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–17 March 2004

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Dr I. Sloane, Principal, Mitcham Primary School, Executive Committee Member, Victorian Primary Principals Association.

The Acting Chair (Ms BUCKINGHAM) — I declare open this hearing of the Education and Training Committee. The committee is an all-party joint investigatory committee of the Parliament of Victoria. It is hearing evidence today in relation to the inquiry into the suitability of current pre-service teacher 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 and is granted immunity from judicial review pursuant to the Constitution Act and the Parliamentary Committees Act.

This morning the hearing commences with Dr Ian Sloane, who is an executive committee member of the Victorian Primary Principals Association (VPPA). I invite you to make a presentation or a small introduction, and then members will proceed to ask questions.

Dr SLOANE — Thank you for inviting the Victorian Primary Principals Association to contribute. Perhaps I should give a bit of background about why I am here. I am a member of the executive committee of the VPPA. I have been a principal class officer for 13¼ years and I have been in primary education for 33¼ years, in one form or another. The VPPA represents approximately 1300 members in Victoria, mainly principals and assistant principals. The association has an organisational position on this issue, and I will put the relevant points in a few moment's time. I have also prepared a brief written submission of my own, which I failed to double check last night — it did not print properly — so if the committee would like a copy of that, I will provide another one which is readable.

The Acting Chair — I invite you to make your presentation and the committee can get a copy of your submission later.

Dr SLOANE — I did not get a whole lot of warning for the hearing. In fact, I have had only about 24 hours to think about these issues. I did some work at home last night. I had a look through a number of books and articles that I have and started thinking about what it is that we are actually looking for when we are choosing young people to go into teaching. It occurred to me that we really have to examine what is happening in our society before we actually go about finding out who is suitable to do the job in front of children.

I noticed there was an article in the *Age* yesterday about the situation that is confronting France at the moment. They are having to change the way they operate in France, and from my reading of it, and this is happening all around the world. Many members of the Committee may be familiar with an author by the name of Charles Handy. I think he is probably one of the most interesting characters who writes on the way society is changing in the Western World. He has made a number of really interesting observations which I think are very pertinent to the business of this committee. In particular he has said a number of things in the two books I have here and a couple of others he has written. What he is saying is that large slabs of the work force will be operating in a completely different way from the way we have been operating in the past and that schools are not set up in an appropriate way to actually deal with the needs of our society and community.

Basically, Charles Handy says schools currently resemble the stuffy military academies of the 19th century in the way they regiment youngsters and the way that we teach them. But I think in Victoria we are lucky, because there are many enlightened school communities, and, particularly principals, who are leading schools into what we now call the thinking curriculum — in other words, training children to solve problems and training them to think through issues and look outside the square. Back to Charles Handy saying that schools are a bit like a military training academy, basically he is saying that the school system is designed to fit children into slots which no longer exist. If that is the case, we have to have a very good look at the sorts of people we attract into taking on roles as teachers both in the primary and secondary setting, and, to a degree, in the tertiary sector. Is this inquiry related to just the primary and secondary sector, or is it also looking at the tertiary sector?

Mr PERTON — I think we can look at it in a peripheral way.

The Acting Chair — It is my understanding that it is predominantly primary and secondary.

Mr PERTON — If you have an interesting point on it — —

The Acting Chair — Make it.

Dr SLOANE — Charles Handy and a number of other commentators, like Peter Drucker, are saying that by the year 2020 our society will basically be knowledge-based society and 80 per cent of the jobs will be related to

information and knowledge — that 80 per cent of our workers will be knowledge workers. If that is the case, that is a huge and fundamental change in society and it means that there will be a lot of young people who are not intellectual or academic who will find it very difficult to find their place in the world; and that is allied with the trend that Handy and others have identified where there is an increasing casualisation of the work force, where people move on from job to job. A character by the name of Gerry Smith who ran the River Oaks School in Canada believes children going to school now will basically have between 13 and 18 changes of career in their life — not job, but career. That means there has to be a fundamental mechanism for retraining throughout the whole of your life and it really means that education will be a key determinant of the prosperity of our country.

We already know from what Barry McGaw, the Director of Education in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, has distilled in terms of the OECD data that for every year that you can increase the average of general education in a community that translates to a 4 per cent increase in gross domestic product (GDP). In other words, the better educated your society is, the better off it will be. Many countries that are not blessed with the resources that Australia has are pouring huge resources into education. I will give you an example.

Two years ago I hosted a visit at my school from the director-general of education from the Maldives. They are desperate to try to increase their output because at the moment they have only two sources of income. The Maldives are a set of sandy islands not far above sea level, so if global warming does have the effect that the scientists are predicting, they are in a bit of strife. Their two major sources of income are fishing and tourism. They are putting 18 per cent, if I remember correctly, of their GDP into education. They have approximately 5000 people teaching, of whom only 1000 are formally qualified. That concerns them, so they have had a look around the world to see how they could address that issue.

If a country that is not affluent at all, like the Maldives, is pouring so much of its resources into education, as are many other underdeveloped economies, then Australia needs to have a good look at that too, because we are putting nowhere near that amount of our GDP into education. In fact, the amount that government is directing into government schools at the federal level and at the state level is in decline. We are putting less into education now than we were even 20 years ago. That is also very important to the business of this committee.

What do I think we should look for in people who are trying to get into the profession? I guess primary principals regularly choose young people and older people for jobs. In the past five years I have probably run about 180 interviews for positions in my school. I have 8 new staff out of 18 staff members this year, so I have had a very good opportunity to review the sorts of people that are being turned out by the various colleges. In addition to that, in the past eight years I have also been actively affiliated with or taken students from four training institutions, those being: Deakin University, the University of Melbourne, Monash University and RMIT.

All of those institutions have a different system for training their students. There are also differential entry standards according to, I suppose, the reputation of the institution. I suspect that the University of Melbourne probably has the highest tertiary education rank (TER) scores that are required to get in, and possibly Deakin might be at the lower end. Having read through the committee's pamphlet which was faxed through to me the other day, I believe there is minimal commonality between each university which trains students. Each has its own idiosyncratic ways, and, in my opinion, there are certainly some shortcomings in all of them.

One of the things that concerns my colleagues and me, is the amount of practicum which the students we see coming into our schools are undertaking is actually less than adequate and heavily concentrated towards the end of the training. That raises a couple of problematic issues. Firstly, if the person is in the wrong profession either they are not going to find out that they do not like the job they have taken on or they will have wasted 2, 3 or possibly 4 years before they are given accurate and honest feedback about their aptitude to deal with young people. I think that is something the universities have to have a very good look at.

Very few of the universities actually send their first-year trainee teachers out into the schools. The committee may or may not be aware that there is a proliferation of courses which people can do. Sometimes people start off with a degree course and then tack on the Diploma of Education or do a Bachelor of Teaching, which can be two or three years afterwards. Sometimes they do it as a double degree, which means the courses are spliced together or integrated, as it were. Sometimes they just do a Bachelor of education or similar, which is just one four-year qualification, because the entry requirement to be a teacher now is a four-year tertiary qualification.

It is still possible that some teachers — and we do have a number of them — do not have a fourth year. Up until about 1978 teacher training was just a three-year course, and prior to that up to about 1971 in the primary sector the minimum requirement that was a two-year course — the Trained Primary Teacher Certificate. Some people went on and did the TITC — trained infant teacher certificate — after that, which was an extra year tacked on. But now everyone has to have at least four years to go into the profession. My view is that there is no uniformity between the various training institutions. They all do something similar in one form or another, but not the same. That is certainly the view of the VPPA as well.

The VPPA believes formal and ongoing links need to be initiated between educational leadership groups such as the VPPA and the universities and that there needs to be a set of moderated standards against which the pre-service teachers — in other words, students in training — are assessed. The organisation also holds the view that there seems to be some disparity about the responsibility and the rigour of the supervising teachers. One small example of this is that now the universities routinely do not send out a supervising lecturer when students in training are actually in your school. They will send somebody out if there is an emergency — in other words, if someone has a dismal failure in their round or they have a psychotic episode or something goes seriously wrong — but our view is that there should be someone who is actually responsible for the outcome coming to supervise those students, and that is not happening.

The organisation's view — my own view differs from it — is that the teaching courses should be restructured as a four-year period. The suggestion that the educational leadership portfolio of the VPPA has put forward is that in the first year of training common core subjects should be drawn from across the range of faculties and that placements in diverse educational and social welfare settings ought to be organised; in the second year of the course there should be specialisation of subject courses; in the third year there should be extended placement periods in school settings; and the final year should be specific to Department of Education and Training initiatives, because basically the DET sets the standards, although the VIT will, I suspect, ultimately completely take that part of the arrangement over. The initiatives include things like the early and middle years initiatives and so forth.

My own view differs slightly from that. My view is that the students in training should be going to schools right from the word go so that they can find out whether or not they have the right temperament and the aptitude that is required. Sometimes it does not become evident that people do not have what it takes until two or three years down the course. In any case, it is probably better to find out earlier rather than later.

One thing I would say — and this is the view of the organisation as well — is that principals have noticed an increasing quality in the calibre of new graduates applying for positions in schools. I am not sure what the reason for that is, but I can say there has been a definite improvement in the pool of talent around. Let us say, going back five years, in my previous school, which was in a very wealthy area, we would routinely get 60 applications for any jobs that came up. Many of these applicants were not appropriate candidates. As the committee may be aware, you can now actually tag vacancies in your school to be available only for recent graduates, which at the moment is defined as anyone who qualified from 2000 until the current time. Both in terms of the applicants for general positions, which are not tagged to be available only for recent graduates, and for the recent graduates, I have noticed that there has been quite a strong improvement in the quality. I think that is not necessarily to do with the training institutions. I think that is to do with the candidates themselves who have been attracted into the profession. I would say there are probably three reasons for that.

Firstly, about three years ago there was a big improvement in the pay rates for beginning teachers, but not so much at the other end of the scale. If the committee is serious, as I believe it is, about having a good look at what attracts people into the service, then the remuneration issues have to be seriously considered, because in my view the skilful teacher is not remunerated appropriately. That is certainly the case compared with some countries like Hong Kong, for example. Australian teachers are being recruited over there at the moment. I happen to know the chief executive officer, and I saw him at Christmas time. He is paying teachers A$200 000 Australian to go on a two-year contract over to Hong Kong. In South Korea, if you have a look at the data from the OECD — —

Mr PERTON — Was that $100 000 a year?

Dr SLOANE — No, $200 000 a year. That is what he told me. I have not gone over to find out.

Mr PERTON — Have you not gone yet?

Dr SLOANE — I am actually enjoying very much what I am doing at the moment. We have some interesting times at Mitcham Primary School.

Hearing that from the chief executive officer staggered me. I was absolutely amazed. On the other hand the cost of living in Hong Kong is huge, so obviously higher remuneration is necessary, but then the taxation regimen in Hong Kong is remarkably low compared to Australian standards as well. If you have a look at what is happening in South Korea, the classes are much larger, but the actual face-to-face hours are shorter than what occurs in Victoria and certainly in Australia, and the remuneration of teachers there is much higher. These comparative figures are available from the OECD.

All these go into the melting pot, and I honestly believe the more experienced teachers — which after all the people being attracted into the profession will ultimately become — really ought, on the basis of their training and experience, attract a higher salary. In terms of the influence of the salary on the sorts of people that are going in, a number of studies have been done around the world about presage conditions of what makes a good teacher. The answer is that it is impossible to actually pick them before they undergo their training.

The research from the United Kingdom and from America is reasonably consistent on that. In other words, you cannot distil the essence when the youngsters are 16, 17 or 18 years of age; it is not possible to look back and identify who is definitely going to make the grade. It is determined by a whole range of things: the support that they get when they go into a school, the level of experiences they have, their intellect, their temperament and everything else.

I have mentioned one reason that it attracts people — obviously, that is a salary. The second thing is the fact that clearly the status of teaching, although too low, has improved to the point where many people are interested in taking it on as a job although sadly, not enough males. Recently you have no doubt been aware of a series of articles in the news and from people, including politicians, getting up and speaking about the fact that we are not attracting enough young men into the profession — or even middle-aged or moderately aged men into the profession. I think that boils down to two things; the fact that it is not considered a job suitable for males in many cases and secondly, there are issues of propriety. Some people allege that you might be not exactly perverted — and I cannot think of the right term — but there is a risk of an allegation of impropriety if you are dealing with young children.

Mr PERTON — A risk of it.

Dr SLOANE — Yes, that is right. I am not inferring that people do that; in fact we have over 35 000 teachers in government schools in Victoria and to the best of my knowledge there are less than 20 incidents that the complaints and investigations unit follow up every year, although that obviously fluctuates from year to year.

On the issue of status, clearly they recognise that there is going to be a limit imposed in the classroom and the maximum that a leading teacher can earn is $65 000. I will just give you a brief story as background. On 7 July 1977 I was teaching a grade 4 class at Ivanhoe Primary School. I said that I would like those youngsters to ring me on 8 August 1988 and lo and behold, seven of them did. More rang me on 9 September 1999 and we agreed that we would go out to dinner, and so we did. I scurried around and found a few bottles of 1977 wine, just to mark the 22 years since I had seen those youngsters. My wife went with me and during the course of the evening those young people let me know a few things that I was quite shocked about.

Firstly, the fact that they have such portability of careers; they move around every two or three years and so in many cases do not have a long-term commitment to an organisation. Secondly, they are relatively undereducated in comparison to me. I hold four university degrees plus my teacher training, three of which are postgraduate degrees from the University of Melbourne, and I hold a PhD. These characters have done one degree. They were all in their early thirties and every single one of them was earning at least twice what I was and up to five times more than my salary at that stage.

At the end of the evening when I went to pay the bill they said, ' No, we are the high income earners; you keep your wallet in your pocket'. What does that tell you? It tells me that commercial organisations are placing a higher monetary value on people's skills than we do in government education. I think you could probably say the same about independent and Catholic education because, whatever the salary level is in government schools, it is replicated by the Catholic system and although the independent schools pay in a different way, it would not be significantly more than, say, 30 per cent a year.

The lesson I learned nearly five years ago was a very constructive one for me. I still think on what it all means. I do not know you how would interpret that, but I found it shocking; I was quite surprised. They had no problem about disclosing what their income was; they were not coy about it at all. It was not that they were boastful, but they were not unhappy to discuss it. They realised that teaching was not a well renumerated profession.

If that is the case and we have young men in their late teenage years or early twenties who are thinking about going into education, the money, which determines what you can buy — although obviously not happiness — and certain things that you can do during your life. Money is relatively important. The people who have an entrepreneurial attitude or who are creative and innovative thinkers, in my view, probably are not going to be attracted to teaching because of that uppermost limit. I just gave you an example of young men who were salesmen or working as commercial lawyers or working in a variety of occupations and who can be paid up to $150 000 or as high as $250 000 or $300 000.

