the schools, talking with the kids, enabling the kids to go out on visits and setting up traineeship arrangements. It breaks down the boundaries and the hard barriers — and they are hard work barriers — between these different places. Industry talks a different language to schools and vice versa, and it is hard for a teacher who is doing this sort of stepping across the boundary — with a load that is already heavy with a whole range of other school-based demands — to take on that extra work and do that little bit extra.

There are other ways that that is happening in addition to the LLEN. Local government is playing a really significant role, and I know down in the Frankston area an expo has been set up and developed basically by the local government in association with the LLEN and some of the schools to open up a range of information for young people, and that has been celebrated and given a big wave. That expo has a lot of kids going along to have a look at what kinds of local employment opportunities there are and what kinds of vocational pathways might take them in those directions. While I think that is great for the young people and that those are really good initiatives, I also think it is really good for the teachers and for the local government people to actually just rub up against each other and to talk to each other and find out how each other works. Some of these kinds of community partnerships are really important because they act as a kind of professional development in their own right, broadening the horizons of not just teachers, but each group in their own particular contexts and enabling them to understand much more about the kinds of trials and tribulations that each faces.

So I think there are some really exciting things happening. I also think in some ways, while I would not want to generalise, some of these boundary-crossing initiatives are sometimes — I will not say easier to get going — more able to be realised in country areas, particularly in regional centres, than in the metropolitan area. I think because in metropolitan area communities are less distinct, there is greater mobility and so on, it is difficult sometimes for the urban partnerships to develop because kids in the school might be coming from halfway across Melbourne, so the sense of community is less easy to work with.

Mr KOTSIRAS — We have heard some people complain about universities and about supervisors not going out to look at students on teaching rounds; some say that they do not see the teacher for two rounds. Is that a problem? Have you noticed that to be a problem with Monash?

Prof. SEDDON — I am not closely involved with our teacher education program at Monash, but I do have a sense of that issue. I know that our lecturing staff do go out to the schools and we are also very aware that when you have a lecturer going out to schools and maybe visiting 15 or 20 schools in many different areas it becomes a huge resource question, in a context where the funding that is made available to support practicum is already not covering the costs, so there are some really intractable pressures here. I know that in our context we

talked about how we can manage that better, how we can build partnerships so that a lecturer, for example, might have a specific relationship with a smaller number of schools, but then look at all the teacher education students there — not just based on their specific disciplinary expertise, but look at the whole group. So there are attempts to build those kinds of partnership relationships.

In the South Australian example they were very actively looking at partnership models where they wanted to use school-university partnerships to support inquiry, and to use various kinds of small research projects that the schools wanted to work on as a way of building a stronger connection between the university and the school which generates a range of outcomes besides the supervision of student teaching. So there is some very innovative thinking around this type of question, partly because the resource questions are very intractable. There is just not enough money for it.

The CHAIR — I do not think you have covered it, but since the demise of techs various programs have been put into place, but most students would say there have been very little vocational opportunities happening in schools since then. It has been a policy of government to try to increase that so that students have more vocational things to do. There are some schools that offer vocational or mainstream subjects as part of their program curriculum. What I would like to know, from your experience, is how much of that is covered in teacher training courses. Do TAFE teachers come and talk to student teachers? Is there anything innovative happening there?

Prof. SEDDON — It is something that is recognised as being an issue. I know that probably a couple of years ago there was a move, I think by the Australian College of Educators, to actually review the way VET in Schools was being addressed in teacher education programs. My recollection is that not much was happening in a formal sense, and what surprised me was that Monash was noted as doing some special things whereas I do not really see that as an insider. I guess I should not really say that. My sense is that there is a growing awareness that there needs to be some stronger induction of student teachers into this broader world of lifelong learning partly because we know that lots of students who train as either primary or secondary teachers go on into the adult sector. There is an enormous flow of teachers out into both TAFE and adult community education, but also into industry, personnel, human resources and all of those things. We know they do very well; we also know that they get paid an awful lot more than they get paid in schools. I had one doctoral student who applied for a job at Scotch after he had been working in industry. It was a part-time job and he got offered the job, looked at the salary and when I asked whether he had taken the job he said, 'No, they are paying a pittance, I could go out into industry, do a few days work and get $100 000 a year'. So there are big issues in all of this and in terms of opening up young people's occupational possibilities, there is a recognition that we need to actually inform people more of these options.

By and large I do not think there is all that much happening about preparing teachers for vocational education — not that I know about. There are some programs — and I am not sure which universities — that do try to give student teachers choices. They do a generic program for so long and then students can opt into primary or secondary or adult, so that they can take out different kinds of qualifications. I also know that, for example, in our own program there will be some lecture sessions where VET questions will get opened up or student teachers will be allowed to do a practicum or a visit in a non-school context. So it is being addressed in those ways. There is effort being made, but it is not terribly systematic. I do not think it addresses the full range either.

Mr KOTSIRAS — What do you think are the goals of a teacher of the future and do you think that our institutions are focused on those goals?

Prof SEDDON — A few years ago I did a paper which I gave to Nick, which in a way is an exploration of that question, where I tried to look at the pressures that were on teachers. I tried to ask what we are looking for in terms of teachers — when using this very generic category, what kinds of roles are we really looking for? I ended up generating three types of teacher and I cannot remember what I called them. But I remember that one was very focused on, if you like, foundational learning — for young kids but also for older children and adolescents and for adults. The foundational learning, which is about reading and writing, is about being inducted into knowledge traditions, which is really important. I saw schools, universities and to some extent TAFE institutes as playing an important role in that in different ways.

There was another category of teacher that I saw, which was actually taking up the kind of applied learning science. It was the way people were working across boundaries and were working in a wide range of industry and community context in order to support learning.

I had a third category — I think I might have got the second category wrong — which was what I called knowledge workers within a knowledge-based economy, or something like that, which is where you want learning to occur in all sorts of places. It is where there is a role for teachers because teachers have stunningly good pedagogical skills and where they can work with companies or they can work with communities in order to facilitate development, and capacity building if you like. But often it was not in a systematic way, it might be a bit here and a bit there and there is a real role for that kind of boundary crossing, brokering, learning development type of person within the broad context that we are living with.

You might need to check that second category. I started to pull these types of teachers apart, but I think it is really dangerous to move in some ways, too far from what schools are doing. We want kids who have got good basic knowledge, skills and understandings, dispositions that are appropriate. We want them to be good citizens. A lot of the rest can actually be dealt with in other places, but increasingly those other places are places where they are not just dealing with technical work-based skills; they are actually having to be decision-makers, evidence-based practitioners in a whole raft of different occupations. They have to look forward, they have to understand where they have come from to find ways forward, and they need to do that in ways that take them across boundaries all the time. That kind of learning about dealing with cross-cultural communication is really important.

The CHAIR — I might have the final question. In my electorate of Eltham two schools are doing fantastic things. I often think that if we could keep that going, progressing, in regard to what happens in teachers colleges, we would do well.

Mr KOTSIRAS — In all our schools.

The CHAIR — But that is a lead to my question. There seems to be a push to replace VET courses with a postgraduate two-year bachelor of teaching education course, which for many entrants to teaching would mean they would have six years of qualifications before they start teaching. Do you think that is appropriate or overkill? Would they be better in classrooms? I would like you to comment on that if you could, if you want to.

Prof. SEDDON — It is a can of worms.

The CHAIR — Yes, it is.