In my view that has to be taken into account. Why would be any young man or young woman who wants to support a family and who might go into another tertiary qualification, take on a job which tops out at $65 000 — and you do not get to that level for at least 12 years in any case? If you have answers to that, I would like to hear them.

I have bounced around a bit. One other thing that I will just mention is Hedley Beare, who is Emeritus Professor in Education at the University of Melbourne. He wrote a really interesting book, and I am happy to leave my copy with you, Helen — I know I can trust you. The book is called *Creating the Future School*. In that he looks at a composite person called Angelica who is a five-year-old girl. The book was published in 2001 so Angelica would now be turning eight this year. He looks at the conditions that she is going to experience during her school life and how he thinks society is going to cope with the learning needs of people like that little girl. I will not run through it in detail, but I think what he has to say is really insightful and will help this committee. If you look at some of the things that he has put in there, I think it will help you get a picture of the future.

Something else which I think is very important and needs to be taken into account is the fact that we teach differently now to the way we did 5, 10 or 15 years ago. In my view the best teachers teach using an inquiry-based learning approach. That means that there is a less didactic approach and less teacher direction. It allows children to explore their interests and it allows for greater individualisation of the curriculum and that is crucial when young people are being trained. They must learn and be exposed to those things in the training process. If that does not happen and they just go to schools where children sit in rows, where there is no emphasis on learning or information and communication technology, where there is no grouping employed and where there is no individual learning plan, then they are being short-changed because they are increasingly going to go into schools where those things all happen. It certainly happens in my school.

Every child in my school has an Individual Learning Plan. All of my staff teach using inquiry-based learning and all of those things are very important for the training institutions to take account of. If the training institutions do not teach or train young people to think in those ways, then they are failing our profession, or they will fail the profession because they are not taking into account emerging initiatives and new priorities.

Mature age entrants is another point that you want to deal with. I do not know the proportion of mature age entrants into the teaching profession but I find — and I think my organisation would agree — that many of our best teachers are those who have done something else beforehand and who are attracted into the teaching profession because of their love of children or because of their love of learning and because they have had a chance to try something else. This year I employed a 38-year-old woman who has four children. I think she is doing an absolutely fantastic job with the youngsters in her classes; she is a specialist. I am convinced that one of the reasons why she is doing such a good job is because of her life experience. She knows about the tricks of children; she has had four of her own. She also helped for a long time in her own children's school and she makes an ideal person to be a teacher.

I also have a young 29-year-old woman who was a mature age entrant, teaching a class in my school at the moment. She has not had as much experience and she has no children of her own. She has not had as much life experience as the other person but I can say with confidence that she is doing a better job than a person who might have come straight out of university aged 22 or 23 years. It is evident that there is a maturity there and she has been able to think through a lot of the issues surrounding her own life and where she fits into our society.

I have also employed a couple of teachers who are a bit younger than that. I have eight beginning teachers on my staff this year. One has just returned from a year in Ireland; she took a year off. One is a 23-year-old second- year teacher who we took on last year. She has turned out to be a crackerjack teacher because my staff invested a huge amount as mentors. They taught her how to structure her classes in literacy in the Early Years initiative and the same in the Early Years Numeracy initiative because we do that particularly well at my school. They have made sure that she was on firm ground every step of the way. In terms of the experience that young people bring, you can get it both straight out of university and in terms of mature age people, but the mature age people have an extra dimension that is missing with some of the people who may have gone straight into university from school.

Helen, I can see you are concerned about the time.

The Acting Ch air — I just want to leave enough time for a few questions. Ian, we thank you for your valuable insights and I would like to hand back to Steve Herbert who is our Chair.

The CHAIR — I am sorry, Ian, the traffic out my way was ferocious this morning. We will have an opportunity to come and speak to you, your organisation and a range of principles as we go through our inquiry.

Ms MUNT — You touched on it briefly and I am interested in your expanding on the challenges of training teachers to educate children for jobs that are probably not even in existence yet. I see that as a particular challenge. Could you elaborate a little bit more on that?

Dr SLOANE — That is a good point. Just before I do that, could I say that your committee would be very welcome to visit my school, and I would be certain that almost any primary principal would welcome any of you to come and see what we are doing. You may have visited schools recently because I know that most of you go to your local electorates and have a look, but if you wanted to have a look at different schools I am sure the VPPA would be very happy to facilitate that. Certainly you have an open invitation to come to my school.

Yes, it is very difficult. In my view people have to be reading things and looking at things that are happening in society. They have to be reading newspapers and talking to their friends and the children's parents to find out what is happening and they have to listen to the people who are running the schools. Flexibility, being able to cope with the turbulence of change, predicting trends, recognising where things are heading are all very important. That is probably more in the role of the principal and other leaders in the school to be ready to respond to new initiatives, and that is certainly the case with ICT, for example, which has been around now for about 15 years, and most schools have adequate computer facilities. But there is research that suggests that children can get their thoughts on computer at 200 per cent of the rate they can when they are writing. Most teachers would not be aware of that. I have read the research so I am aware of it, but if the teachers are informed of that, they are going to do better.

Another example is that last year I had all of my staff trained in the 'Intel Teach to the Future' program, which is supported by that major microchip manufacturer which some people have rather scant regard for. That program put a very heavy load and burden on the staff but at the end of it they were delighted that they had done it because it taught them to integrate learning technologies or ICTs across all curriculum areas. I think that providing you recognise where the opportunities are and providing you can predict with some confidence what the trends of society are, you can help your staff to get there. So that Intel program was one of those opportunities.

In my school we have a robotics program because I think that it is going to be of enormous advantage to young people to understand what robotics is, because if we are going to move into a knowledge society we have to train people to think. And that is the key to it — training them to think and make the most of their abilities in whatever they want to be.

Mr HALL — Ian, first of all thank you for your presentation and thoughts on a whole range of subjects; they were provoking. One of the comments you made with your personal views was that you felt there were some benefits if, during the course of teacher training, a person started in a school in their first year of teacher training and had some continuity throughout. Do any of the four training institutions that you are involved with actually do that?

Dr SLOANE — Yes. I am not advocating that they should stay with the one school because variety is the spice of life. One of the shortcomings of our school system at the moment is that when the numbers-based system concluded, and selection of staff was based on merit, there was far less movement around the system. One of our strengths was that teachers might spend three years here, three years there and three years somewhere else. If they

were any good they would take the good ideas that they had learned in the first place and build on them and develop them. They would then take the good ideas they learned there to the next place and again build and develop them. That does not happen to the same degree now except at leading teacher class where really talented people go in and have real leadership responsibilities.

In terms of the training institutions, I have formed a view about the internship, where in the fourth year of training there is effectively a 10-week block where the student builds up to take full control over a month, and there is a professional and personal relationship which develops between the master teacher and the student in training. Based on what I have seen at interview (and I wrote it down but have not mentioned it) I believe that that internship is a very effective way of getting somebody who really takes responsibility to help young emerging teachers to be successful in their chosen career.

Mr HALL — How important is the supervising teacher when somebody is doing a practical placement?

Dr SLOANE — Absolutely critical.

Mr HALL — How important is that person as a role model and how are they selected in your school?

Dr SLOANE — I am very lucky because I have outstanding staff all the way through. I have now chosen 15 of the 18 teachers on my staff. Three of them were there at the same time as I went or preceded me. So I have made my own luck in that respect and many principals are in the same boat. I would not put a student in training with a beginning teacher because they do not have the breadth of knowledge. They do not have the experience or the techniques or the discipline or the understanding of what make a learner tick, how children learn and how you get through to their heart. They do, but they do not have it in the depth that a more experienced teacher would have. So I think it is very important that a teacher who takes students in training has been teaching for at least six years and probably more, that they have a thorough grounding in learning and teaching and that they have compassion and a joy of learning very close to their heart.

Mr HALL — Do they volunteer to take a student teacher, and do you have to approve it or does the training institution have to approve it? Who pays at the end of the day?

Dr SLOANE — The answer is yes and yes. My assistant principal is responsible for that area, but we talk about who will be offered students. It depends on how many students are coming from an institution. Usually what happens is that the institution rings up or sends a note saying, 'We have six students in training. Are you able to accept all of them?'. If we have six suitable people the answer is yes. If not, then we would say that we can take five or four. If it is just a short-term visit there is not a problem. For example, Monash University has a system where it sends its students out for five one-day observations. If I am in a school that is affiliated with Monash, I am happy to let them go into any grade to have a look and see the variety that we have in terms of learning and the different aptitudes of teachers.

But in terms of the skills that are needed, the institution does not have any say about who the students go with. At the moment Deakin University pays $20.20 per day to each training or supervising teacher. My view is that we should be paid nothing for training. I think that is a professional responsibility. When we take on new teachers and teachers in training, I always remind my own teachers that we have a professional responsibility to hand on the knowledge that we have accumulated to the young people who are coming through both as teachers and as students in training. If we do not do that then we are failing in our responsibility. We have got to train them to avoid the mistakes that we may have made. Everyone makes their own mistakes of course, but if you can help people avoid mistakes and increase the learning that takes place, that is better.

My school is like many others. We rest our school's foundations on children's achievement and staff development and so under both those umbrellas you would find an answer to the question that you posed just before. Is there anything I didn't answer that you wanted me to.

Mr HALL — No, that was a good answer. Thank you.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Just a couple of questions. I was interested in your discussion of the new sort of knowledge and learning that kids would need, and I want to ask you about the balance between those sorts of things and the basic skills that one needs to be able to access them. I do not just mean literacy and numeracy; I mean things like understanding diversity, understanding our international context, understanding our multicultural

community, and languages-other-than-English skills, because there are some things that have to be taught. You are not going to learn literacy through an inquiry learning approach. It can be part of it but there are some things that have to be taught as well as those things and the balance between those.

Dr SLOANE — That's absolutely right. I will just read from this: 'My view is that training teachers need to have all of the human qualities we value in teaching: empathy; care; enthusiasm; intelligence; problem-solving; negotiation skills; compromise; strong interpersonal skills; persistence; determination; organisation; time-management skills; excellent record keeping; planning; team attributes; courage; optimism; vivacity; outside interests; sanity; sense of humour; honesty; flexibility; and the ability to adapt successfully to change'. They are some of the things that I look for, but as I am sure many of you are aware, we have broken Victorian schools into nine different categories like school groups:

Category 1 schools are very privileged schools where there are not many ESC enrolments and a low educational maintenance allowance figure in proportion to the population. It goes up to category 9, which is schools with high education maintenance allowance (EMA) populations and high non-English-speaking-background populations. By the way, it is a three-year rolling average that determines that. My school is currently a category 6 school. We have 32.5 per cent of children who come from a home where there is no English spoken at all, and 42 per cent of our students last year received the education maintenance allowance. So right at that moment we were probably in category 9, but because it is a three-year rolling average it fluctuates a little bit according to what the current rental group is and what their particular skills, educational levels and occupational status are.

I said before, Anne, that my view is that you have to go into a range of schools to find out what its about. I still hold that view. If you avoided category 6 and category 9 schools, and to a lesser extent category 3 schools, you would never find out what it is like to teach children who predominantly come from non-English-speaking backgrounds. If you avoided category 4 to 9 schools you would not know what the school communities were like where poverty was endemic. So the answer to your question is that it is important that young or middle-aged students in training, whoever they might be, sample that range of options that they will get when they apply for jobs later on.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Given you have just said, you seem to be arguing for a greater diversity in experience. I have no problem with that, but you seem to also be saying there is a need for greater uniformity in teacher training, and I am just a bit confused about that.

Dr SLOANE — The reason I believe that you have to expose people to a base set of core skills is because they could be called on to teach in any environment. I agree with you that each school is different — there is no doubt about that. It starts with the school community and the culture that has existed there; the attitude towards achievement; the leadership that the principal and the leadership group provide; what facilities they have; and so on and so forth. All of those are different, and I agree with you, but on the grounds that a student in training does not really have any idea where they are going to go they really have to be exposed to everything.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Sure, but are there different pathways to the same end point. I am just a bit confused because you are saying 'diversity' on the one hand but 'uniformity' on the other. Is it uniformity of outcome; is it uniformity of pathway; or is it a mixture of those. I am just a bit confused.

Dr SLOANE — That is an excellent question, and I am not sure that there is an answer to it.

Ms ECKSTEIN — There might not be.

Dr SLOANE — I would say that at the moment we do not have uniformity in judgment when you have supervising teachers who assess students on different things. That is one area where there is clearly capacity for improvement — in other words, you might rate Flossie as a top performer but I might say she is average. Or you might say she is an average performer but I find her unacceptable. It is a pretty hard call to fail a student during their teaching round, I can assure you. I have done it, and you certainly agonise over it. That is the first thing. There has to be uniformity in judgment. If there is not then it means that you cannot rely on the practicum reports they provide. When you employ a teacher they usually give you a ream of paper which shows their subject scores; and they will give you their round reports as well if they are good. If there is no moderation in that then it really means the judgments are not worth the paper they are printed on.

In terms of diversity of training, each institution is naturally going to try and give itself a particular spin so that it can attract the quality students. I happen to know that one institution that we regularly deal with is very reluctant to

publicise how it goes about training its students because it thinks that some of the other universities might pinch some of its good ideas and get the march on it. So you have to consider that aspect as well.

Mr PERTON — In the area of special needs, Ian, the parents of gifted children regularly complain that teachers do not have the appropriate skills. I was at an autism conference on Saturday and the parents of autistic children regularly make the same complaint. Can you comment on what should be done during teacher training in respect of special needs, and although it is obviously a little bit outside this inquiry, what else do we need to do to train teachers once they are in the field to deal with these issues of special need?

Dr SLOANE — That is an excellent question, Victor. Firstly, there is special training available for people who want to focus on that area during their careers. You can get a Graduate Diploma of Special Education or a Bachelor of Special Education from a number of institutions. Generally speaking, I value those staff members as highly as I do the people who have TITC (Trained Infant Teachers' Certificate) because they have an extra dimension to their skills and knowledge. However, the average teacher is not going to do that.

So what do parents want? All parents want the best for their child. They want the school to be disciplined; they want their children to have access to all the opportunities that can possible be afforded and are available; they seem to want as low a number as possible in classes; they want their children to have access to learning technologies; they want a teacher who cares about their child and communicates well with them. There is an allocation available for schools with children who have special needs, and we expose our students in training to what we do. For example — it is now called something different but I will use the term 'disabilities and impairments' — I have six children in my school who are funded, ranging from level 1 to level 3. You purchase aide time, or in the case of one child we are buying in some time for speech therapy. We would explain that to all the students in training who come in and we will let them sit in on sessions with the youngsters so they can see what is going on, because if they do not understand how the school functions as a whole and they just see it as the sum of the parts rather than the global picture then they are not going to be well prepared.

In terms of children who are gifted and talented there is an obligation on all schools to stretch each child to the limit of their capability. Most schools have a gifted and talented program and children are encouraged to attend Gateways programs. We have set up special programs in our school. One of these is called Tuesday Challenges. We have chess available for the youngsters; a robotics program is also used to stretch and challenge youngsters in terms of programming and working out how circuitry works. I also employ a consultant who comes in and teaches children web design, animation, advanced graphics and so forth. We also have a digital portfolio in our schools because the way the world of work is going and with these changes of occupation that are occurring, in order to move on to your next occupation you have to take your portfolio of skills with you and sell your talents and abilities to the next person. We are training children to do that now by having them create a Powerpoint display where they burn onto a CD all the things that they have learnt during the year. This gets them used to idea of taking what they have and what they can build on forward so that in the future they can show their parents and any family members what they can do already and what they are looking towards doing. That is also very important in relation to children who have talents and abilities.

As far as students in training are concerned it is important to allow them to participate in these special activities and make sure that the staff are up to speed with the way the latest research is going on thinking skills as well. All of my staff are expected to design their classroom programs using Gardner's multiple intelligences, and we also use De Bono's 6 hats. We use Scamper, we use Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning; we use Scaffold Learning; we use a variety of things that encourage abstract thinking. So my answer is that many schools operate in the way that mine does. We talk to parents about what they want for their children by surveying them. Providing those opportunities is critical.

Back at the other end of the spectrum — that is the autism side of it — that is a very problematic area, Victor, because there is no funding available in mainstream schools for children who come without resources already. Asperger's syndrome children do not get a cracker. Some children who are autistic, if it can be diagnosed early enough, get a small allowance, but it is terribly difficult for schools to manage the needs of those children, particularly if they are at the more severe end of the spectrum. How do we deal with that? If we haven't got resources — —

The CHAIR — Sorry, I do not want to be rude, but I may have to ask you if you could just keep it brief. We do have other groups, and we started late.

Dr SLOANE — Sure. It is an impossible question to answer, other than just make the most of what resources you have and try and expose the students in training to how the classroom teacher succeeds.

The CHAIR — One last question, and then we will move on.

Ms MUNT — Just a quick one. You have mentioned that you have noticed difference in contents and standards in teachers coming out of the different training courses. Have you formed a view on which ones are better than others and which ones they are?

Mr PERTON — We should get the dean to leave the room.

Dr SLOANE — They all have their strengths. I found that the people I interviewed who have done the internship program are better prepared. That form of training develops very good personal relationship with the young person or middle-aged person who becomes known by all the people on the staff and they all try and assist them by sharing it round. I would not like to say one is better than the other — certainly not on the public record.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Dr Sloane. We would certainly welcome a written submission; perhaps you could elaborate on some of the points we have not had time for today. Maybe you would like a confidential section about which is the best training provider.

Mr PERTON — Perhaps after we have done our research study in July it might be useful to ask the Victorian Primary Principals Association back.

The CHAIR — The way we are operating is that we are doing major research between ourselves and we will come back to it, so maybe we will ask you to come back after July. Thank you very much.

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–17 March 2004

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Witnesses

Dr Andrew Harvey, Executive Officer, Australian Council of Deans of Education; and

Dr Ken Smith, Secretary, Victorian Council of Deans of Education.

The CHAIR — The committee welcomes the Australian Council of Deans of Education to the inquiry. Would you like to give your names and titles for Hansard and then a short statement. We will then open the committee up for questions.

Dr SMITH — My name is Ken Smith and I am representing the Victorian Council of Deans of Education in my position as secretary.

Dr HARVEY — My name is Andrew Harvey. I am representing the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) as the executive officer.

The CHAIR — Welcome. Would you begin with a statement perhaps, outlining your views in terms of the inquiry or what your organisation does.

Dr HARVEY — Can I first of all apologise for Mary Kalantzis, who would like to be here but who is in Greece at the moment. Most of what I am going to say is based on research that she has been involved with, and I would recommend that the committee try to find the time to speak to her if possible.

The Australian Council of Deans of Education supports the inquiry and particularly the broad ambit and focus of the inquiry. I will just make a few brief comments on the five issues that are listed in the terms of reference. Mostly I will just be briefly outlining our views on this issue. These views are explained in a lot greater depth in our charter which was released a couple of years ago, and also in a discussion paper that was produced recently. I would have brought 10 copies but my satchel is unfortunately not conducive to that. I am happy to send them to the committee if members are interested. As I say, most of what I will be saying in terms of the knowledge economy and skills for the 21st century can be found in greater detail in those papers.

With respect to the range and nature of pre-service teacher training courses within Victoria, as I am not a dean and as I am also from the national body, I am not going to talk a lot about the minutiae of the courses in Victoria — that might be something that Ken knows a bit more about in any case. First of all I think we both object to the 'teacher training' term. This has been an ongoing problem and certainly in the Australian Council of Deans of Education organisation, 'teacher education' is the term that is preferred rather than 'teacher training'. But in any case at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) the reshaped B Ed has recently devoted more time to practicum, but that practical experience has been linked directly to the theory, and I might explain a little later on how that has happened. Certainly the issue of how much practicum time you have and whether you have internships is obviously a key issue and we have spent a lot of time talking and writing about that. The basic view that deans have is that more practical experience is preferable, but any time that is spent in practice in the schools or in practice — it might not necessarily even be in schools — must be linked to the theory, and it needs to be a holistic approach.

I will just make a few brief comments about the range of courses across Australia and internationally. The committee might be interested in some of the programs run by universities — and again I encourage the committee to contact the deans; I am happy to distribute the email mailing list. A couple of programs that we have dealt with recently that may be of particular interest are the knowledge building community program at Wollongong University and the retraining program at University of Newcastle. The knowledge building community program is very much about collaborative learning; mentoring; team teaching; and also about moving sites of learning, not just focused within the university.

The retraining program at Newcastle University was organised with BHP. That has been an important program, particularly in terms of the mature age entry focus. The way that BHP and the University of Newcastle cooperated to try to retrain those within the industry to become teachers is very important. Again the details of that are outlined at greater length in these papers. Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education has a program of particular interest as well in terms of the varied student demographic at Bachelor, and also as a mixed sector university.

Internationally I think there are some interesting examples. The committee will no doubt be looking at these, particularly, I guess, in the US in terms of what is happening with mentoring and internships, and all of those things. One example that came to light last year at an international conference at Monash University was the example of San Diego university. I will just read a little bit of an extract from our report of that day. This was a collection of deans from around the world. We had a dean from Jordan, a dean from Egypt, a number from the US and deans from the UK and Australia. What was highlighted was this global local tension in teacher education — the tension between the increasing local pressures of standards, registration and accreditation, and against that the growth of the globalised profession premised on high labour mobility and cultural diversity, so how you manage

those increasing accountability requirements at a local level with trying to promote portability and greater mobility, not just across states in Australia, but internationally, is a key challenge.

The need for a multiplicity of field experiences was stressed this day, particularly given the need to work productively with cultural diversity. Examples highlighted were a three-tiered model corresponding to course years: a beginning practicum featuring occasional visits to multiple sites, a junior practicum comprising one day a week over a period of time, and then a full semester of teaching.

Paula Cordeiro, who is the dean at San Diego, stressed that within her college there are two key prerequisites for graduation — intercultural competence and multiple field experiences. Every candidate must be conversant in a second language and be familiar with a second culture to graduate, and every candidate must also undertake multiple field experiences — for example,. in a rural and urban site.

Some of these things are obviously much easier to achieve in theory than in practice. The resource issue in terms of practicum is a huge one. The committee would be aware that the federal government has promised $81 million for practicum funds for teacher education, but there is very little detail of how that will be played out, and clearly a limitation to further practical experience is that resource issue again.

Mr PERTON — We were told by the primary principals association that we should not be paying teachers to do this.

Dr HARVEY — There are two views on that. We are probably in the worst state, I guess, in that we pay them a nominal amount, which is neither here nor there. I think there is a risk that some of the $81 million in terms of teacher education faculties may not reach the faculties. I think there is concern that that money has not been guaranteed to the teacher education faculties as yet, so some of it may end up getting siphoned off through the universities and some of it may also be distributed, as you say, towards paying supervising teachers more. All those things are possible, but I am not sure that the Australian council itself has an official view on the payment of supervising teachers. Ken, did you want to — —

The CHAIR — Maybe if you finish your presentation and we will come back to questions; otherwise it makes it a bit difficult. Perhaps sum up on that, and then come to the next point.

Dr HARVEY — They would be some of the examples I would encourage the committee to chase up in terms of individual universities, both within Australia and internationally, that are being innovative and putting into practice some of the ideals that are shared by the committee. The skills and knowledge required of teachers, and therefore of pre-service teacher training courses in response to reflect the changing nature of education in the 21st century, is something we have written on at length in these documents. I will not go into that in too much detail, but again I will read a brief passage from a chapter written by Mary and myself in the Australian College of Educators year book last year, which sums up the view of the council as well, 'The role of educators is central to the knowledge economy'. The promotion of effective teacher education programs, however, must follow from broader considerations of the needs of knowledge workers and the context of new learning.

The knowledge economy does represent substantial changes to the dominant, commercial, technological and cultural conditions of society. For learners and for teachers, the changes suggest that flexibility, portability and the ability to have broad knowledge must be sought, that diversity must be harnessed as a resource, and that both autonomous and collaborative learning will become increasingly important. Within teacher education programs these priorities will most likely be reflected in substantial changes to curriculum content and delivery and expansion of assessment practices, greater emphasis on promoting diverse learning styles, greater collaboration through mentoring and team teaching, and professional development, which is both creative and ongoing; more broadly how the profession of teaching is recast will have profound implications for both individual prosperity and national wellbeing in the context of the knowledge economy.

As to what the skills of teacher education and teachers will be in future, there are a number that we have listed here. There is much more information on them, which I am happy to make available. First, we have argued that teachers will need to focus on learning and teaching the new basics. At one level, certainly in a European context, these are listed as ICT, foreign language, entrepreneurial and problem-solving skills, but the term actually denotes qualitative as well as quantitative changes to the way curriculum is approached. There is a need to refocus on issues like literacy, so that you look a lot more at issues like multi-literacies and the context in which that literacy is being learnt. There is a need to maximise student participation and to accommodate and support different learning styles.

There are a number of ways to try and do this. One way is to expand assessment practices in order to better measure multiple intelligences. We have supported the idea of broader assessment techniques — contrary to a lot of the trends nationally and internationally, of course.

We have argued that teacher education will focus less on the attainment of particular skills and more on the overall aim of reflective practice. As I have mentioned, we do not necessarily think this means simply spending more time in schools. We do argue that it probably means spending time in a variety of learning, so it is not just schools, but also universities and communities and other organisations — industry, even. It is a need of opening up the school, if you like, to that broader community.

In terms of the way that the practicum experience is delivered, we have argued that we need to have a model based on inquiry, which also involves project work and collaborative learning between students, teachers and academics. It is very important that we get greater collaboration between the schoolteachers and the academics. Again obviously there is a lot that we have written on this.

The CHAIR — We will read it — be assured.

Mr PERTON — As long as someone marks up some of the important bits.

Dr HARVEY — I can highlight them, if you like. One other point which was raised by the previous speaker is that teacher education is an ongoing process. I think this is a really important one, not only in attracting mature age people to the profession but in attracting anybody to the profession because it is not simply about salaries. The starting salary for teaching is not that low relative to other occupations. There is, of course, a problem with the ceiling, which we know, but there is an equal problem of the lack of the career path in teaching. We have argued a need for international exchanges at various points in careers — for sabbaticals, for moves into industry, for a whole range of measures that, if you like, refresh teachers and also provide them with knowledge in wider context.

I think the idea of continuing professional learning is a key area we have only just discovered in recent times. I know in places like the UK there is greater movement towards sabbaticals, secondments and exchanges, and particularly more support for teachers in their first five years, because obviously we lose a lot of teachers in the first five years in Australia as well. It is also important, as we consider learners to be lifelong learners and to continually be changing their skills, that we consider the same thing with teachers.

I have touched on the issues related to attracting people from other professions, and also people from other professions not necessarily having to start at the lowest level. I am not sure what the situation is in Victoria. I know in some states though that if you have been working for 30 years as a scientist and you then come in as a teacher — you change careers — you automatically must start at the lowest salary level, and that is obviously problematic as well. But again this comes back to flexibility and compatibility between and among the jurisdictions. It is very important that skills be portable, and be seen as portable, so you do not have clashes between states, and also that prior learning is recognised across those states.

The one final thing I would say, which is related to the question that Victor asked the previous speaker in terms of students with disabilities, is that teacher education at the moment is under enormous pressure in terms of the curriculum. We recently responded to a Senate report asking for a position on whether teaching students with disabilities should be a compulsory subject, if you like, within teacher education. We have similar requests in terms of indigenous education and also in terms of LOTE. LOTE is a problem as being a KLA that probably is not represented in teacher education as much as it should be. There is a crowded curriculum, so the integration of these interests has to be integrated rather than just tacking on separate subjects.

I think in terms of your recommendations and specific requirements for pre-service courses, there needs to be caution in terms of being overly prescriptive. We generally advocate that those issues are taken on an integrated, holistic approach rather than simply trying to add subjects. On that point, I will hand over to Ken.

Dr SMITH — Just a few further points on the Victorian perspective. I should say before I begin that I believe each of the universities in Victoria will be responding in writing. I can get that verified at our next meeting. I know from the particular university I am at, we certainly are going to be responding in writing. However, the two points that you mentioned in your terms of reference are the future requirements and then also mature age entrance. With the first one I would like to give you a bit of a story to lead into that. In 1870 they developed a time machine

and in that time machine they put a doctor and a teacher and transported them to 2004. Each of those individuals walked out. The doctor went into the hospital and did not know what was happening. He had never experienced it. The teacher who walked into the classroom rolled up his sleeves and just began teaching the class that he had entered. What I am saying to you is that I think you need to look at the philosophy of teaching.

It was interesting hearing the previous speaker. Notwithstanding all of the future developments that are going to be occurring, and I am certainly not one that can read the future, but what I do know about teaching is that it is a relationship, and something that I would want all of my graduates to be able to do is to be able to relate to the people that they are going to be working with in that community. That is not just the children of whatever age, from 5 years of age up to 18. It also includes parents, colleagues, staff — the whole community. I take Andrew's point. I have been in it for 30 years. I do not think I have ever trained a person to be a teacher. I have certainly educated them about the pedagogy and the whole different theories, philosophies, et cetera. You can go back to Lev Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist, and I think they ought to teach more of that probably in teacher training where he emphasises intelligence was based on the relationship the teacher and the learner have - the whole zone of proximal learning.