Prof. SEDDON — And I do not know that I really have thought very much about what kinds of formats you might put programs into. I think there is a real problem, because particularly for students enrolling in university programs these days there is a real cost involved, and obviously they are wanting to get out to work. To have too long a program without appropriate supports for them becomes an intractable problem. Not everybody can self-fund. Increasingly we are finding that because kids are having to earn while they are studying it has an impact on what they are learning, and that is a real worry, frankly. So there are some real problems about a very long program. In a way the mix we have, which is a muddle of concurrent arrangements — discipline-based and education programs side by side and the option of doing discipline-based first degree classes and some add-on — is not a bad basis, because it means that if they have got through their first degree they have only got one more year potentially to do.

There are two things, though, that are problematic about it. One is that I do not see it providing the diversity of provision — a diversity of learning opportunities — for our student teachers to enable them to have a very broad view of education and training. Immediately there are questions that need to be asked not only about initial teacher education, but about continuing professional development through a career, and I think those are very important questions to be flagged. In a way my hunch is that that is a better way to deal with these questions than to try to think of how to sort of front-end load a bit more.

The other thing I would say, though, is that if we push the idea that teaching is a very aggregated occupation where teachers have to be enormously multiskilled in order to do the job and then say are there ways in which this could be disaggregated in some ways without actually losing the very strong relationship and connection that teachers have to students, I think that is the crux of that valuable teacher role. Are there ways in which we can disaggregate? It may be that different kinds of programs will be available for some functional areas where, for example, mature-age students might come in with particular professional experience and then be able to do modest courses, if you like, in order to get accreditation and so on. That is something that has been very sensitive over the years, but there is value in exploring it.

I say that partly because of what I see in universities and TAFE institutes where as a particular function becomes more specialised it builds up its own community of practice, if you like, its own knowledge base. It does push the prevailing level of understanding in that particular area in a way that, as a teacher, if you are very generic there are real limits on how much you can push in different directions. There are interesting issues in how we think about this category, if you like, of a teacher and whether it is possible to pull it apart in different ways that would be acceptable both to government and to unions.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Professor Seddon. We very much welcome your contribution and we shall be reading your material.

Prof. SEDDON — Fantastic. I will leave this document with you.

Witness withdrew.

C O R R E C T E D V E R S I O N

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne – 18 May 2004

Members

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	Mr J. E. Scheffer

Chair: Mr S. R. Herbert
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Executive Officer: Ms K. Ellingford
Research Officers: Dr N. Fischer and Dr G. Berman

Witness

Ms V. White, chief executive officer, Victorian Schools Innovation Commission.

The CHAIR — I declare this hearing of the Education and Training Committee re-opened. This is an all-party investigative committee of the Parliament of Victoria. It is hearing evidence today in relation to an inquiry into the suitability of current teacher education training courses in Victoria. I wish to advise all present at this hearing that all evidence taken by the committee, including submissions, is, subject to parliamentary privilege, guaranteed immunity from judicial review pursuant to the Constitution Act and the Parliamentary Committees Act. Welcome. You have a presentation for us, I see?

Ms WHITE — Just a small one. Can I just say thanks for inviting me to speak with you today.

I will underscore right from the outset that the Victorian Schools Innovation Commission is a small player in the field of teacher education. It is not part of our set of objectives or our brief, and I thought it was important that I state that up front. I just wish to provide a few key ideas that have emerged as a consequence of our working with teacher education academics — the core business of our work. Some insights have emerged around an issue that is germane to this inquiry that have been as a consequence of the work that we have been doing, and so I tender this for your consideration. Should further work emerge, as we are in the process of publications and writing evaluations about our work, I will be happy to tender this to the committee at a later date when we have published.

Overheads shown.

Ms WHITE — You have in your folder a presentation , and I will refer to that.

The commission, as you know, is chaired by Dr Barry Jones, and I am the chief executive officer. When we last met at another inquiry I provided the committee with a very broad description of the work of the commission, but it would be fair to say it falls into these current four categories of work.

The pillars of our work are, firstly, creative schools and creative communities. That particular pillar involves us working with a large number of schools in Victoria and with teacher education academics and academics in other fields beyond the teacher education context, exploring the role of creativity in curriculum assessment and school organisation. From that particular initiative I want to make some comments about the relationship of working with other academics outside the teacher education context as a way forward for innovative practice in teacher education.

The second pillar of work is that we have two major projects that we are involved with. One with the building commission — not yet public but in confidence within the walls of this particular inquiry — is the notion of us building a landmark school that would provide a blueprint for sustainability for Victorian government schools. That has involved us working with a number of academics and intellectuals in the whole space around sustainability — economic, social, and political.

We are also very mindful that in any new agenda of reform, be it in the school context and as associated partners in teacher education, we keep front and centre the notion of fairness and equity, which is our third pillar. We are currently working on a number of initiatives in that area, looking, as I mentioned in the last inquiry, at selective practices for public schools and the effect of selective practices on the learning outcomes and educational choices of young people. We have also done some significant work with the Department for Victorian Communities, working with social workers and people in another social space around building cultural and community capital by working with schools and broad communities with a particular focus on the Cranbourne quadrant in Casey, and from that work we have also been working with our university colleagues in exploring those concepts and how we might take them forward in terms of innovation.

The fourth pillar of our work, which is an overarching area of work, is innovation. We believe the notion of innovation itself as a phenomenon should be put under scrutiny. It falls very easily off people's lips in the public policy sense. If we are not really sure what we are grappling with and how we are learning about innovation then I think we lose a major opportunity of levering it as a driver for reform in the education context. Associated with that particular initiative is the $500 000 ANZ project, which has provided us with funding for over 18 months to look at what are some of the key elements in sustaining innovation in education. That particular work has brought us into close contact with a number of university colleagues and in particular one university which is the subject of our study in that project.

I note here for your information the purpose and methods of the innovation commission: our principal work is to trial, research, test and evaluate innovations that provide insights and solutions to key issues facing public

education in Victoria. To do that we have engineered a set of strategies whereby we bring groups of people together over time to explore key questions of interest to them, and we have called those research and innovation circles. I guess for Hansard I should read this, although that would not be my preferred thing, I think you are all quite literate, but if it is to be in the Hansard record — —

The CHAIR — You can hand it in.

Ms WHITE — It is just that the last time I gave evidence the stuff that was meaty was not there, and I want to make sure it goes in. I am happy to read it.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Do you want to read it quickly to make sure?

Ms WHITE — We do not only do research, we set up Research Circles and we also scope particular strategies. We have had a number of agencies come to us and ask us to develop policies, programs and pilots around particular issues of interest to them. The refugees project is a classic case in point where we brought all of the key stakeholders across Victoria to see whether we could actually develop some innovative strategies for engaging young refugees in our public schools. That project is finished and is now looking towards being funded, working with a number of the key agencies here in Victoria to work with large numbers of students in our schools.

We, of course, do peer research; we conduct pilots in schools. Productivity pilots are a case in point; we publish and conduct large-scale professional development around the space of innovation. How do we decide to do our work? It is not the random choice of people without thought; we absolutely must link it to innovation. We work out how we might do this core work; we scope our resources; we design our projects; we are almost always finding we are getting resources to do large-scale work. People are extraordinarily interested in the work we are doing and are coming to us with funds outside the government budget; then we move to operationalising our large projects; and, of course, we evaluate and we write about our work.

With whom do we work? We work with the schools, the corporates, the universities, government, community and students, of course — and germane to this inquiry is our work with universities. It has been our observation as a commission so far — and you have already indicated this in your early documents — that most of the faculties of teacher education are fundamentally looking at the way they rethink and re-imagine their work to be more relevant for young people in the future.