I have put down five dot points, and you will have to excuse me for the fact that I have to speak on behalf of all of the Victorian universities, so I will keep a lot of my personal opinions to myself. I do not think it is right for me to come in here representing it. First of all, what you would already know, the first two points, is that the current shortages in mathematics, science and IT need to be addressed. There are plenty of reports from different other committees that have been set up. A greater emphasis on ICT for improving learning outcomes, but I take that with a grain of salt. It does not mean being able to use a computer. You are going to still need that relationship. We find that even at university level with off-campus type delivery of courses, and we see it in the states, a number of universities are pulling back on their online courses because the participants are just not opting for it. I am finding that at my particular university also. I asked a group at masters level would they like a unit online. They absolutely said no, this is the only opportunity they get to meet their peers and have discussions. So when I tell you about ICT learning outcomes, to me it is using a whiteboard or, back in the old days, the blackboard — it is a tool.

The third point — and this is very important — is that more emphasis should be placed on school-based models of teacher preparation. There needs to be more interaction — and I am sure I will get questions to expand on it — between that individual who is learning about education and the actual setting that they are going to be in. That involves not only academics coming up there for 45 minutes and stating if they have passed or they are capable of teaching in 45 minutes. I am not sure if someone did that to me I would pass even with the experience I may have in 45 minutes; I might be having a bad day.

I am giving an overview. There needs to be support for students in the rural areas. This involves the mature age entrants, but certainly we need to be addressing the specific areas of concern that rural students may be presented with. A number of researches have been undertaken by the University of Melbourne in its development evaluation. I might give you some examples. Do you want me to give you some examples of what we are talking about in addressing rural needs? For example, the University of Melbourne and the Australian Catholic University are both starting an initiative next year with the city of Shepparton, where each of those universities will offer the same program they are offering in the metropolitan area at Shepparton. It will probably attract individuals of mature age because we will probably be having evening classes, but it is the same program accredited by VIT, or any program accredited at that particular university, but it is being offered on the school grounds with collaboration with the staff and very much support of the administration, particularly the principal. That way the individuals in the rural areas do not have to find some way to get into Melbourne and find accommodation and those types of personal issues that they may be confronted with.

Again, Victor, this goes to your concern, and I have to admit it is a very good question, and that is more interaction with community services. I think schools need to be seen more as part of the community and not just a 9-to-3-type of situation. By community services it would involve the health services, the youth officers, the special needs, because getting back to the education of teaching, keep in mind — and I would say that most of the universities would agree — we prepare the students so they may get bruised in that first semester they are teaching, but not hurt. No way in the world are we suggesting that over a four-year or two-year postgraduate program that there we have your shake-and-bake teacher — 'Your learning is finished. You are an experienced teacher'. I am sorry — and this might be me, I might need to go back to training — I am still learning about teaching.

Certainly there are different types of students et cetera. We are preparing them. I think the Victorian Institute of Teaching should be applauded. You need to realise that the universities do not register or accredit the teachers. The VIT does and previous boards before it did. But more importantly, for VIT it is only probationary in the first year. This is where there are going to be significant changes because who signs off that that person is prepared now to be the principal? The principal will have to. If the teachers are on a probationary period, they have to sign off with their portfolio. So I stress those three last points — the school-based model, rural areas; community services.

With regard to the mature-age entrants, again, setting up programs that will suit those individuals that still need to bring in a certain amount of income, maybe offering programs in the evening where they are incorporating. The other area that needs to be addressed: the only way you are going to become a secondary teacher, or at least to open the door, is you need to have a degree. No university, at least in Victoria, can accept an individual in a secondary teacher preparation course unless they have a degree. That really leaves out a lot of individuals who have been working for 20 to 25 years. Take a politician who has been a politician for 20 to 25 years and they want to become a teacher and probably teach politics at secondary school — if they do not have a degree they are not going to be registered by VIT, and I think that is a waste of talent. Computer operators or scientists — and Andrew mentioned scientists — still need that degree as an entry point for teaching secondary.

Keep in mind that universities in Victoria are accredited very much by VIT and there are some other accrediting bodies such as the Catholic Education Office or Australian Catholic University that have to abide by it also. If you look at mature-age entrants you need to look at more recognition of prior learning or recognition for prior training, formalise it, accredit it and approve it. I will leave that there.

The CHAIR — That is excellent. I will open up the questions.

Mr HALL — Thank you, gentlemen, for the presentation this morning. My first question relates to mature-age entrants and also to recruiting people from other professions, which is the point you finished on, Ken. It appears to me that there is an untapped market out there — that is, people who have two and three-year previous teacher training who for some reason have left the work force and now we do not seem to be making it attractive to recruit those people back into the profession of teaching. There are probably a lot of three-year–trained women, for example, who have left to have a family and expired their seven years — back in the early days it was only a single year that they had off and then they had a seven-year maternity leave — and other people such as males who have left the profession and tried something else but have got a two or three-year trained qualification as a background. It seems to me that governments are not doing enough to try to attract that particular group back in to assist with the shortage we have in the teaching profession.

Do any universities around Australia actually target that group and offer retraining programs? I mention it because of a constituent of mine, where a person with a two-year trained teaching course applied to a local university to have that qualification recognised and was only given a very minimal recognition of that previous qualification.

Dr SMITH — That is correct, Peter, because in Victoria you now need to be four-year trained. Go back 20 years ago: when they changed it, they required the person who was two-year trained to become three-year trained so the universities offered programs to upgrade those qualifications. Many individuals were three-year trained and they were required to be four-year trained, so the university offered a four-year program to bridge that, and that was equivalent to being four-year trained. That has been occurring for over 10 years so now the universities do not offer that any more. However, what Victoria allows is that an individual can do two graduate certificate courses, each comprised of four units — in other words they do eight units of study that they can complete in one year and they will be fully qualified, and if they have been registered previously they will be registered with the VIT. I think very few of the difficulties arising would be with the two-year trained —

Mr HALL — Yes, all or most would be expired, yes.

Dr SMITH — Most universities would try to be accommodating to that. I think they do try to address those individuals and help them upgrade.

I should point out, too, that we are finding more and more — I am not saying there is a significant number; I do not want to mislead you on that — I was surprised by the previous speaker. If I can get more money, that is great, but I think many individuals do not go into teaching just for pay. You could not sustain what is required in teaching. I do not care if you get paid $100 000. They should not allow me in a primary school even if they were going to pay me $200 000 as I would not be suitable for that age group. It is not just about money.

We are finding individuals — accountants, lawyers, doctors — who have done that profession and for whatever personal reason they may have they want to go into teaching. We are not getting a whole line of people doing it, but to say that we are not attracting individuals, there is a lot to be said for more than just making a lot of money. Certainly I have nephews and friends who have kids who probably have only one degree and who are making $80 000 or $90 000. They are working seven days a week and will be burnt out in three years' time. They are on a three-year contract. You have to look at the whole vocation of teaching rather than just at the monetary return. I do not know if that answers your question.

Dr HARVEY — The first point to make is that the demand is soaring and we should not forget that. The biggest problem at the moment of course is supply, and demand not just I think from those leaving school but also from mature-age entrants for teaching has never been higher. That is a positive reflection of the esteem with which teaching is regarded as a degree. The other correlation with that is that a number of people who leave teaching, which is high, leave because they do not feel they are being provided with a career path or because they cannot handle the pressure or for a whole variety of reasons.

There are also a number who recognise the portability of that degree, who go into a new career and use that degree as perhaps an arts degree used to be considered, as a generalist degree. The importance of the degree as a generalist degree is also worth noting. Secondly, the demand is very high and as to teacher education, we get blamed for a lot of things but it is not all our fault.

Mr HALL — I really liked your comment, Ken, that teacher educators prepare teachers so that in their first year they only get bruised and not critically injured. I really like that comment. I think that is an appropriate one. But with respect to that, what sort of follow-up support do you think should be given to people who have commenced a career in teaching? And is that a role for teacher educators, to come back and provide that bit of follow-up support?

Dr SMITH — I think there needs to be more of a relationship between the schools and the teacher educators as a basic principle. I am a registered psychologist with supervisory qualifications et cetera and I had to pay for the supervision at the university. If you look at the internship of the medical model, the social worker — the previous speaker and I agreed that if you get to a certain level of senior teacher, it is part of your professional responsibility and part of your job description to train and mentor the younger ones. I want to say this is working the system, but I will not say that. It is double-dipping as far as I am concerned.

We are supposed to send out students. We pay the associate teachers and yet they still want the university to send out a staff member. At a small university it is more than a $1 million budget, because you have to take into account that every time I send out a staff member, that is part of his or her workload. I then have to pay for travel costs, food and everything, and on the other hand I get the bill to pay for the supervising teacher. And it does not stop there. You do not just pay the supervising teacher; you pay the coordinator at the school also. So the university is paying multimillions of dollars for supervision, yet we are not doing enough because we are not sitting there looking at someone teaching when we are paying someone who is actually in his or her class. They could do team teaching.

So when I am talking about this relationship with schools, yes, it should be a cooperative relationship and should be being developed better than it presently is. There are a lot of reasons why it is not — you know, lack of staff, lack of money. You cannot send a member of staff out for two or three days. Who is going to be teaching back in the lectures or their own classes?

Mr HALL — Putting aside the financial considerations I understand the point that you are making. In an ideal world would it be better if there was follow-up support to teachers from the teacher educators — say, six months down the track, if they are out there teaching? When they graduate is that the end of the responsibility for the teacher educators? That is what I am asking.

Dr SMITH — That is why I kind of hesitated. As an alternative, why not have professional development programs for the practising teachers in supervision and mentoring, which presently we do not have. Right now there are a lot of individuals that we have to assign student teachers to who should not be supervisors; for whatever reason, they are not properly suited. I would be spreading the money and the time working with schools, with their senior staff working with them so they can use the skills in the classroom. You see, the student teachers should be in front of those students as soon as possible, and if they can be with an experienced supervisor who has been trained by the university and who has worked in together and they are working as a collaborative team, that is the

type of model I would be looking at, not simply saying, 'Well, if the student has not performed well, they can come back to the university'.

I would not want to take them up, and the reason is that the students are failing at that school not because they do not have the intellect. I just cannot believe any 19 or 20-year-old does not have more intelligence or more knowledge than a five or six-year-old. It comes down to relationships; they are not relating well to those students. They do not understand their individual needs; they are not tuned in to that eight-year-old, or the year 10, or they are not getting along with their colleagues. It is relationship issues you are looking at. It will not be that they do not have the necessary skills. You have to go back to what teaching is all about; it is about relationships.

The CHAIR — We might just move on; we have a lot of questions. We will come back to you. This is a first hearing and we are building up a knowledge base.

Mr PERTON — In our briefing hearings on Monday we had Dr Ingvarson from the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) speak to us, and he said it is his strong belief that the best qualification for secondary teaching is a degree in another discipline — for instance, science or arts-politics or whatever, and a diploma. What is the view of the deans?

Dr HARVEY — The view on what?

Mr PERTON — He would say that instead of doing a four-year bachelor of education you are better off doing a three-year science degree or a four-year honours science degree and a diploma of education. I think that is a correct summary of his view in respect of secondary teaching.

Dr HARVEY — I think one of the problems that is acknowledged by educators and other disciplines within the university is that the cooperation between the education faculty and the other faculties within the university could be improved. I do not think it is necessarily a question of saying, 'You should do a three-year science degree then a one-year Dip. Ed.', or, 'You should do a four-year 'B Ed.'. I do not think it is an either/or thing. Why is it that the science faculties are not happy with the way that teachers coming out of a B. Ed. teach science. We are just doing a joint project at the moment with the science deans on professional learning, which will be out very shortly, but that kind of cooperation has not happened very much in the past.

I think — and again I will hand over to Ken on it — that the issue is within the universities, that there needs to be better cooperation between the faculties in terms of delivering a teacher. And that is not just a matter of cooperation, it is a question of resources as well, and there probably needs to be greater discussion within the universities to deliver the specific discipline knowledge to the satisfaction of both the disciplines and the teacher educators.

Mr PERTON — What is that project? When will it be concluded?

Dr HARVEY — It is a project looking into professional learning programs within science, maths and technology within Australian schools. It is a joint project we began last year. It is very close to being finalised but it has not yet been finalised, so I am thinking that in the next month or two we will be able to release that. I think what that does is go back to that point I mentioned earlier about professional learning. It is a real issue. The previous questioner was asking whether teacher educators should go back to the students. It really is the only profession where you get in on day 1 and that is it. You are just sort of thrown in and away you go.

Whether it is teacher educators going back or whether it is greater professional learning provided by the education authorities or schools, or how it is financed, there are issues of pragmatics, but the fact is that there is just not enough. Simply, the main point to make is that there is just not enough professional learning from day 1. Teachers need to be seen as lifelong learners as much as the students.

Mr PERTON — I just want to follow up a question on that last bit. You talked about a crowded curriculum. Perhaps my university days were much more blessed, but I have interns in my electorate office every semester. The number of hours they are in lectures does not seem to be all that high; the workload of the student does not seem to be all that high. How do you say that the bachelor of education curriculum is so crowded?

Dr SMITH — Certainly the hours are the same, 15 to 18 hours; that is all that we really have the students for. They have part-time employment and universities are very much different nowadays; they are not hanging

around the campus. We are being expected to do more, and in order to do more do you reduce the amount of mathematics to take on more IT or take on special units? We are required now to have units on special needs in our curriculum, to at least introduce the students to these. So, the same as for primary-secondary — more and more is being asked of the educational institutions. Before , for example, we could have spent 4 or 5 hours on maths education. Now it is more of a requirement to do special needs.

Mr HARVEY — Life science and social service.

Dr SMITH — Because you want more generalist teachers you want a teacher who is supposed to be an expert in all of these areas. Let's throw in social work, counselling now too — that may be coming in in the near future. That is what is meant by the crowded curriculum. I think it would be difficult to expect the students to be on campus 8 hours a day, five days a week.

Mr PERTON — Sure, but it is a four-year degree now, not a three-year degree. Surely the expectations of society in having teachers prepared for special-needs students or the fact that there is a more violent society is not out of the question in a four-year degree?

Dr SMITH — Wait a minute, it is not necessarily a four-year degree.

Mr HALL — I went through four years.

Mr PERTON — People a bit older than us went through with two or three years. They now have four years to prepare them.

Dr SMITH — That is it exactly — they went to two years or even one year and what they did is they spent a whole year after school. It is not necessarily a four-year degree. The Grad. Dip. (Secondary) is a one-year degree — one year to train a secondary school teacher. Then you have a bachelor of education postgraduate degree that may be two years. Keep in mind that even in the bachelor of education not all of those units are education units because they now require that you have to do majors or minors. I take your point but they are not just studying education units now; it is a requirement of the university that you have to fill a minor in sociology or whatever.

Dr HARVEY — And, as we say, we still have the science discipline saying teachers do not know enough about science, that they do not have enough content.

The CHAIR — Given the time, we might have one more question from Helen Buckingham. I am sure we will want to come back to the deans once we have further questions, and I will ask for some information later.

Ms BUCKINGHAM — I am not sure if it is Dr Smith or Mr Smith but I want to pursue something that Peter Hall said. I heard very clearly what you said to us about paying your staff to go out and supervise within the schools but my concern is that as an education faculty you would want to assess in some way whether what you are doing with your students is working in a classroom situation. You must have some sort of performance indicators and as educators you would want to see if your education is working on these pre-service teachers. To absolve that responsibility and hand it back to the schools when you have no control over who supervises within the schools — as you quite rightly said, that control comes from the principal who chooses the supervisors — seems to be a problem; that is the way I would like to put it.

The universities have responsibilities to their students but they should also want to know whether in fact what they are teaching them is working in the school situation. I understand the monetary constraints but I am thinking more in terms of the education responsibilities. If the schools choose the supervisors where is the connection? How do you know whether what you are doing at universities is working in schools if all you are getting is reports back from the teachers and you have no quality control over the supervision of the teachers?

Dr SMITH — Let me say that I never suggested that I wanted to disassociate ourselves from schools. What I am saying is entirely the opposite — I want to develop a more involved, cooperative relationship with the schools. Most universities could do that. Think of what we could do with that money in developing professional development programs where the teachers might be given credit towards masters. We are spending millions of dollars just to pay them and there is no money left over where I can sit down and have a student here and have that type of cooperation. We are spending all of the money that is allocated to the universities to pay off the professionals.

I should say this: there was a question about what happens when they are not doing well, I do not want to answer a question with a question but as to exactly what the medical profession does, I do not see Melbourne University's medical school running over to the hospital when some doctor has accidentally killed a patient but I will bet you any amount of money that Melbourne University has a strong working relationship with those hospitals. I bet they do and that is all that I am suggesting. There is no doubt that if I do not have the money I cannot send out staff so I have had to come up with something different. As was described by the previous principal, we are out there like a shot if there is a problem. We are relying on the professionalism of the teachers we are presently paying. Is that the best system? I would love to be out there and doing the things that both Melbourne and we are doing at Notre Dame.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. I hope that you will come back, perhaps after July, to a further committee hearing. Would you be prepared to do that?

Dr SMITH — Absolutely, we are just down the road.

The CHAIR — One of our terms of reference relates to the range of courses that are on offer. I wonder if it would be possible for the deans to perhaps give us some information about the types of courses that are on offer and a little bit of rationale about the differences. Is that possible? It just may help us with some individual questions.

Mr PERTON — We actually got a list the other day and maybe we can send them the list.

The CHAIR — We will send you the list but perhaps you could give us a bit of background information about the different ideologies from your perspective.

Dr HARVEY — I think there are a couple of Department of Education, Science and Training reports that contain some information and of course you will be receiving written reports from the universities. I think the Australian Council of Deans of Education will also be putting in a formal submission.

The CHAIR — That will be terrific.

Dr SMITH — If you need anything, just give us a call. Thank you very much for your time.

The CHAIR — 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–17 March 2004

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Ms J. Cashen, President, Victorian Council of School Organisations.

The CHAIR — Welcome. Would you like to formally introduce yourself to the committee and make a short statement about your council's views of the terms of reference or what you do?

Ms CASHEN — My name is Jacinta Cashen. I am the current president of the Victorian Council of School Organisations (VCSO). We are affiliated with the Australian Council of State School Organisations. Our organisation has as its members state government school councils of primary, secondary and special schools across the state; our members come from those schools. I suppose our focus is governance and good quality public education; they are probably our two main focuses at the moment.

I am a trained primary school teacher. I taught in the Catholic sector for 11 years and I am currently doing my masters in teaching at RMIT. I kind of feel like I come here in two ways: as a passionate person about teaching as well as a passionate person about education in general. Shall I proceed?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Ms CASHEN — VCSO has established policy over teacher education over a long period of time so if you do not mind — it is not very long — I will just read to you directly from our policy document. We last updated the document in 2001. Given the kind of serious discussions going on at the moment in education we would probably like to change some of the language and the focus but basically most of this has not changed. It states:

> Teacher education institutions should be independent of government departments, and should be linked with multidiscipline institutions.
>
> ...
>
> All pre-service teacher education courses which are recognised by the department of education as suitable qualifications for employment in Victorian government schools should have courses for study which better equip teachers to work in partnership with school communities. At least the following areas should be included in such courses;
>
> > the roles and responsibilities of school councils;
> >
> > the effects of home-school interaction on children's learning;
> >
> > group processes and collaborative decision-making techniques.

I will talk to the one about the effects of home-school interaction on children's learning. I am also a member of the Australian Literacy Educators Association, which means I know Marie Emmitt, the dean of education at the Australian Catholic University. I am often on her back about the partnership with parents in education. Because I am a student at RMIT, I have been able to talk to a number of lecturers there. In fact, two weeks ago I and the president of Parents Victoria, Gail McHardy, went to RMIT where they have set up what I think is a great thing pre-service — a couple of the lecturers there, including Gloria Latham, have set up a virtual classroom for their fourth-year bachelor of education students.

If I heard rightly some of the conversation going on with previous witnesses, sometimes that relationship with schools and other teachers is really hard to develop so RMIT has a virtual classroom where they have a profile of each child and a classroom teacher and a description of the school, where the lecturers try to give them problems to solve that they may not get to solve out at the coalface, if you like. Gail and I were the virtual school council president and parents club president. We went in and we spoke to 100 students who were meant to be one student in the staffroom having an induction about what was going on in the school in terms of school council and parents clubs. I had an absolute ball, it was great fun. We got to joke a bit because we were role-playing about some of the stereotypes around parents, which the students appreciated. We were quite surprised by how much they understood the parent perspective and what was going on underneath the relationship. That was really good. They have also set up a chat room for Gail and I to continue to have conversations with the students around issues they think specifically relate to parents. I think that is a really great pre-service thing that RMIT is doing. It is something we would highlight.

A couple of years ago I spoke at a national teacher education conference about the partnership with parents and one of the lecturers from Armidale Teachers College was a bit gobsmacked — he had not thought about the partnership with parents. Even though there is this enormous rhetoric around the partnership with parents it is actually not tackled at pre-service level very much. That was kind of interesting. It is the kind of area which causes great stress to teachers and principals.

Ms MUNT — And parents.

Ms CASHEN — And parents, of course, and then students on top of that because they are surrounded by these anxious adults who, to pinch a quote from John Holt, hover over their children like dark clouds sometimes. I think that is really important. We would probably say that we would love to see lots more in pre-service education on the relationship with parents. It also feeds into the whole notion of learning organisations and that notion that we all have something to offer and it is important for us to share that. Unless we have relationships with each other we cannot do that. You just cannot do that unless you are meeting with people and talking to people. We would say that those relationships are very important.

At the moment our organisation is surveying 300 of our members about their effectiveness as school councils. It is another area. It is governance of schools and yet nothing is done about this pre-service. Teachers come onto school councils and often have no understanding of their roles in this regard but assume they do because they are teachers. However we are talking about governance and not education per se. That is another area we would probably like to highlight.

The decision-making techniques is probably another area. We met with the Australian Education Union last week and they were also talking about decision making in terms of proper consultation among teachers and principals themselves — when a principal comes to a staff meeting and says, 'I am planning this' and no-one responds, so he takes that as a yes.

Mr PERTON — It sounds like politics.

Ms CASHEN — It sure does. I heard the crowded curriculum mentioned here and we would also recommend that quite a bit be done around special education. That is probably all from our policy that is worth mentioning.

We used to say in our policy, but I do not know where we would want to put this now, that we felt the training institutions should offer first aid training to at least the standard of St John Ambulance certificate to all prospective teachers. I think we would like to talk a bit more as an executive about how realistic that kind of thing is given the crowded curriculum. We would also acknowledge that it is crowded.

One of my frustrations at the moment given what is being said federally about the way schools should change and the way pre-service institutions should change is there seems to be an enormous amount of scrutiny of teachers and of the profession of teaching, and a lot of that scrutiny is coming from people who do not have a professional background in education. I do not think sometimes that people understand the complexities of teaching and learning, or pedagogy, whichever word you would like to use. I have found that a lot of teacher educators do not like to use the word pedagogy, they find it a bit of a wank but that is beside the point. This is an enormously complex issue and I think sometimes people want to quantify it and make it very simple, which is a bit of a pity.

There are some other points we would like to make. In relation to mature-age students, my experience and in talking to some teacher educators recently is that generally speaking they find they make better students on the whole. However, and I have noticed this among my friends, a lot of people are turning to teaching because it suits their lifestyle. They are actually saying it in their written applications to the institutions: 'This is going to be a great lifestyle for me because I will have the school holidays which will suit me and my children', as a top priority rather than because they want to come back and teach. I have friends who have done exactly that. It breaks my heart but they get in and they do it.

It does not mean that they do not care about teaching but sometimes that can be the motivation. The institutions have been saying that they are getting loads of enrolments which means they cannot screen out as well as they used to. I know when I did my teacher training 20 years ago it was the equivalent of an ENTER score that was reasonable but on top of that and heavily weighted was your interview. They cannot do that now, they cannot cope with the volume of doing that. That is a problem.

The other point that somebody from RMIT made to me which I thought was a good point and a tricky one and I do not know how it would be addressed is the whole notion that most students have just spent 12 years at school and in the those 12 years, apart from all their learning, they have been exposed to different models of teaching, or not necessarily. They might have a warped view of what teaching might look like and then they come straight to teachers college without any kind of transition.

It is like they go straight from school to being seen as a student to being seen as a teacher just like that — even though I know you do not graduate for four years down the track, largely you start to see yourself as a teacher — without unpacking what happened to you in those 12 years, what kind of models you saw, whether they were useful or good practice or what have you. This particular lecturer was advocating that maybe, while she was not advocating the American model, the notion that people do some kind of degree or short degree first or do a year of liberal arts before they embark on the other side of teaching and learning — the technical stuff and the pedagogy — would be useful. I would also argue that.

Personally I often found it frustrating that if you are talking about lifelong learning you are talking about learning organisations and then you are only focused on the technical side of teaching and learning. How can you then display that love of learning, that understanding that it is not over until they nail the lid on the coffin? I kind of think there is scope in the institutions to do some more around that. I think they want to but again there are constraints.

That is the other thing. The people before me were talking the important relationship between schools and having some closer relationship. My experience as a student teacher was that I only saw one really good teacher out of all the teachers I saw. That was just because you got sent off out into the world and you went to whatever school. There was not a close enough relationship with the schools to make sure you got a mixture of mediocre and fabulous and really bad, it is important to see the whole gamut. That is an issue.

As a supervising teacher myself of student teachers, I felt for them and I often used to say to them, 'Forget the mark at the end of this, as long as you can prove to me you really want to teach I will help you and get you through to a pass at the end'. I often found that useful because it meant they could relax. Again, I wanted to have a relationship with the university where these kids came from because I could see that they needed some kind of other training that would have enhanced their time at school. For example, what Gail McHardy and I did at RMIT enabled us to say, and it is on their agenda now, that if students can they should go to a school council meeting at least once in their four years, they should go to a parents club at least once in their four years. I would argue more but being realistic they would be good things for them to do on their rounds.

The Diploma of education is a tricky one, and I heard people talk about this also. It is good having a degree, but one year to really understand teaching and learning is not a whole lot. I was actually also, for a time, an adult literacy teacher. What was interesting there was they actually sought out primary school teachers to do adult literacy because they had a better background not just in literacy but the methodology of teaching and learning. I do not know whether one year is quite enough for that to occur.

The other point, in terms of the crowded curriculum, is we have the idea— even though we talk about it a bit more, which is good — or the notion still that everything gets fixed up in schools, all the society's ills get fixed up at school. We need a much better discussion about breaking down the silos. I know it gets talked about, but we still are not there. We need a much better understanding that we as a community share the responsibility, not only those of us with children but even those without children, to ensure that we have the kind of society we all want. It should not just be left to schools. I think it is a pity that teachers sometimes do not resist that and say, ' no, it is not our job. We cannot go there; you need to do that, not us'. I would agree that often schools and teachers are dumped with things without experience because governments are not prepared to cough up the dollars. I am sure you have heard that a few times. You will continue to hear that as well. That is enough from me because I do not want to waste your time.

The CHAIR — We will have lots of questions. I will hand over the chair to Peter for a few minutes.

Mr PERTON — Jacinta, Dr Ingvarson from ACER gave evidence on Monday, and he said in respect to secondary teaching it was his view that a degree in another discipline — you mentioned the American experience — followed by teacher training was the best training for secondary teaching. Do you share that view?

Ms CASHEN — It is going to be interesting with the discussion around the middle years how they are trying to break down that notion of somebody who really knows their content area and just does one year of teaching. In fact Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology is starting to move towards a component of their bachelor of education that specifically relates to the middle years to add that other level. Largely yes, you need to give evidence that you really understand that particular area, especially if in VCE you are specifically teaching a science or maths or any of those highly specialised areas, you need a degree or some way of demonstrating you have that kind of knowledge. But I do not think a year is enough.

Mr PERTON — I have spent some time with other parent groups which are subsets of yours, for instance the parents of gifted children, autistic children and other special needs children. From your observation, both with your teacher training and your representation of parents, what is your view on what should be done during pre-service training?

Ms CASHEN — In terms of gifted education, a lot of us in the profession would argue that is in fact often almost a red herring in that if you really understand the methodology and the theory behind good teaching and learning, then gifted children are not an issue. They do not need to be a separate issue at all because the understanding and appreciation of the way children are, what they are doing and where they need to go is out in ether, it needs to be discussed. But I do not think you need to spend a lot of time on gifted children in particular if you have really solid understandings of pedagogy.

Special education is difficult if you have teachers who have no experience of that area. I was talking to a parent today who has three integration children at a school. It is in your face all the time, front and centre, though not for every school because some schools still do not have many, or any, integration children. But there is a large number of integration children. That area really does need to be addressed pre-service, definitely. There needs to be something there.

Ms MUNT — I am interested in mature age workers coming back into the teaching profession, and how you view that, and by what method we would put them back into schools. I know that primary schools in particular are anxious to get men to teach as role models for the young boys, particularly in areas where there are a lot of split families and they do not have these role models. Do you have a view on how to bring these people in? You were talking about women who want to come because there are holidays and they have children of their own, but there needs to be a bit of a broader recruitment.

Ms CASHEN — I spoke to another person who dealt with preservice mature age students who said that a number of them had actually worked in high-profile jobs or reasonably high-profile professions and decided as they got older that they wanted to give back. So they were not interested in the salary; they were interested in teaching on those grounds. What a wonderful thing that would be if we can find more of those people.

On the other hand, I think we have to be careful especially in terms of male teachers in just trying to encourage people for the sake of it when it is not really heart and soul what they really want to do. I have seen people enticed into teaching who just should not be there, who should never have been enticed to come. I would not want to make it too easy in a way, but at the same time you maybe need to put the thoughts into some people's heads as they get older that they might consider teaching as an option. In fact in my own personal life I see people and say, 'Have you ever thought of teaching? You would be a fantastic teacher'.