On record I am the chair of the program advisory committee from RMIT, and so I am very familiar with the major rethink of the bachelor of education program, the new learning project at RMIT. I have had some interesting conversations and I have been able to provide those groups with support around the range of ways that they may work more productively with schools. I have also worked with a number of the universities — in particular VU, Deakin and RMIT — to develop relationships around our work. What we are finding is, of course, as you mentioned earlier, that most are trying to re-engineer the practice so that it articulates back to learning in the universities and so that the learning in the universities serves the interests of the schools.

These are some examples of the work I have been observing. The New Learning for New Times project for RMIT is a particularly ambitious project with a high set of ambitions and, I would argue, a low set of resources. To completely re-imagine that bachelor of education within the current restraints of the teacher education portfolio budget is a very big ask. They are working with significantly innovative young academics, but they also have a large number of academics for whom this is very new work and a very small budget to re-imagine and retrain. The Victoria University partnership project I had some knowledge of personally prior to my work on the innovation commission, but I now know in detail. The partnership program of VU is really beginning — with very small resources yet again — to look at new ways of articulating the needs of schools and placing the student teachers in the schools to help the schools meet some of their learning needs. I think when you actually get a win-win for both parties with the practicum, then you start to get some real innovation taking place.

Ballarat University has done some particularly interesting work with its schools, in particular Ballarat Secondary College. The university is very tied to that school. If you were looking for a sample school that was really integrated with its local university in innovative ways, Ballarat Secondary College would be the one. Minister Brumby launched last week the Ballarat Excellence in Learning awards, and Ballarat Secondary College and Ballarat University were given major awards by Professor Skilbeck, Dr Stephen Kemmis and me. They won the major award for their work. Deakin University, as you have no doubt heard in other evidence, has done some very interesting work with the Geelong LLEN, and the Learning Literacy Together initiative is the one that the

commission is studying. We have 10 academics at Deakin who are working on trying to bring learning and literacy into a very close relationship between the schools learning about literacy and the student teachers learning about how to teach literacy in new contexts with their academic colleagues.

I have shown you this slide before and I will not read it through for Hansard, but I think if we are going to be reconceptualising our work in teacher education we need to recognise, if you like, the knowledge paradigm within which universities are working, which actually creates some extraordinary limitations on the way we might want academics in universities to work with our schools. If the academic colleagues are going to be working in the way we would want our young teachers to be working and trying to graduate new teachers for new times, then the work that the university colleagues are doing with schools needs to be in context. It has to be across disciplines, and it needs to be accountable in the social context within which it works.

The problem is with most of our academic colleagues that their rewards are internal and they are to do with their publications and their conference papers; the work they do in our schools counts for nothing in terms of their own promotional opportunities and their tenures at universities. So there are some really interesting industrial tensions that I am sure have been played out with you in other evidence. But for 20 years now I have been struggling with this question with university colleagues with whom I have worked personally across Australia. That notion of whose knowledge it is, who gets rewarded and how do we co-construct creates a lot of the dilemmas for their work.

In relation to issues that are emerging about the notion of teacher training courses, I am interested that you have actually used the word 'training'. There is a lot of debate in the literature around training versus education, especially in the university context, but I think there are new partnership models that need exploring, and our work would suggest that it needs to be beyond the school and the teacher education relationship. I am frequently mindful of the need for all of us in the education world to work in different contexts. Many of our teacher education academics have been teachers and worked in schools and they now work in universities working with teachers in schools, and that is naturally their core business. But they need to have opportunities to work externally to the school environment with other intellectuals in other disciplines — and, I would want to suggest, so do teachers. The work we are doing in the creativity and Beyond the Pilot projects is indicating that working in new spaces is very stimulating for teachers learning about other disciplinary knowledges from scientists, poets, business people and so on.

I would say, too, that teachers in training need to access outside education experiences while they are training. I would like to see teacher education programs and student placement in schools based on the experience of a diverse and often experienced cohort of students. For instance, if we have mature-age students who have been scientists and engineers coming into our university context, how do we actually capture their professional knowledge to grow our innovative space in our schools? Why not place students at the practicum within local networks so they have experience of multiple contexts? Why not have teacher educators working with schools to place students in schools so that they add value to the work of schools as well as training the beginning teachers? Why not require student teachers to have work placement in a non-educational context to give them a broader experience? Why not support education academics to work outside the university context to give them new opportunities for learning? Why not support and reward teacher educators to work for longer periods with schools in reform initiatives? And why not use the previous work experience of mature-age students to enhance the knowledge base of schools as creative practitioners?

To put it on the public record, we have had a number of reviews of teacher education. The list is long. All of us in the education business would like just one shot at having a major national project that allows us together to re-engineer how we might prepare our teachers for the future and that builds on a broader perspective around how we might do that. Just imagine — we might actually do it fundamentally differently rather than tinkering at the edges. I have finished.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Viv. Excellent.

Ms MUNT — I will take up your final point if that is okay. You say you want a fundamentally better way of doing teacher education. How? What sort of model would you suggest?

Ms WHITE — None of the models that I would suggest would be cheap, and I think we need to look at the funding base that teacher education faculties have within their university context. That has to be looked at in a major way. I would want to see university academics working in an educational context, but also working with

other academics across disciplines — with the lawyers, the scientists and the business folk. We need to stretch out beyond the teacher education context if we are going to prepare our teachers to deal with the complexities. But equally we have absolute experts within our teacher education industry within the faculties of teacher education whose skills could be used much more broadly in the university context as well. They should be, if you like, the lead teachers in the other faculties. But I would want to see, too, a longer period of time for university colleagues to work in schools on serious issues of concern to the schools with their student teachers.

I have always particularly been attracted to the Sykes model in Madison and in Michigan on the professional development schools, where groups of academics are attached formally to a set of schools over time with a group of teachers engaged in working together with a cohort of students. The Victoria University partnership model is playing with that, but it does not have the resources to build it strongly. We have never had a real go in Australia at the Linda Darling-Hammond and Gary Sykes model of professional development schools. We have never put the resources into it in a university school context.

Mr SCHEFFER — You have posed a series of rhetorical questions that underpin what the value is there. You have said that we need to have a good look at these issues and we need resources in response to Janice's question. Those things I accept. But what are some of the structural blockers? You said there have been reviews before. Why has nothing worked and what might be the difference in the near future?

Ms WHITE — I see the blocks in a number of different ways. Firstly, there is the industrial context that the university academics work in. I am not the union organiser for the teacher education academics, but when we look at the class size ratios that teacher academics have had, to see the changes in pupil–teacher ratios over time, they have been astonishing. Again in the industrial context there has been massive casualisation and part-time work, so young academics do not have a clear career path beyond the contract labour. The notion of building a community of intellectuals who can work in a substantial set of relationships with a cohort of students over time has been undermined in the last 15 years. So they are industrial contexts. Then there are the resourcing questions around how many intellectuals you have got and how many students. There is also the intellectual side of it that I teased out. At the moment if we want university colleagues to seriously engage in co-constructing knowledge working with the profession to explore how to change the way they do their work in schools it actually does not assist their career path. It does not assist them to get permanency, to get tenure. They need to publish over their own name. Working with schools is classified as low-level work. Not by the individuals, but by the structures it is not considered valuable work to do as an academic. The third thing — —

Mr SCHEFFER — How could that be changed?