The idea needs to be out there that that is a possibility, especially in a world where we do not stay at the same thing forever, that we tend to change, that would be good. But I was disappointed with Brendan Nelson's proposal to give scholarships to male students just to entice them on those grounds. You do not want people coming in just because it is easy to do. And I would argue that it is not schools' responsibility to provide good role models, male or female. Obviously I am not saying that you do not want good people, but it is the community's responsibility, not for teaching to be the answer to that. It is an artificial environment, I would argue.

Ms ECKSTEIN — When you read out those policies, the first or second thing you said was that you thought teacher education should be independent. You talked a lot about collaboration and working together, and I am just trying to understand what you mean.

Ms CASHEN — You are right. What I meant is that at the end of the day with these committees — the Victorian Institute of Teaching and the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs have been doing a review of pre-service as well — the weight of those decisions defers back to those people who really know their stuff. It is learning organisation theory, isn't it? It is good that we all talk and we get together and we share and we have responsibilities as a community, not just separate ourselves into little pockets.

Actually I could give you a good anecdotal example: we are getting a lot of calls through our office about principals' selection panels. On those panels are parents and although there is training from the department it is not necessarily very rich training, it is quick, there is a short time line. Often you end up with parents on those panels who do not necessarily have the kind of experience needed to select a leader for their school.

At one school in particular that rang us, what they ended up with, because of that very process, the parents thought it was up to them to pick the principal. In the end they were not happy with the panel's decision, and they have big problems at the school as we speak around kicking up a fuss. I guess you want people to share their knowledge and information, but you do not want people to then perceive that we all get to decide, we all get to make that final decision, that we all get to dictate together to areas that are highly specialised and complex. Do you understand what I mean?

Ms ECKSTEIN — Doesn't the employer have a significant role to play in that?

Ms CASHEN — Yes, but I think they can have that without dictating and mandating things. In fact that is what the department is trying to get away from in the blueprint — to stop mandating and ending up with a system that is complying rather than being a learning organisation. It is trying to break down some of that. It is a tension. Employers need to be talking also.

Ms ECKSTEIN — And having a role in the decision-making?

Ms CASHEN — Yes, but not dominating, that is what I'm saying, sorry, not very clearly.

Mr HALL — Jacinta, I know that you are interested in literacy. What do you think of reading recovery in terms of training available to teachers to undertake reading recovery?

Ms CASHEN — To take off one hat, I was an executive member of the Australian Literacy Educators Association for a long time until VCSO called. Our organisation was absolutely appalled at the great damage that reading recovery did to an understanding of literacy learning. I even have my own personal case where a well-intentioned teacher said to me as the parent of my daughter in grade 1 that she did not quite need reading recovery, but in fact they had some spare hours and she could have assistance from the literacy teacher. Because I knew my stuff I said, 'No, leave her alone, she is in the range of normal, she is using all the cueing systems et cetera, leave her alone'. This teacher was beside herself because of compliance, ' Oh, but she has to be at level 23 by the end of grade 2'. She said, ' If we give her a bit of extra help now, I'll be sure'. I said, 'Leave her alone. I'm her parent at the end of the day. That's it. Don't touch her'. I actually went and saw the literacy coordinator to say the same thing.

Now my daughter is in grade 5; she is above average according to the testing that they do there for her literacy levels in reading and writing. I feel that those courses can often, because of poorly trained teachers sometimes, well intentioned though they are, do great harm. They can actually be counter-productive. My daughter would have been devastated by being viewed as someone who needed extra help when in fact she did not. The teacher was misguided; she didn't have a solid understanding of literacy learning. I know reading recovery teachers would say there is no stigma, but there is. There is absolutely a stigma, and kids are not dumb; they pick up on that. If you had better resources in the classroom, you would not need to do that.

If you look at some of the research on reading recovery it has not been doing what it said it was going to do. The notion that you can fix kids up in 20 or 21 weeks — that is rubbish. What can you fix up in that time that is really important? One of the problems at pre-service and amongst teachers — I see it all the time — is no understanding of the range of 'normal'. They are still very locked into, 'We think grade 2 children can do this universally'. Yes, there are some commonalities and the range is there, but that does not mean they are all going to go here, and it does not mean that because they have not done that they are never going to do it, and they should be earmarked as needing extra assistance or intervention.

Some of what teaching is about is very complex, and people try to simplify. Parents believe their kids will be fixed up in 20 weeks if they spend it reading recovery. I am telling you now that they will not, it does not happen like that. And maybe they do not even need it; they need adults around them to be patient and understand that it just does not happen like that. Often we are dictating when we want it to happen. Yet our brains are developing — I used to think it was around the ages of eight or nine — and continuing to develop almost endlessly. It is not.

The new technology can see what the brain is doing. It is a delicate balance of really assisting when assistance is needed and avoiding intervention because we adults are anxious without having a clear understanding of what we are doing and the great harm it can do to people's self-esteem if you send them a message that they are not where the adults want them to be.

Mr HALL — They were interesting comments on the program. Do parents who are on state school councils talk much about the quality of teaching at a school council level?

Ms CASHEN — One of the jokes I said at RMIT , which I often hear from teachers, is parents stand around the car park gossiping about them. I said, ' Yes, and you don't think teachers are in the staff room gossiping back?'. Yes, they are, but not in the way some people think sometimes. I think they are talking generally about the quality of the profession. Undeniably most parents are saying that they appreciate that teachers work hard and are conscientious people. I see a lot of positive stuff around the way teachers are viewed. Yes, they do get frustrated when they get a teacher who maybe is not communicating very well what they are doing, or in fact who is not doing very well what they should be doing.

I am finding increasingly, and I think it is to do with discussion generally in the community, an openness to discussing learning and what is going on; they are just overloaded with information. Parents are increasingly wanting to talk about the big picture, about the big policy education issues rather than being too focused on single issues, on their children and their concerns.

Mr HALL — My experience as a member of a state school council was that there was very little discussion about teachers and the quality of teachers, partly because there were teachers sitting around the table with them. Therefore there was some intimidation about talking about those issues. But as an organisation, do you think about that?

Ms CASHEN — In fact all the time. We have a working relationship with the AEU and Parents Victoria. We want to model what should be going on, and often there is just no way; unless you say good things about teachers in that forum; often you cannot say anything at all. Most people choose not to and go to the principal separately. There is also that perception amongst teachers that they are constantly being portrayed as being not very good. When I challenge teachers about that view, because I do not think it is necessarily true — it is a bit of a myth that they are holding onto sometimes — they cannot give evidence of what they mean by that. It seems to be part of the culture of teaching. When you talk to people off the record in the AEU and other places they also agree.

Generally speaking teachers have this mythology — they are their own worst enemies. A couple of years ago our school was doing a triennial review, and I could see that it could really improve. However, the principal was resisting it because he found that critical discussion about how we improve very difficult. He just wore it as a criticism of him, incorrectly. We had the verifier come who was a lecturer from Melbourne University who could sense that I was frustrated. He said, 'Maybe your teachers here just need to be thanked more. I said, 'I don't get this kind of comment. When I taught, seriously, you were rewarded every day. I don't know what it is like at secondary, I had primary. You get to be rewarded every day — you get hugged, cuddled, commented on how you look good today–whatever! You get constant feedback from the kids'.

I think their mindset needs to change about some of that because they do get thanked often. They certainly get thanked by the kids. You only have to be a mediocre teacher usually to get thanked by the kids because they are incredibly loyal.

The CHAIR — Thank you for coming. We may wish to continue discussions as we go further into the inquiry. Certainly our researchers might have more questions. Thank you very much.

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–17 March 2004

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Mr A. Blair, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals;

Mr J. Fee, school principal, Australian Capital Territory; and

Ms W. Teasdale-Smith, school principal, South Australia.

The CHAIR — The committee welcomes the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals. Andrew, perhaps you would introduce your associates, make your presentation and then we will ask questions.

Mr BLAIR — My name is Andrew Blair. I am president of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals and vice-president of the Australian Secondary Principals Association. Today we have brought together a Victorian perspective on a range of questions within the inquiry, but it was fortuitous that I could bring to this meeting today some colleagues from ASPA who are responsible for our Australia-wide surveying of teachers around issues of pre-service training quality. Indeed, ASPA has been doing some surveys on issues of teacher supply across Australia for about a four-year period now. The two people with me today are responsible for that work on behalf of ASPA: Wendy Teasdale-Smith from Adelaide and John See from the ACT. They have joined us for the presentation.

The notes we have handed to the committee relate to the survey process, which I will get John to talk about in terms of how we go about it, but it is an Australia-wide online survey. You will note this particular survey relating to first, second and third years of teaching was undertaken in August 2003 with 604 respondents Australia wide, so it is a fairly rich data set. John, would you care to walk us through the construct.

Mr SEE — On page 1 committee members can see how the document is badged with both ASPA and Zoomerang; Zoomerang happens to be the online survey instrument we used. We basically sent this out to all our members throughout Australia and asked them to circulate it to principals in schools. They in turn gave it to staff who were in their first, second or third years of teaching.

On page 1, the second question is, 'What is your current employment status?'. Andrew will refer to that later with regard to page 11 but I thought you might be interested in marking that as something to come back to in the future. We basically set these questions out to get an idea about who would be doing the responding and what is their current situation.

Question 5 on page 2 is interesting for the committee to be aware of. If you look there you can see that large numbers of teachers in actual fact are teaching outside their subject expertise for either 20 per cent of their load or 40 per cent of their load. That has implications in terms of the training you might want to provide those teachers in that it needs to be fairly broad, because they will be expected to teach outside their areas of subject expertise at some time in their career, and certainly within the first three years.

At the bottom of page 2 and the top of page 3 we have asked them which state or territory was the area in which they did their pre-service training. We can then pull out the results for the various states and territories and see what they thought about the pre-service training that took place in their states and territories. Andrew will talk about those results later. In actual fact we can also do the same kind of thing, depending which institution they attended. We have not recorded that according to each institution, but it is material that is available, so you can find out which university does the best job if you want.

On page 4 question 8 is:

> In which state or territory are you located?

That will tell you the kind of experiences they are having now with respect to the induction into the education system that they experience in schools. Question 9 refers to where they are actually located and question 10 is about the level of education.

On page 5 the committee will see that we are coming to some fairly solid pieces of data in questions 11 and 13. That is information we have pulled out, and there are several pages later on which Andrew will refer to where we have displayed it graphically so you can get a sense of where Victoria comes. You also might notice that for question 12, which asks, 'Do you have further comments relating to the previous question?' we have pulled comments out of these things as we have gone along and Wendy will talk to those sorts of things. We have also included a selection of comments which you might find helpful in your deliberations.

On page 6 questions 15 and 18 also relate to data to which Andrew will speak shortly. Finally, we asked people if they had any further comments relating to the previous questions or matters surrounding the survey, and again we have pulled those comments out and put them into a group you might find useful. The comments themselves are in an unexpurgated form so you will find some spelling mistakes and typos as teachers were in the full flush of

enthusiasm in putting these things down. You are not to take that as a measure of their ability to spell, please, or their enthusiasm and speed.

Then we come to page 8 where we have pulled the data out for the Victorian situation.

Mr BLAIR — It is important to say first that of the 604 respondents, 242 were from Victoria. For some reason in our surveying it would be reasonable to say Victoria tends to be a fairly high respondent state. I do not know what that is saying.

The CHAIR — It is to do with the great computers we have in schools now and ICT.

Mr BLAIR — I was heading down that pathway too. On page 8 you will see the results in relation to question 11 are in a charted form. Question 11, by way of reminding, is:

> How would you rate your university pre-service preparation in relation to the amount of teaching you were able to do in schools?

So in that box at the top, the top figures are for Victoria and underneath are the collective tabulated results from the other states. They are not average figures; they are direct tabulated results. You will see that by and large young people in training would say that their pre-service time in schools was excellent or good to excellent; 73 percent indicated that. That is a percentage figure of the Victorian response.

The next question was, 'The content of the main learning area(s) in which you are accredited to teach', again we have a slightly less percentage figure than for the rest of Australia — and it goes on. Out of that you would have to say that in terms of the overall situation for young people in training through university they would rate in Victoria their time in schools as being very positive relative to their training in universities. We will extrapolate that a little further for the committee.

Some of the questions on page 8 included, 'Gaining a knowledge of state/territory curriculum documents', which was quite poor in Victoria; 'Gaining a knowledge of assessment strategies and standards', again quite poor — that is that figure of 55 versus 62 Australia wide. 'Gaining a knowledge of professional approaches and practices required of you as a staff member' is a difficult question and a difficult concept, but it is that whole area of working in teams, understanding professional standards, all that stuff — again, quite poor. The two next ones are crucial areas: managing students, the training they are receiving at university viewed poorly, and understanding of legislation or departmental requirements, again viewed quite poorly in Victoria.

Wendy, is there any comment you would like to make?

Ms TEASDALE-SMITH — Yes. In the comments I attempted to pull out those most relevant to Victoria, but as Andrew has already said, a number have come from Victoria. Overall they were particularly damning about pre-service training; there was no question about that. Some comments were:

> I believe student teachers should have more face-to-face time rather than spending copious amounts of time in lecture halls. Practicum should be longer ...not enough time spent in classrooms.

Some comments are particularly damning about some of the university courses here:

> The dip ed course at —

a university in Victoria —

> was a farce! The compulsory subjects are ridiculously easy and anyone who can write a essay can get top marks without any content whatsoever ... The lack of student behaviour management skills imparted to student teachers is only evident when the graduate reaches their own classroom.

Overall there was no question that across the country the view teachers had was that their in-service training was very poor and did not prepare them for the classroom whatsoever. They were particularly damning about lecturers:

> I felt that at university the lecturer who taught me for my major area lacked people skills, failed to teach us what was relevant in schools today ... he modelled very well how to be a poor teacher.

They were the sorts of feelings.

Mr BLAIR — The overall dataset would suggest that only 60 per cent of the 242 teachers in their first three years in Victoria rated their university pre-service training as being excellent to good at preparing them for teaching in schools — only 60 per cent.

Mr HALL — Did the results of this survey surprise you?

Ms TEASDALE-SMITH — No.

Mr SEE — No, not with respect to university preparation. I think we all would have horror stories from university where we thought, 'This is no good; this is useless', and the most useful times that we had were in schools. That is backed up with the data here, and you would have to say of that, as Andrew said, 60 per cent thought their pre-service training was excellent to good, and that is consistent Australia wide.

Mr BLAIR — You still get comments from beginning teachers — and I am not here to bag the university sector by any means — that the kind of content they are being exposed to through their university pre-service training programs — through grad. dip. ed., for example — by and large is somewhat grounded in previous decades. A lot of it has to do with perhaps the longevity of staff in our universities. There needs to be a much greater sense of interaction between training institutions and in schools, or the employer and schools.

I listened with interest before. I actually believe strongly that the employer in this state needs to play a far more overt role in managing the quality assurance of teacher training in this state. Without it there is no leverage.

The CHAIR — Have you finished the presentation, Andrew?

Mr BLAIR — No, I will keep going. The next question is 13 and this is the expected contrast:

> How would you rate your experience in schools during your pre-service training in relation to ...

You will note the bar graph on page 9 is returning much higher response rates than relative to the university pre-service training. In the first one 'The content of the main learning areas in which you are accredited to teach' — this is the experience when you are in schools — Victoria is 82 per cent, which is a pretty good number. The figure for the minor areas is 70 per cent. Then under 'Gaining a knowledge of state/territory curriculum documents', again it is not a terrific figure but it is better than what occurred in university; it could be improved. Assessment strategies at 67 is not bad but it could be improved. By and large kids are saying, 'Hey, we need more time in schools', but there is clearly work to be done in Victorian schools to improve our game in relation to this area.

Ms TEASDALE-SMITH — There are particular comments related to this:

> I found my training to be antiquated and when in a teaching role I rarely went back to what was taught at the university, particularly in the management of students and VCE documents and requirements.

There were several references made to those issues of student behaviour management and legal requirements and duty of care:

> The lack of student behaviour management skills imparted to student teachers is only evident when the graduate reaches their own classroom and ... can be both frightening and discouraging.

A number of people talked about wanting to leave teaching fairly early due to their feeling ill prepared.

Mr BLAIR — It is worthy to note that out of that question 13 nearly 80 per cent of teachers in Victoria rated their school-based experience as being excellent to good in preparing them for teaching in schools.

Questions 15 to 18 is the last area I care to make particular comment on. Question 15 states:

> In gaining employment how would you describe you are experience?

Question 18 states:

> Regarding your induction into the profession how would you rate the quality of experience?

This is an amalgam. By and large a worrying feature there would be service from Department of Education and Training officials in relation to the first three years. That is a fairly alarming number and, I guess not surprisingly, support from colleagues is quite the reverse, a terrific number in terms of 91 per cent.

Out of the figure of 242 we pulled some data on the status of those people. Relative to the rest of the country — this is on page 11 — 90 of the 242 Victorian teachers had permanent appointments, and that related to 38 per cent of respondents, versus temporary contracts in Victoria where we had 47 per cent versus 34 per cent Australia wide, which is an interesting piece of data given that issue around induction and how much energy do you put in for the longer term outcome in terms of contract versus a permanent appointment.

Ms TEASDALE-SMITH — I think this quite sums it up:

> It seems that the government is doing everything possible to make finding a job as difficult, time-consuming, expensive and stressful as possible. If the government wants young teachers to stay in the profession they should remove some of the obstacles ... For some of us the stress and uncertainty of this profession is making us want to leave and find better paid jobs that won't cause us stress-related medical problems or necessitate our working in bars in order to pay the rent over Christmas.

There was another one:

> There is a shortage of teachers but when you look for a job it is as hard as digging a well in the desert.

There were a number of comments about the VIT people being unhelpful, inefficient and rude, not very user friendly, very bureaucratic. Obviously young people or beginning teachers found the process of the bureaucracy and how to manage the employment rather difficult.

Mr BLAIR — I would not wish to digress in terms of the work of the inquiry, but we have to find the right balance between a push for a more permanent employment status for teachers and providing principals with the flexibility to manage their budgets on a year–by–year basis. That is just an aside. In terms of the other datasets, I will ask John whether there is anything to mention specifically.

Mr SEE — On page 11, Mr Blair has pointed out the differences between those people with permanent appointments and those with temporary contracts. Thirty-eight per cent from Victoria were permanent, and 47 per cent were temporary. If you compare that to our nearest, largest neighbour, which is New South Wales, you will see if you look at the raw figures for New South Wales, that of the 60 people who responded from New South Wales, 42 of those were in permanent employment and 13 were in a temporary capacity.

If you were thinking of joining an education system an offer of permanency is far more attractive than an offer of a temporary contract. Also, if you were thinking of moving from another profession to teaching, the offer of permanency is more attractive than a temporary contract so that is an area that you need to consider; and I happen to live in the ACT so I know what it is like to lose teachers to New South Wales.

Mr BLAIR — Also in the pack we have given you, you will note a press release on that topic, and also a summary of the data which is across a range of questions. I guess in conclusion, on a couple of other points regarding the broader terms of reference, one of the issues you are addressing is attracting people from other professions back into becoming qualified teachers in Victoria.

You would be aware that the Department of Education and Training has recently announced 20 training places for other professions back into teaching. They are paying those people at the top end of what we would call the instructor scale, which is below a qualified teacher but compares to the rate of a beginning teacher.

My issue with this is that I would see that as being a positive starting point — we have short-term supply problems in certain subject areas, which John See and Wendy Teasdale-Smith could talk to you about for hours — but the issue for me in the end is: how are those people trained? How interactive is that training with the school that they might actually finish with or sign on to? And is it realistic to pay people that amount of money and expect that they might stay in without an ongoing contract behind them?

We will not solve the short-term supply problems in particular subject areas without major incentives for people to join the profession, and I happen to have a view that we can be precious about subject shortages or indeed gender shortages in schools, but unless we actually do something to provide genuine incentives for people to join the profession we will have young people missing out; and having young people miss out for me is the key question in this state.

I cannot genuinely sit here today and say to you that every young person in the state of Victoria has an absolute guarantee of receiving a core curriculum provision in this state on the basis of teacher lack of supply, and I think that is a very worrying proposition.

Mr SEE — Just to illustrate that last point, on page 16 of the document Wendy Teasdale-Smith has brought together the information concerning 'Teaching outside area by learning area', and there is a graph there which shows where people are teaching outside the area, mainly in the areas of maths, English and studies of society and the environment (SOSE); but it is difficult to teach in a language area outside your area because if you do not speak the language, you do not; although I did know of somebody who taught Japanese and she was hospitality trained! What happens there is that you do not teach the language; you just cull that curriculum from your school.

Mr BLAIR — I know we are getting a bit red herring'd here, but I have been doing some work in preparation for the July MCEETYA meeting regarding the development of an Australia-wide position on the teaching of languages in Australia and — my goodness me! — how difficult it is to come to a position that might be acceptable to all states and territories on this fundamental issue.

We do tend, as a result of that process, with respect, to dumb it down to a lowest common denominator of outcome which would be acceptable. So I guess I am saying we need to be a little bolder in this state and be prepared to be a bit bolder for the sake of our kids.

Ms TEASDALE-SMITH — I notice your terms of reference related to attracting people from other occupations, and there were a couple of quotes in our documentation to you, and I will draw your attention to them. These are from mature age teachers who went into teaching after other occupations:

> As a sole parent it is very difficult to leave your home and children to have to take up rural positions to gain employment. This is extremely stressful, especially at my age.

Then:

> As a mature age beginning teacher with a career that will be shorter than most graduates I find the salary will be a major concern as my family grows and costs become greater. If you want us to stay, keep us healthy, with the best health care and provide incentives to stay, otherwise other fields that have greater benefits that would suit my skills and expertise would become of more interest.

One of the unexpected outcomes we found as a result of that survey was the number of people in their first three years who were already considering leaving the profession, which is also what the research shows but that came out, mostly based on feeling ill prepared and/or unsupported in their teaching.

Mr BLAIR — I hope that this data is, in summary terms, useful for you. We have been doing now our teacher supply online process for about four years so we have built a pretty considerable longitudinal data set that has some genuine usefulness. We have a survey out now, and we expect about 500 responses about teacher shortages across secondary schools across Australia. So it is useful primary data. We are planning on doing another later in the year.

Ms MUNT — This is absolutely stunning information, and it shows very clearly that the students are basically arriving in the schools unprepared and are clearly asking for a lot more practical experience. We heard a little while ago from the university deans, that when the students go to the schools it is the schools' responsibility, and there seems to be a need for a much greater cross pollination of purpose there.

The CHAIR — They said practical is important as it relates to theory.

Ms ECKSTEIN — But it had to be linked to theory, is what they said.

Ms MUNT — This demonstrates clearly that that simply is not practical and not working. I was interested in this quote from your data:

> The course I did was written by teachers which made almost everything we did practical and useful for teaching. It was a post-graduate course so we did not waste time learning the content for my subject areas. Instead we spent time learning how to teach those subject areas.

That is very interesting and shows the balance between practical teacher learning and theoretical teacher learning. I am pulling this all together — that is talking about a pre-degree and a post-degree qualification. Do you think that that is perhaps the way forward to solve these problems?

Mr BLAIR — My personal view is that one of the things we must as a community understand is how transferable teachers are in terms of the globe. Teaching as a profession and as a training area is very attractive and

very transportable to other countries and other professions. So I suspect that the days of a four-year concurrent preparation for teachers are probably dead and gone.

I think we need to be talking about first degrees with add-on graduate diplomas of education. I do not have much problem with that as long as that graduate diploma of education is very much grounded in the practice of teaching and is very school-based.

There is some stunning work going on in this area in the United Kingdom about how universities work with networks of schools and fundamentally have flipped the whole idea that the primary focus of that graduate diploma of education year is university based. The university lecturers actually spend their time in schools as against dragging kids back into a university to sit down and listen to perhaps a philosophy of education lecture that I heard in the early 1970s.

Ms MUNT — That seems to be the crux of the matter.

Ms TEASDALE-SMITH — The three of us have been teaching for a while now, and I know that when we have beginning or practical teachers out to my school, they are getting exactly the same training and model as I did 20 years ago — so many weeks to come back and so on — and when we try to get them involved in middle school so that they teach maths and science and not just science, the lecturers will not let us go there, basically, and if we force that to happen, then the student will not fulfil the assessment requirements of their course.

We argue against that and say, 'That is what they will end up teaching, so let us prepare them for that'; but they say, 'No, no, science is the business'. It is a very old-fashioned and traditional way of approaching it.

Mr SEE — In some ways I would agree with what Mr Blair says that the days of having a concurrent qualification in education and something else are numbered. It does have problems. These people who come out with a four-year bachelor of education are better teachers than the ones with a graduate diploma in education; but their understanding and grasp of the subject matter and what drives the area in which they are teaching is poorer.

I would agree with what you have said that when they do the graduate diploma of education it is important that they maximise the amount of time they have in schools, and the University of Canberra has finally moved internships — which are significant periods of time for Bachelor of education students in primaries, in their final year — into the secondary system, and that is where they go out and spend several weeks in the schools. I believe that that is the way to go.

Ms MUNT — It seems important also, from all the information here, that the universities actually participate in that process rather than just handing it over.

Mr BLAIR — Absolutely, and that is why I am actually quite critical of our Department of Education and Training — the largest employer of teachers in this state, by a long way — for not leveraging those training institutions and saying, 'Sorry, guys, you actually are not running the agenda anymore. If you want your young people to be employed, then this is what we require. We need some quality assurance about what is going on and we need for you to join us and the rest of this community in the rest of this century'.

Mr HALL — Thank you for the presentation. This survey work is certainly very interesting stuff. It shows the views of, as you said right from the outset, something like 601 participants all in their first three years of teaching.

I am not surprised by those results either, as you have indicated you are not, because getting in front of a classroom for the first time is a daunting experience for those of us who have been through it, and I can imagine young teachers standing in front of the class feeling that their training and preparation for this has been less than adequate. Do the principals associations both in Victoria and Australia wide share those views at the same level as these young teachers do?

Mr BLAIR — Absolutely, and we have made a number of submissions to the commonwealth and to inquiries undertaken by the commonwealth, for example, with the Kwong Lee Dow inquiry. We have a view that there is an issue around supply which is not assisted by preparation.

Mr HALL — My follow-up question is that we heard from the deans of education this morning suggesting that teacher education courses can only, to a limited extent, prepare people for survival; and the real education comes from the experience of standing in a classroom and teaching kids. Would you agree with that?

Mr BLAIR — Absolutely.

Mr HALL — To what extent, then, is the criticism of education training courses valid in that they cannot teach people everything?

Mr BLAIR — Basically what young people are saying to us is that their preparation is essentially chalk and cheese. They go into a university where there is little relationship to what is going to happen to them in schools. So to say that the practice of teaching is something which is only able to be gained through school practice is to, in many ways, denigrate the graduate diploma or education and the capacity of the graduate diploma of education to relate in a very genuine way the theory with the practice. There is absolutely a lack of relationship between the theory and practice which needs to be built on quickly.

Mr SEE — Just adding to that, it would seem to me from what you are saying that the universities are trying to wash their hands of effectively preparing their students for school. There are aspects of teacher preparation that the universities do well. If you look at the two sets of results on pages 8 and 9, especially when it comes to teaching the students about curriculum and possibly legislation — but I am not quite sure about that — you can see that the universities score higher than the schools do because in the schools the students are engrossed in survival and what do they do. They have a lesson in 5 minutes; what will they teach? They will be very much engrossed in what they will teach the students.

At the universities they have the time, and they can take them through the information that is required to learn about the curriculum — for example, 'What do the curriculum documents look like? How do you go about writing a good curriculum document? What is the information you need to know about?'.

So there are aspects of the university education which are useful, and need to be there; and they dovetail with what happens out in the schools. It is like saying, 'I believe that the students should be going out from the universities into the schools but the universities should provide some sort of a safety net or way of debriefing the students when they come back or during the time they are there so that the experience is not a negative one but a professionally growing one.

You can see from those results that the schools are doing inordinately well in providing support to the young teachers and helping them through the processes but the universities can also play a role in providing information, the structures and things to be aware of, in the debriefing, and in terms of what you do, where you go and how you do it better next time.

Mr HALL — I agree with that, and we challenged the deans on that particular issue this morning. What is the association's view on the payment of supervising teachers?

Mr BLAIR — I believe the association would have a view that the days of teachers receiving extra remuneration for this are in fact diminishing the profession. We have just been through a process of a thing called ETWRs — experienced teachers with responsibility — but I expect that they will not be around much longer.

I would have thought that as a precondition of being a highly experienced teacher and a leader in the pedagogy with responsibility for an area within the school that this duty of supervising and working with younger teachers might be seen as a genuine professional responsibility in building the profession and building the capacity of the profession. I think we should not be in the game of additional remuneration, but I do not know if my colleagues from other states would have a different view.

Ms TEASDALE-SMITH — I understand what Andrew is saying but it is historical, so for it to be taken away now would be problematic I think. I believe there are already issues with universities in the South Australia getting schools to take on prac. teachers now let alone if there were no perceived benefits to the teacher, because the teachers see it as just hard work and an extra body to look after. I think it would get more difficult if that was the case.

Mr BLAIR — Is there not a case to say that if the Department of Education and Training in this state became more overt in its relationship with the deans of education in quality of provision and quality assurance around these issues, that by relying on universities to provide the remuneration they are actually diminishing their control over the process. If this duty was seen as being something that the department insisted upon, that experienced teachers — pedagogical leaders — were required to take on then they would have more control over the outcome.

The CHAIR — It is in fact part of the ETWAR is it not?

Mr BLAIR — Actually it is not in strict terms.

The CHAIR — It was in the publicity that went out.