Ms WHITE — If teacher educators were able to put forward serious proposals on how we would do it through the institute of teaching or through the commonwealth, whichever structure we chose to make it happen through, to work with two or three schools, with 200 or 300 beginning teachers, 1000 schoolteachers over a number of years, to do some particular work of concern for those schools, and that they agree to do the professional development, to do the writing, to do the reform, and they get rewards for it. It is probably not appropriate, but I refer to them as brownie points. The brownie points academics are proven in order to their work. In terms of their own performance appraisal within universities, they are required to do a certain amount of that work in schools to get tenure and promotion. That work in schools — that serious reflective research — should be rewarded. At the moment in the commission we are doing a piece of work for the Office of Senior Victorians, now the Department for Victorian Communities, about intergenerational understanding. Victorian Communities is very concerned about young people's attitudes to people who are older — older Victorians — so we have older Victorians, teenagers and teachers together over a year to explore how we might change both groups' attitudes to each other. We have four academics working with us over the year. We do not have a budget to pay substantially for their work, so we have four retired academics who are doing it for love. Out of that particular project we all have a body of knowledge that will be very helpful to schools, it will be very helpful to universities, but it is being done in a volunteer way. That is one classic example — we have other university colleagues whom we pay, but in that particular project we have not been able to.

Mr SCHEFFER — So that is the university's industrial continuum. What about education bureaucracies and governments?

Ms WHITE — I have watched over time the university relationship change between the preparation of teachers from when I was a beginning teacher and we were owned by the education bureaucracy and led to

college — in a way — and then we decoupled the university training programs. Now we are sort of re-coupling them in a way through our institutes of teaching and our various registration bodies. There needs to be a stronger strategic partnership between the universities and the schools and the bureaucracies to do new work together. Not all of the work, but to construct some new paradigms and new ways of doing this work and to explore them. We in the commission are doing that not in an ad hoc but in a small way. A large bureaucracy could stimulate some very interesting work with universities if we found ways to combine research, professional development, teacher induction and teacher renewal in the one space. We are doing that with those research and innovation circles — quite interesting work — where we have young teachers working with established teachers and people in the systems and people in the universities around a particular issue.

Ms ECKSTEIN — How would you structure a pre-service course if you could do what you liked? Would it be different for primary and secondary? Would you look at stages of schooling? Do you have a view about an integrated course over four years versus the degree-Dip. Ed. model?

Ms WHITE — I am happy to answer that with the proviso that I do not have evidence. I am mindful that this is a public inquiry and I have not got research-based evidence. My evidence is simply from my experience in the last 20 years of our working in the context that I work with and now sitting on a committee at RMIT. I do not think we should separate primary and secondary schooling — I have a view about that — and I do not think we need to, if you like, divide primary, middle, secondary and applied. We have all of these various different ways. We need a combined preparation program that has specialisations within it. We need to have, I would say, probably almost two-thirds of the experience that would be combined. I would want to see the practicums also in both or multiple contexts as I indicated. I would like to see maybe every teacher to have the opportunity of working in early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and non-education contexts as part of their preparation as teachers. The non-education context would not be associated with working, with respect, with the innovation commission or the Brotherhood of St Laurence; it would be working with Rio Tinto or a parliamentary office, for instance, or a businessman or in a law firm. Just get teachers and beginning people out of schools to turn their head around about schooling and about education.

I resist the notion of believing all training should take place in schools. We can narrow young people's expectations of what is possible if we place them in what I call a stuck school. If the school itself that they are spending a whole six months in is not an innovative school, does not have our best teachers in it and best ideas floating around, they can be inducted into a culture of education that is not helpful. They need multiple contexts. If we could build it in, they need a structured beginning year of teaching where our young beginners are not put in the most difficult contexts. I am from New South Wales originally and 80 per cent of our teachers in Wilcannia were first year out. That is akin to putting first-year doctors in charge of brain surgery at the Alfred hospital. We are asking our beginning teachers to do the most complex work, placing them in difficult-to-staff schools, so we need to mentor them into our professional and first year, and they need to have time to be mentored.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Could I just enlarge on that? Is there a time constraint? Kids who do a three-year science degree and then do a Dip. Ed. have to do 80 days of teaching rounds. Now you are saying for them to go out and work for Rio Tinto or someone else. Is there not a time problem?

Ms WHITE — I would say, in answer to Anne's question and then yours, that I would not agree with a three-year specialist degree with a one-year Dip. Ed. That is an old model. We need an integrated end-to-end in two years science, four years education. Like we have arts law, environmental law or commerce law, I think we need a deep pedagogical and educational understanding and a deep set of content knowledge and they should be running together, so I think four years minimum and the practicum should start in the first year. I can see no better place for a beginning science and maths teacher than spending two months with Robin Batteran in Rio Tinto as part of their experience in the world or work.

Mr KOTSIRAS — One other point that you made is for students to work within a local network.

Ms WHITE — Yes. We have worked with the government middle years strategy where the schools have been giving large amounts of money — $250,000 per cluster. Out of that work we have been doing the teachers have been saying to us there is a real problem about getting enough places for students. In my position at RMIT we were talking about how you cannot find schools to take teachers for their practicums. I said to the teachers who have been working with me, 'What would you reckon?', and they said that what the principals are saying if we

placed a group of them in a network and they could share the students around and they could actually build a program that would give them multiple contexts, that might actually work.

Mr KOTSIRAS — From there, the teachers should know the students, or should probably get to know them. It is hard to do that when you swap from one school to another on different days.

Ms WHITE — No, they were talking about — let us say, at Deakin Geelong. You might have 200 students in first year at Deakin Geelong. Fifty of those students would be attached to that network for the whole four years they were there. You would give them multiple contexts, but they would also have a nest, if you like, to be supported with. If it was not working out in one school, the network principals would ensure there was a better match. Rather that one principal having to do all the matching and supporting, the network would do all the matching and supporting.

The CHAIR — A couple of things — you said there was a problem in that a substantial cohort of professionals want to work with young people but changes in tenure reduce that. Yet we know there are hundreds of excellent teachers, professionals, in the schools who have a wealth of knowledge, who have kept up their qualifications, who can in fact form a cohort of teaching. We also know that increasingly mature-aged students are coming to teaching and bringing a wealth of information, but they need a decent grounding in theory, practice et cetera. I think they are young mature aged, I must say, but nevertheless we will call them mature aged.

We also talked about industrial constraints in the nature of universities being in some ways — while you probably did not say this — fairly restrictive in the way they change and adapt at times. I put to a previous group: what is wrong with having teacher education courses that go outside of 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. and have classes at 5.00 p.m. or 6.00 p.m.? I am not saying to teach longer hours or more hours, but to have appropriate teachers from schools, innovative teachers, come in and take classes to enable both the expansion of options for teacher educators and mature-aged people coming into the institutions so they do not have to give up their jobs and they can come in and learn from the teachers. What do you think of that? Is that feasible?

Ms WHITE — Firstly, it is feasible; secondly, it has been done in a number of places. The Maine partnership in America is a very interesting model. The University of Maine had just that sort of program, but what it did differently was to have an after-school. The student teachers would work in groups in various local schools and the local schoolteachers would work with the student teachers after school, and they learnt together. So if there was a new literacy strategy, for instance, that the government was running then the student teachers and the teachers in the local schools worked together on coming to understand that. We do already have that. Two or three of my staff in the commission are practising teachers who do regular lectures at VU on innovative practices.

The second thing is the industrial framework. I have now been working in educational reform for approximately 15 years. I have a major set of publications that I would not be embarrassed to line up against many of the academics in the universities. I do not have a PhD. I cannot get a job in a university. What is more, if I did, they would be paying me less than what I would be getting as a graduate teacher, so there are some absolute financial disincentives for teachers. Teachers have a strong union and although we would say we are not paid nearly enough, we are paid more than part-time and casual academics in universities, so there is no incentive for teachers to do that.

Therefore we really have to think about the fundamentals of what we might do, how we might do that differently, so that we bring the teachers in to work with the university academics and their students, but what is in it for the teachers other than a bit of extra money and helping their profession? What I found in my experience is that teachers are much more interested in the model that we have tried out here at Malvern Central. Eight VU students are attached to Malvern Central for the whole year, and they work with the CBD program at Malvern Central by coming to the city for nine weeks in the term. The student teachers come with them on that particular program. That is a win-win for everybody. The student teachers are learning about a really innovative middle years program, the school is getting eight extra adults to work with them on this innovative program in the city, and the children are getting exposed to a range of educational experiences. The teacher educators who are supervising those eight students get to experience some learning for themselves as well. They are the sorts of models.

The CHAIR — I think that is good, but I do not know if I agree with you about teachers not being prepared to lecture or work with students after hours. We have come across a lot of teachers who would love to do that. What they do not want to do is to go part-time teaching and then be casual during the day at university,

because that impacts on their superannuation and long-service leave et cetera. There are many teachers whose children have left home, who are very experienced, who are in schools and looking for a new challenge; and part of that new challenge is to teach student teachers.

Ms WHITE — What stops them?

The CHAIR — Often that they cannot do it after hours is one issue. I do not know how easy it is to get in.

Ms WHITE — That is interesting.

The CHAIR — I was going to talk about your seniors project. There is a school out Watsonia way that did a great project — —

Ms WHITE — Where is it?

The CHAIR — It is in Montmorency.

Mr KOTSIRAS — Is that in your electorate?

The CHAIR — In fact I think it is Sherbourne, but the students of the primary school went out to our senior citizens place and taught the senior citizens how to use email. They told some delightful stories about an 83-year-old who emailed their daughter in England and it was the first time she had spoken to her in ages, and so what they are doing is interesting. But it leads to the point that what we find in teacher education institutions is the fear that the lecturers there do not have the technological skills or are a bit scared of using technology in teacher training. Have you any comments to make on that?

Ms WHITE — I think part of the problem with the technology — we were just joking before we started — is that the technology is not good enough for us yet, really. With really creative pedagogues this technology is not all that useful to us, so I have not experienced that lately. Ten years ago, yes; but not lately. In fact at RMIT there is leading-edge stuff around multiliteracies — new technologies, absolutely leading-edge — and some of the academics there are working cross-faculty in the arts and design faculties, and that has been really instructive in their work in teacher education.

Talking about the seniors project that we are working on, we have just set up a mentoring program at Kyabram called the Old Mates program, and these senior people are not just reading out loud to kids; we are talking about serious mentoring of adolescents through their careers, and it is a fantastic program. These happen across Victoria, and they are the sorts of ways that we can imagine doing new work with universities and schools.

One thing that comes back to a question you had, John, about bureaucracies and large-scale systems is that we are still in that domain of tendering for projects, and we end up with competitive tendering between university colleagues who often would like to work across universities — who do already work across universities. If we want to leave those substantial intellectual outcomes around some of our government initiatives then we need to build coalitions of universities and schools around new work. To me, that is where some of the power could be, especially with the research projects that young beginning teachers are doing; they could be brought to bear into the core work that we are doing with teachers. Because we are in a commission that is not for profit we are able to bring people around the table without the tendering process and build partnerships to do new work, which is proving very productive and very powerful.

The CHAIR — Thank you. That was terrific. You have given us a lot to think about. You have given us more questions that we will endeavour to get a few more answers to. Thank you very much.

Ms WHITE — My pleasure.

Witness withdrew.

C O R R E C T E D V E R S I O N

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne — 18 May 2004

Members

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	Mr J. E. Scheffer

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

Staff

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

Witnesses

Ms N. Schultz, education policy consultant;

Ms L. Millar, course developer, bachelor vocational education; Victorian TAFE Association and

Mr J. Parish, former Director, Kangan-Batman Institute of TAFE

The CHAIR — Welcome to representatives from the Victorian TAFE Association. Would you start off by introducing yourselves and giving a short statement of what you do and your views relating to the terms of reference, and then we will go to questions.

Ms SCHULTZ — My name is Nita Schultz and I am educational policy consultant for the Victorian TAFE Association. The association members include all 14 stand-alone TAFE institutes and 4 multi-sector universities, so the association is well placed to comment on the effects of TAFE education in Victoria. It was on that basis that I thought we would be able to make some contribution and offer some information to the hearings you are conducting. I have brought copies of a paper that was written a couple of years ago by the VTA on the VET professional and TAFE teaching qualifications, which we will not refer to in detail, but I will leave those for distribution for your interest. We have summarised that paper in dot points which I sent to you in an email, so we have a brief summary of only one sheet of paper, as we did not want to burden you with too much. Looking at the terms of reference, we can probably respond to both parts of that, but in particular to the second item you had there about attracting mature-age workers into teaching as a career and a profession. Perhaps John will start from that perspective.

Mr PARISH — Yes, I will do that. I am John Parish, recently retired director of Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE, and as such I am here today to put a point of view with the VTA about teacher education. The most important point I would like to make for consideration is that there is a specialness in vocational education and training relating to TAFE that has to be grappled with for teacher education. TAFE institutes and, I would argue, senior secondary colleges in particular need access to people who have vocational skills and knowledge — in other words, they have worked in industry or commerce in some sense before they have become teachers — and that is certainly a requirement of a TAFE teacher, but it is increasingly important to look at the crossover into some of the senior secondary level teaching. There has been a gradual demise of trade teachers, if you like to call them that, as people have got older, and there has been a lack of training of those sorts of people to fill up the gaps. In fact in the late 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s there was a major influx of people, and they are now exiting the system. The major point I want to make is that we need to find a way to get these people into teacher training and into teaching.

In general terms a person can become a secondary teacher by going to high school, going to university, getting a qualification as a teacher and becoming a teacher, but for a TAFE teacher or someone who has vocational skills you are asking them to become first of all a qualified person in trade or commerce and then to become a teacher. The dilemma we face is: how do we do that? How do we actually get them to come into teaching and give up a whole lot of things which will impact on their family life to get that teaching qualification? The major premise of the point I am making is that teaching is a special qualification. The classical case might be a tradesperson, and to get them to come into teaching is not just a matter of saying to them, 'Okay, you can come in and work in a classroom'. They have to become teachers. As a TAFE director I did not want to employ just tradesmen and tradeswomen; I needed to employ teachers. I expected them to be very good tradesmen and tradeswomen and to be very well qualified in their field — and that is a prerequisite, of course — but I needed them to become teachers.

Teaching is a special craft or a special profession, no less than nursing or any other professions that exists, and I need those people to gain a teaching qualification and I need them to become educationalists. I need them to understand about learning, about how people learn and about the learning difficulties they will encounter, and I need them to understand that in a mixed learning environment where you have a whole range of students we are not going to get that sort of experience with people coming off the streets with minimal qualifications. I need, we need and the system needs a way to get these people qualified in education, and that is the major dilemma I see facing us. TAFE institutes do that by using a variety of methods, but essentially it is a major difficulty. We have the ageing working through our system, and that is going to cause us some major problems. We are now teaching generation X and generation Y, and these students are different from the people who are currently teaching them, so there are some reasonable difficulties there to come to grips with in relation to their different learning styles and expectations and their different ways of doing things. We need people trained to handle and work with these young people.

The major point I would like to get across today is that education is really, really important. Education needs specialists, and we need to find ways to bring the classical sort of industry people into teaching and make them into teachers or educationalists. I guess that is the major point I would like to put here today. Special skills are needed, and we need that 'specialness'.

Ms SCHULTZ — And flowing on from that, we would like to offer some suggestions about what that model might look like in trying to develop a work force of teachers who can demonstrate the skills and attributes that John has been talking about. From a TAFE perspective or a vocational education and training perspective, a teacher training model that puts people into a learning environment in a university or in an educational setting of some sort and then occasionally puts them into a practical environment such as a school is not necessarily producing the qualities and the skills that we need in teachers in VET. We would like to suggest the model that John described — perhaps a cadetship or a blended model, going back to the apprenticeship model whereby a person spends equal time in their learning environment and in a VET environment, or any teacher training whereby they spend considerable blocks of time being mentored and coached in a working environment in a school, in a TAFE college or with a private provider or whatever it might be, and then they spend the balance of their time in a formal learning environment where they are gaining the theory, the background and the underpinning skills to become a teacher. That has been used as a model in the past, and even now the older members of the TAFE work force hark back to those times.

In preparing for talking to you today I have been asking many people in the VET sector, 'What do you think is the best working model to prepare a person for teaching in VET?', and they invariably say that there has not been enough practicum and that the model that used to exist in the past worked well, whereby people had mentors and coaches in their working environment with whom they could deal on a day-to-day basis with issues of teaching, learning and reflecting on what is happening in their own teaching; whereby they started off with small steps and worked towards less and less supervision over a period of time; and whereby that experience was supported by an equal amount of time in a university, a college or a TAFE institute, learning the underpinning theories and knowledge required. We are keen to put that to you as a model that has worked. I am personally a little critical of a model whereby a person may go out for a block of time. Leonie, whom I will pass to in a moment, has been involved with the preparation and development of a bachelor in VET through the Holmesglen institute, and a key feature of that has been working at practicum and integrating the practicum into the learning, but having substantial practicum from day one through to the end of that degree. Leonie might like to comment on that.

Ms MILLAR — My name is Leonie Millar and I am from Holmesglen Institute of TAFE; formerly, like John, another retiree, deputy director at Holmesglen in charge of the academic programs there, and also in charge of professional development for teaching and non-teaching staff. I am currently managing a project for which Holmesglen was funded to develop an undergraduate-level qualification in vocational education and training. We have been working on that for the past five or six months. The course is almost completed and about to go through the accreditation process and as part of the research for that we have talked to a large number of providers in the VET area. I think I can really only endorse what John and Nita have said about appropriate teacher preparation for people working in the VET sector.

We do need people who have high level technical vocational skills, whether it be in IT or hospitality or nursing, or the various trades such as building, construction and so on. But we also need people who understand the nature of teaching and learning as a set of processes by which individuals engage other individuals in that learning process. I think it has been our learning experience that the qualifications currently available, while they might be appropriate as a stopgap, quick-fix measure to get someone into a classroom if there is a situation where a teacher is desperately needed, do not provide people with sufficient in-depth knowledge to develop those skills to what we would call an appropriate level, and that is why we entered into the process of developing an undergraduate degree.

It is not the sort of degree where people will go and study in the university exclusively; they will be working in a VET environment at the same time,. In fact part of the requirement to be doing the degree is that they are actually working in a VET environment. They will have a coach and/or a mentor within whatever environment they are working, whether it is a TAFE institute or a private provider, and there is a large level of emphasis on the practical experience which they need to gain while they are doing their theoretical studies. So that is the way we are heading with this particular qualification and it is certainly something we would like to see promoted throughout the system.

The CHAIR — It sounds interesting and I might open it up to questions. Firstly how is the Edmund Barton centre going, is that all up and running.

Ms MILLAR — Hemisphere. It has changed its name.

Ms MUNT — It is absolutely wonderful, it is right next to my electorate and it is a wonderful centre.

Ms MILLAR — Yes, it is great.

Ms MUNT — It is doing really well. It is a hotel, has a reception centre — it is wonderful.

Ms MILLAR — It is doing splendidly at the moment.

The CHAIR — I must get out there and have a look at it.

Ms MILLAR — You would not recognise Moorabbin; it has completely changed, Steve, since those days when were negotiating.

The CHAIR — It is only a couple of years!

Ms MILLAR — Yes, I know, but it is amazing what you can do in a few years.

The CHAIR — That is true.

Ms MUNT — You are welcome to have a look at it at any time.

The CHAIR — You said you were doing an undergraduate degree. Is that part of the TAFE degrees or is it in partnership with a university?

Ms MILLAR — If I could correct you, according to the higher education branch there is no such thing as a TAFE degree. There are undergraduate degrees which may be delivered by TAFE institutes. I call them TAFE degrees too because the minister has referred to TAFE degrees, and I was pulled up very abruptly.

The CHAIR — So it is part of that that is as opposed to a franchising type of arrangement?

Ms MILLAR — Yes, it is. No, it is not a franchising arrangement. We have some franchising arrangements at Holmesglen where we are actually delivering degrees that belong to a university on behalf of that university. No, this is a degree developed at Holmesglen for the VET sector. It is funded by the government under those new product development funds which it granted last year.

The CHAIR — Fantastic. That is excellent. We might have a bit more of a detailed chat about that if that is ok.

Ms SCHULTZ — If I could just add these two other examples that come to my mind: one is at Chisholm which has recently had accredited a graduate certificate in innovation, education and training; and second, Victoria University has a graduate certificate of higher end qualification to attract mature-aged people into a career of vocational education. But Leonie's example is the only one I know of that is an undergraduate certificate.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I would like to clarify how what you have just talked about sits with certificate IV?

Ms MILLAR — Yes, the certificate IV in workplace training assessment.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Is this an improvement on that?

Ms MILLAR — I would hope so.

Ms ECKSTEIN — And therefore you are looking for this to be the base-level qualification as opposed to the certificate IV which I understand is the base-level qualification in TAFE institutions but not in schools?

Ms MILLAR — Yes the certificate IV is the base-level qualification in TAFE institutions for entering teachers. We would hope, although it is not part of the development of the degree program that people who complete the first year of the degree would be able to exit with a certificate IV, but it is our anticipation, and we would certainly be encouraging our staff at least, to continue on to complete the three years of the undergraduate degree because, quite bluntly, I do not believe that the certificate IV offers sufficient underpinning knowledge and theoretical knowledge. There is just simply not enough about pedagogy in the certificate IV to make what I would call a really good teacher.

Ms ECKSTEIN — I hear what you say; there is clearly also a disjuncture with the certificate IV which you need as the base qualification in TAFE institutions as opposed to schools, so someone who has that cannot go into a school and teach the same level. So the agenda ultimately would be to raise that base qualification so that you could get something that is transferable.

Ms MILLAR — I would hope in developing a degree we would be raising the bar, if you like, for teaching qualifications in TAFE institutions.

Ms ECKSTEIN — And it would be transferable to the schools then?

Ms MILLAR — I have not gone through the process yet of approaching the Victorian Institute of Teaching, but we intend to see if the bachelor of vocational education and training will be eligible for people to be registered then with the VIT.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Because that transferability would be a good thing.

Ms MILLAR — I think it would be an excellent thing. The other thing about it is that with the move to VET in Schools, and its increasing popularity, I think you are going to get a lot more VET teaching in secondary schools with people doing a lot more vocational-type education, and obviously the most appropriately qualified people to teach them are TAFE institute teachers with that sort of qualification.

The CHAIR — What happens if students in school do their VET in Schools at the TAFE. I think in Box Hill there are a couple of hundred of them; you need to have done them, every TAFE does them, or with a VCAL subject. What is the requirement of TAFE teachers taking that VET in school subject or the VCAL subject in terms of teaching?

Mr PARISH — If it is delivered by the TAFE institute it is covered by the TAFE institute's quality processes in terms of teacher qualifications.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Certificate IV would be the minimum?

Mr PARISH — Well certificate IV is certainly the minimum.

The CHAIR — So they do not have to have a teaching qualification per se.

Ms ECKSTEIN — But if they go into the school and deliver it in the school they would have to.

Ms MILLAR — But that is a different issue. However, in reality — and I think John would be able to endorse this — in terms of VCAL in particular where you are dealing with a very different client group from the standard VET students, I think at our place, for example, we would not have anyone teaching in VCAL who had not done the full bit. They are people who have done a full undergraduate qualification in teaching or they have done both the graduate diplomas because they are covered by the TAFE.

Mr PARISH — The institute's procedures and requirements.

Ms MILLAR — And under AQTF all they have to have is the certificate IV.

Ms MUNT — I am not particularly familiar with TAFE and how the system works, so I wonder if you could take me back to the first step on the ladder. How does the teaching qualification work in TAFE now? My brother is a trade teacher, so I know that back then he was a 'tradie' and he went to Hawthorn for a year and virtually did a Dip. Ed., and out he went to teach. I think that system does not operate anymore.

Ms MILLAR — No, it does not.

Ms MUNT — What is the system that operates now?

Mr PARISH — The system now works on the basis that a TAFE institute would identify that it had a vacancy in let us say a trade course and it would say, 'Okay, we need to identify someone who can fill that vacancy', and if it cannot find anybody with a teaching qualification already it will employ someone and undertake to give them a basic qualification of a certificate IV and then encourage them to go on to other studies.

Ms MUNT — So you basically go and look for someone who has the technical expertise, and then you train them up to be a teacher to your own specifications when you have found that person?

Mr PARISH — Yes, we do.

Ms MUNT — And do you do the certificate IV yourself through your own TAFE system?

Mr PARISH — Yes, we are able to do that.

Ms MILLAR — And the diploma of vocational education and training as well; we run both of them.

Mr PARISH — So the basic premise, of course, is that you have to have the commerce skill — the trade skill, if you like — and the industry experience first, and the dilemma that faces us is that then we have to find ways to free that person up to get the other qualifications. We can do a minimal qualification in-house — that is what we have to do, and that is an undertaking we make, like anything — but the difficulty is to move them on to become educationalists and to actually get an undergraduate qualification, which would be the very minimum we would be encouraging all of our people to have, understanding that the certificate IV is the minimum. There is no way under the Australian Quality Training Framework that that is going to change, but to think that that is enough to educate our young people is a joke. It is not enough. We need to have people who understand the craft of teaching and the craft of engaging people in learning, and that is the major dilemma that faces us.

Ms MUNT — What is the rigour of a certificate IV? How long would that take?

Ms MILLAR — How long is a piece of string?

Ms SCHULTZ — Normally it is 290 hours of classroom study.

Ms MILLAR — The reality is that it is delivered in different modes in different organisations, and there are some providers — not TAFE institutes generally — who deliver it in what they call a fast-track mode over a weekend. You are given a few workbooks and sent away with the workbooks to fill them out.

Ms MUNT — So there is no mark you have to hit, like with the VIT; it is just virtually in-house? I know that private providers do give it. I was down at the Coles Myer Institute, and it has certificate IV for certain things. So if you had your way, what would be your preferred model? I would say there is going to be increasing importance on the TAFE sector training.

Mr PARISH — I would answer that by saying I do not know that there is a lot wrong with the model, but if you want someone to be able to get into teaching, you need to encourage them to think about becoming a teacher, and we need these people out there working in industry, but to just say up front, 'The only way you can get in is to have a degree before you start' is impractical. We have to encourage people to come in and study part of the job or study part time, but the point I have been making is we have to find a way to hold up the light to say, 'Look, you need to become an educationalist. You need to have a look at the idea of an undergraduate qualification', and we need to make pathways to that. A certificate IV is part of a pathway. A certificate IV might be a good beginning, but we need to find ways to add to that beginning; otherwise we are not going to qualify people to teach in secondary colleges.

Ms MUNT — What has happened to the Hawthorn approach, for instance?

Mr PARISH — It is gone.

Ms MUNT — My brother did his apprenticeship, then he did his year and then he went and taught in a secondary school. Would something like that be appropriate?

Mr PARISH — It does not exist. In a role that I have just undertaken I am involved through the minister in creating a TAFE development centre which will have the role of focusing on initial teacher training and in-service training for TAFE staff. We will be looking at models that might have an impact there, but it is very early days, and I am only into the second week of that particular role. That Hawthorn model does not exist any more. If you want to gain a qualification you can certainly go and study at various universities, but the way it worked at Hawthorn no longer exists. That was a great example of where people worked for three days a week as teachers and studied for two days a week.

Ms MUNT — Yes, it was terrific.

Mr PARISH — To that basic model we would add the approach of using mentoring and coaching, as was mentioned by the previous witness. The concept of being able to actively work with mentors — in other words, trained teachers and trained administrators in the system — means that as you learn how to teach you also learn how to work with young people and not-so-young people, because the average age of TAFE students is somewhere in the 30s. So you are working with 30, 40 and 50-year-old people in TAFE, and they are not mugs. They are people who need to respect teachers, and you have to find ways to gain that respect. So, as we mentioned earlier, we think a model of learning on the job and having an active mentor and an active role in learning and studying is the right sort of model, and we think TAFE institutes are a good basis for that. We think you could actually set that up and work with a TAFE institute in cooperation with a higher education provider for the sort of degree that Leonie was talking about. We think you have there a basis of a model that can work.

Ms MUNT — And when are you going to report to the minister?

Mr PARISH — We are working to put in place this thing called the TAFE development centre. It has already been funded, and we hope to have that operational as soon as possible, but it is early days for me. It is the beginning of an approach to pay attention to TAFE teacher training.

Ms MUNT — So you will not be done by the time this committee is ready to report?

Mr PARISH — When is this committee finishing?

Ms MUNT — At the end of the year.

Mr PARISH — We hope we will have things under way in the second half of the year.

Ms MUNT — Before I finish I would also like to acknowledge that I read the following in our committee papers:

> In discussions with committee staff, the association has commented that neither the inquiry terms of reference nor the emerging themes noted in the discussion paper specifically mention pre-service teacher training to meet the needs of vocational education and training in Victoria and indeed in the national context.

I would just like to acknowledge that I have noticed that and made a note of those comments.

Mr PARISH — The international aspect, if I can just mention that, is in a sense a crucial aspect for Australia, because increasingly the Australian training system is being franchised overseas and other countries are being encouraged to adopt a similar model to the Australian training framework. What makes it work in Australia is the training of its teachers and workers, and there is a huge opportunity to train international teachers in how to deliver the Australian system. So that is another opportunity that is out there as part of this. If we can come up with a really effective teacher training approach it is possible we can attract overseas trainees.

Ms MUNT — Thank you very much.

Mr SCHEFFER — John, in your opening remarks you said young people are difficult to teach — or different to teach, sorry; my mistake. Young people are different to teach.

Ms SCHULTZ — Most probably both.

Mr SCHEFFER — Well, yes. But a number of witnesses have alluded to that observation, and I think rather unconvincingly in some cases. I sense that they are different to teach, but I am not sure that the reasons people cite for that stack up for me. Why do you think they are different to teach these days?

Mr PARISH — At Kangan Batman, where I have recently retired from, we had the largest VET in Schools programs and a couple of very effective VCAL programs operating, but the reports that I received from teachers and administrators was more around trying to understand the different ways that young people these days approach learning and approach their opportunities for learning, what they expect of a teacher and an administrator, and the way they want that structured. So the difficulties we experience are probably at the margins of young people who are a bit disfranchised or a bit turned off by the experiences they are having.

Mr SCHEFFER — Are you saying there is a failure in the previous education or experience of learning?

Mr PARISH — I would not necessarily use that word. What I am pointing out is that we know there are young people whose experience in the secondary colleges is not exactly what they want, so they look for other things such as TAFE and VCAL, and some of them find an outlet there. What we also find is that a classical 55-year-old trade teacher has some difficulty dealing with a 16 or 18-year-old person who has grown up in the information age, grown up with computers and grown up, as it has been highlighted to me, never having known when the *Simpsons*, for instance, was not on television. There is a whole lot of stuff there — —

Mr SCHEFFER — Was there such a time?

Mr PARISH — For some young people these days the answer is no. The reality is that they have different expectations of their learning and their learning environment, and that puts pressure on people who are not willing to adapt to that. That is the reality of what we are experiencing.

Mr SCHEFFER — What are those expectations though that are different?

Mr PARISH — They might, for instance, expect that they are going to play around with what they are doing more and not be quite so structured, or the structure is a reality against that — for example, 'No, I don't want a structure, I want some choices here. I want to be able to make a decision myself about whether I do it this way or that way. What on earth are you doing telling me this, you're a fuddy-duddy teacher!'. Unless you can find adapt to that, unless you can find ways to encourage those young people and unless you adapt to that learning environment there are some factors about these generations X and Y that are different. You have to learn to adapt to your client group, I guess, and my point is that we do need to get some young people into training that can relate more closely to these people.

Ms SCHULTZ — I worked in a regional TAFE setting prior to coming to Melbourne recently. Last year we engaged in a project to try to identify what some of these differences were to develop new learning programs to engage these people better. The technology issue was a very powerful influence to them. They have had the instant stimulus of technology from when they were three-years-old. To us we still gasp and gawk and think something is wonderful, while they take it in their step. In terms of getting some of these people to complete their assessments it was a nightmare — a struggle — for teachers to get them to do it. One teacher started using SMS as the means of asking students the questions. They got instant responses to the SMS, whereas they were not getting any responses if they gave them pieces of paper to take home and bring back.

The CHAIR — They had a good deal with Optus.

Mr SCHEFFER — Through SMS they were fairly well-developed responses I imagine and desired — —

Ms SCHULTZ — No, they were satisfactory, and yes, you designed it for your needs, but it was an interesting learning experience for the teachers in that, firstly, the people were responding to this technology when they were not responding to print-based materials, so that was something they could try to capture in some way. Secondly, they also have a culture of using it, whereas older people do not have that culture. That was a very interesting exercise in how they learn. They are much more wanting instant gratification than perhaps we are. They do not just accept what is served up in front of them. They will say, 'Where's dessert?'. They question and ask. As teachers we have to develop new strategies and new ways of teaching to satisfy that hunger. It is a good thing if they are asking questions and they want to engage in problem solving. It is a very important skill.

Ms MILLAR — But the other thing about the cohort of younger people who are in VET environments these days — and I am really talking about the 15 to 19-year-olds, and we have increasing numbers of them — is that a lot of them come from very seriously disadvantaged backgrounds. We have a VCAL group down at the Moorabbin campus of Holmesglen. There are 15 kids in that group, and I think only 3 of them live in what we would call a standard two-parent family. At least three of them are not living in a home at all; they are in some sort of community-based environment because they have been thrown out by their parents. They are very young, and a lot of them have serious drug problems. We have teachers dealing with a whole range of socially and intellectually dysfunctional individuals.

Mr SCHEFFER — How do you engage the student teachers in those issues?

Ms MILLAR — With great difficulty, because I would not put a learning teacher in with a group of students like that. It is too hard for them. They simply could not cope. It would break them. It would kill them. They cannot deal with it. You have to put experienced people into those situations who are experienced but not so old as Nita says that they cannot adapt to some of the ways that these kids like to do things. Technology is a really good example of that. They seem to be incompetent in a whole lot of ways, yet they can sit there and do things with their mobile phone that I can only dream about. It is not that they are incompetent; it is that they have not found a way of learning that has managed to work for them yet.

The CHAIR — I might just finish off with perhaps a specific question. In terms of mature-age student teachers or trainees, what in particular needs to be catered for? What is different about teaching them? Are there any particular approaches to mature-age students that you need to make, whether they be in a teacher training institution or at TAFE?

Mr PARISH — I think there are, but I do not think there are any secrets in it. If you are going to bring in a mature-aged person and train them to become a teacher to work in one of our schools you need to pay attention to the fact that they are mature aged, they are going to bring to the learning environment their life experience and they are going to expect, in my opinion, some recognition of their prior experiences. They will need to be respected for the ability to progress in their learning at a rate they wish to choose to learn — in other words, to learn at a pace that they suit. They need to be able to make choices about the way they wish to learn and be offered some of those choices and to respect them as adults and individuals and not be treated as just a flock of sheep, so to speak. They are all individuals who are going to have to be encouraged to make the best of their learning. You do not want to waste your time if you are a mature-age student; you are there to learn usually. You have made that connection to learning and you really want to maximise that. In my experience that is what TAFE does really, really well. It actually adapts to the individual learner that comes into the environment. There is no real secret. We certainly know a lot about the preferences of mature-age learners and the way they like to go about things.

We have been doing this for a long time. It has been around for many, many years. I am an example of this. I came into teaching as a so-called mature-aged 26-year-old. I was perhaps the youngest in my class at teacher college with other people in their 40s and 50s. We know how to do it, we know how to make it work, we know the sorts of things that are needed — I suppose the pathways that need to be created and the processes — and I would argue, of course, as you would expect me to do, we do need to find ways to perhaps fund some of this to make it work. We have to be innovative. It is not a matter of putting out your hand and saying that this is the way we did it in the past and it is the only way we can do it now. We have to look to ways to use contemporary methods and contemporary ideas, and we have to heavily base them on the concept of mentoring and coaching these days so it is not about heavy classroom stuff.

Ms MILLAR — And that is basically the model of the degree that we are developing.

The CHAIR — You could have a TAFE teacher go and take a vocational or education unit in teacher training? That sort of thing would not cost that much.

Mr PARISH — I agree with you, but it still does cost and it is still an issue. We have to free them up from their work time and we have to respect the fact that they are going off to study. Study requires not just the time they are in class but the study away from class. At least the hour for hour has to be respected. If they are doing 10 hours of study they need another 10 hours to back up that study. Those sorts of things need to be paid attention to in the sense that learning is a special activity. More than anything I hold the view that we have to work hard to enhance the status and enhance the belief in our fantastic system of education in Victoria and in our teachers in particular. We should be trying to pump up teachers as special people. I put the point that TAFE teachers are even more special, but you would expect me to say that, and we have to find ways to increase that status and belief for everybody to respect that what goes on is just magic. Certainly we need to pay attention to how we get them into teacher training.

The CHAIR — I think that is a pretty good note to finish on.

Committee adjourned.