Mr BLAIR — I think it is going to be a historical problem anyway, Steve

Mr HALL — Is it ETWAR class or above teachers who are only supervisors?

Mr BLAIR — No. I have been in schools where third year out teachers have supervised and in many ways it is quite a good thing to do.

Ms BUCKINGHAM — Thank you all for your presentation this morning. I have sympathy for many of the views you put forward. I hear the message loudly that perhaps the department should take greater responsibility. Given that you have this longitudinal study happening, what are the principals going to do? What is your mechanism for feeding back to the department or to government — I suppose your mechanism to government is here today, but to the universities about the inadequacies that you are finding in this study? Have you got a mechanism or is this just a collection of data? I suppose I am asking what you are going to do with it, because it seems such valuable data? Where are you going to take it?

Mr SEE — We have done several things. One of the reasons why we did the survey was because when Qwong Lee Dow was doing his review into teacher development in mathematics, science and technology, we got a whisper that there was a feeling that things were fairly well okay at a university level with preparations and that certain things should continue as a status quo. That is why we put out this survey and asked some of the hard questions. So during the actual consultation process we put out the survey, got the results back and fed that back to Qwong Lee Dow and the people in the federal Department of Education, Science and Training. So I think that certainly influenced some of the responses to those issues that were raised.

In terms of what we do with our colleagues, we publish this material on our web site, we have put out press releases and we are doing this sort of thing here. As Andrew referred to in the earlier question, I also think that we need to build a sense of responsibility among staff that teacher preparation is one of the professional requirements of the job, although in the Australian Capital Territory there are honorariums associated with professional development money or actual remuneration in other states.

Mr BLAIR — In the Victorian context I have also tabled this data at the teachers supply and demand working party.

Ms BUCKINGHAM — Given you are saying that this is longitudinal, I think you said something about dissatisfaction. Do you go back to the same teachers and track whether they have stayed, especially the ones that showed the greatest disadvantage with their pre-service training? If next year is its fourth year, will you have data to show whether they have actually stuck it out or left?

Mr SEE — We cannot do that on an individual basis. Part of the rationale was that it is anonymous.

Ms BUCKINGHAM — I did not understand that.

Mr SEE — This information here is from first, second and third-year out teachers. Last year was our first year of doing this. Teacher supply and quality is a separate set of surveys — —

Ms BUCKINGHAM — Thank you. I did not understand it was anonymous.

Mr SEE — If we run the survey again, which I think we should do this year, we will pick up the new first year out teachers and whether or not there has been an improvement in teacher preparation from last year to this year.

Mr BLAIR — By the way, Helen, we advised principals that when they received this survey they might bring together all of their first, second and third year out teachers to get them to fill in the thing online but then to have a school-based discussion around how the induction and pre-service training has been viewed and use that or lever off that in terms of building programs on a school by school basis.

Ms BUCKINGHAM — On Monday we had a briefing from the department, and I asked the question: what role does the department feel it plays in pre-service education? I paraphrase their answer but it was: that is the role of the VIT. Would you like to comment on that?

Mr BLAIR — Let me comment by saying that I am not surprised that that is the answer you got. I would also say that it assumes that the VIT, in its infancy, has both the breadth of experience and capacity to engage with the deans to provide the kind of young people that we need to staff our schools, and I would say that it is very early days. I would like to see very much more employer involvement.

Ms BUCKINGHAM — Thank you very much.

Ms TEASDALE-SMITH — It seems to me too that the reality of the world now is that it is about partnerships between industry, business and government, and yet around this it seems to be from what you are saying that it is buck passing. It is not their responsibility; it is their responsibility.

The CHAIR — Can I just clarify a couple of things as I did the other day with the education department. Page 11 shows temporary versus full time. We were told that in Victoria, because of its decentralisation, that what is called temporary or short-term is in fact people who are employed for a trial period. When you have a centralised bureaucracy you tend to appoint on a trial period for three months, one month whatever it is. Is that a factor here?

Mr BLAIR — I think to some extent it would be fair to say that principals employ teachers first and foremost on merit, but secondly with a very close eye on their fiscal responsibility. In representing principals I have a view that we would very much like to make certain that when we have young people of quality that we do whatever we can to keep them in the public education system and tie them up for life if we can.

The CHAIR — Do you have a view that your principals should probably appoint new teachers for a trial period or appoint them first off into a permanent position?

Mr BLAIR — To be honest with you, I think this gets back to the graduate Dip.Ed. year. If we could have a far more school-based training and internship-type program in this state, a lot of the selection of teachers would occur in that year. So your risk in putting someone up — —

The CHAIR — I am just trying to understand the statistics.

Mr BLAIR — I am sorry, but the risk of putting someone on ongoing as their first appointment would be greatly diminished. But the essence is that whilst we have a school global budget regime — —

The CHAIR — As opposed to a centralised staffing regime?

Mr BLAIR — Exactly. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot say, 'Increase the number of ongoing employees', and then, 'And by the way, if you run into deficit it is your problem and it is your poor management decision'.

The CHAIR — The second thing is that on page 2 and one of the key things of course being your ability to teach a subject and how you should be trained to do that. It is a contentious issue obviously given that university subjects do not necessarily fit neatly into school subjects. If you do second and third-year statistics, does that qualify you to teach maths? Also the fact that principals appoint teachers through their school global budgets. There are recommendations in Victoria that you should have two years in a subject area at university in order to teach it. I was looking at the questions asked in your survey, and I would have thought that it was a funny kind of clarification about the expertise in a subject in terms of your teaching. If you had simply asked, 'Do you feel confident in teaching your subject given your university training?', you might have got different results. I wonder if

you would just comment on that? The definition of a teacher of a subject is postgraduate and first or second year with an example there that is a bit — —

Mr BLAIR — It was important in definitional terms as well as intent terms to make a definition between confidence which might have to do with the kids that you are teaching versus your capacity based on your training, in terms of the subject knowledge, and that is really how we framed that question. In a sense and as much as one could we wanted to strip away to the core and not have any other elements that might impinge on confidence in teaching.

The CHAIR — What is your view about the basic criteria for teaching a subject? Should we articulate that if you do statistics you can teach — —

Mr BLAIR — Are you talking secondary staff?

The CHAIR — Secondary, because that is where the main area is.

Mr BLAIR — I think you would want to be looking at least a two-year university study to translate that, for example, into a year 12 maths teacher.

The CHAIR — What about junior? Have you any concrete position on it?

Mr SEE — We discussed the definition. There is a question between confidence and capability. Certainly for junior levels in mathematics and science you might say that somebody who also has a major in another area, for example statistics or even PE which is a fairly common one, they may be able to teach some of the junior level sciences. But when you start to get into the years 9, 10, 11 and 12 that confidence does not necessarily match the capability. A point that I was going to make earlier about the four-year bachelor of education course as opposed to those who have a degree in a subject area followed by a graduate Dip. Ed. is that I am the principal of a year 11 and 12 college and I know that although the bachelor of education teachers are confident, their grasp of the subject matter and the nuances that are involved are not as effective as those who come from the other stream. In the Australian Capital Territory system you are also involved in the curriculum development side of things as well as the teaching side of things and you need that grip and depth of knowledge to enable you to write good curriculum for chemistry, drama and whatever. I know that I went from a year 7 to 10 high school into a year 11 and 12 college I thought, 'I can teach anything'. You are quite confident in doing that sort of thing, but when I got into year 12 astronomy I had a little bit of trouble. I was an amateur astronomer, but I was not into cosmology and things like that so I found it difficult to make that transition.

You are quite right that somebody's confidence and capability at one level is sufficient but that when you start moving up through the years in the secondary area, it is not necessarily the case. When I look for staff, if they have done a bachelor of education, for example, or a degree, I look for qualifications in the area in which I am seeking to employ them.

The CHAIR — This seems to be a problem. When we talk about the juniors we have different expectations to seniors. So when you are talking about employing a teacher and their expertise in a subject area, the problem is that it is pretty woolly; it depends on what they are teaching. I guess what you are saying is that if I did not do literature as part of an arts degree in first and second year at university, I could probably still teach English or humanities at a junior level or would I be a good year 12 English literature teacher? Probably not. Would you support work done on how university courses translate into your capacity or qualification to teach subjects at different levels?

Mr BLAIR — I think we have to make some quite strong definitional differences between subject knowledge and the craft of teaching. The craft of teaching is really the area where you are going to get the multidisciplinary project-based, team-based learning programs that are very much growing in Australia in years 7, 8 and 9, for example, and across the middle years. There is no doubt that subject specialism and subject knowledge are crucial through to senior years but then not every senior teacher has a particularly strong craft of teaching. So really I think we are talking about two different things, and I do not think that universities clearly alone have the capacity to have much impact on the craft of teaching.

Ms TEASDALE-SMITH — 'Quality' does not equal 'qualified' although I need to say that qualified is part of the story as well. I think it is a problem to go totally away and say that you can teach anything so long as

you have some sort of general degree. I do not know about here but in South Australia we are training teachers for middle school teaching, which is about having qualifications across and particularly about the art of teaching middle school students and doing that well. The issue of qualified teachers will grow here politically as it has done in America. There is a big push around, 'Who is teaching your child?'. I know they are into litigation in America but there are also issues around senior school and whether or not poor results by students is the result of unqualified teachers teaching them. I think that will become an issue here.

The CHAIR — But the point is, how do you define 'qualified' at the senior, middle and junior levels? That is really where the work has to be done, otherwise we are talking round in circles. I understand your point about the craft of teaching.

Mr SEE — With curriculum renewal which is taking place around Australia as well, they are not necessarily dividing them up into key learning areas , as you see in question 4. A response to the most recent survey says that it is a bit difficult to answer that question because we do not necessarily have the key learning areas any more; we are using different sorts of things.

Mr BLAIR — Those national registration issues around certification are interesting. We are at an interesting point of course with states and territories setting up their individual institutes of teaching, but again, a significant conversation has to be had with employers across the country — each employer and states and territories — around what kinds of certification they require for people to be teaching in their schools and meeting the kind of questions you are putting up.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. You have certainly given us something to think about. I guess we are rapidly coming to terms with the question of where real teacher training occurs. Does it occur in the university or in the schools and at what point should you tick off the teacher as a qualified teacher with the ability to teach?

If it is okay with you, our researcher Nick Fischer will follow up with some questions about the details of your survey. We may wish to come back to you later in the inquiry to bounce off some ideas and get some other information about our inquiry.

Witnesses withdrew.

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into pre-service teacher training courses

Melbourne–17 March 2004

Members

Ms H. E. Buckingham
Ms A. L. Eckstein
Mr P. R. Hall
Mr S. R. Herbert
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Executive Officer: Ms K. Ellingford
Research Officers: Dr N. Fischer and Dr G. Berman

Witnesses

Ms G. McHardy, State President; and

Ms E. Crowle, Senior Vice-President, Parents Victoria.

The CHAIR — I declare this hearing of the Education and Training Committee open and welcome Parents Victoria to the committee. You may wish to make a statement about the terms of reference or your organisation and then we will go into questions.

Ms McHARDY — My name is Gail McHardy. I am the current state president of Parents Victoria. Elaine is our senior vice-president. Parents Victoria is a sole parent organisation representing parents in government primary and secondary schools, and has done so since 1927. Our members — parents associations referred to as parents clubs or welfare clubs in schools, and individual parents — have always represented their views to our organisation in respect of quality teachers and their expectations of them.

I have tabled and supplied to your executive officer a copy of our existing policy. We formulate this policy on pre-service teaching which captures a number of our expectations from state and federal governments and the training institutions on what should be provided. Please note that the policy that has been supplied is reflective of post-parent members and is due for amendment. I am about to read through some of the ideas we would like to see incorporated. I have done it in dot point form if that would be helpful:

- The pre-service training to incorporate in communicating with parents how to deal with parents who have children experiencing difficulties at schools, educational and social.

- Provide opportunities to discuss strategies on how to deal with difficult situations.

- Discuss and witness varying methods of classroom instruction and management.

- Adopt self-assessment tools to allow student teachers and returning teachers to understand their strengths and weaknesses and how to address and improve them.

- Induction and transition programs for new and returning teachers to familiarise themselves with school policy, programs and the school community that they work in, as these are all very different.

- Opportunities, where possible, to attract people from other professions to gain qualifications to teach and participate in education programs, mentor, instruct, and be utilised to bring relevance to curriculum to improve student engagement.

- Student teachers provided the opportunity to understand and experience other school operations, responsibilities and requirements — again around school policies et cetera, and the life of the school.

I want to make specific reference to a recent experience that I had. You may have heard this earlier today from someone else, but it was quite an interesting experience. I was invited by Gloria Latham, senior lecturer at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) who runs a virtual classroom for a primary school to make a presentation to 100 fourth-year students on parent partnership and relationships. It was a really worthwhile exercise that generated a lot of questions from the student teachers. We would also hope that the pre-service teaching would understand the various pedagogies; the meaning of pedagogy; and how things have changed for the future. The courses would also access current research and reports to assist future teachers with implementing improvements.

We would hope there would be an undertaking and a commitment to professional development by the teacher so that there is some sort of arrangement at the outset that they will do further professional development in their future years of teaching. My dot points continue:

- Feedback evaluation from the student teachers at the end of their first year of practice and also the supply of mentoring; a mental bank.

Thank you. **The CHAIR** — That was the most succinct presentation we have had today and we thank you. It was succinct and informative.

Ms McHARDY — We will supply that to you.

The CHAIR — Are there any questions?

Ms BUCKINGHAM — How did you come to that point? What made you, as an organisation, decide that is what you wanted to see? Was it achieved by general discussions or by observation? How did your group decide?

Ms McHARDY — Those things?

Ms BUCKINGHAM — Yes.

Ms McHARDY — Probably the combined experience of being a volunteer in the organisation — for myself I can speak for 10 years — and from phone calls; emails we receive as a result of school visits; and forums we run for the government under our service agreement to the Department of Education and Training. All those ideas and feedback basically form a summary over a period of time. We tried to capture what is the most current concern for you. That is why I had to explain to you about past policy because as you can see when you read it, it is a little bit outdated in some components.

The CHAIR — What would be a perfect model for young teachers just entering and their links with parents and understanding the needs and expectations of parents with regard to schools? What would be a formal mechanism to put in? Would there be one?

Ms McHARDY — Primarily we have communication at the top of the list. We strongly believe there needs to be very succinct communication unit within the pre-service training. A good example is what someone like Gloria Latham is doing at RMIT. I can use that example because I have experienced it. However, we would like to think that the Faculty of Education and other training institutions incorporate those types of ideas because they are real and they are an opportunity for them to invite people who are from those settings to explain what is happening now so that they are prepared when they go into those settings.

The CHAIR — Do the student teachers go to parents' meetings and the school councils and that sort of thing in their rounds? Is that part of what happens now?

Ms McHARDY — We don't know that, Steve. It is a good question. Through this presentation we asked them what they defined as participation — when we said the word 'parent' how did they feel? We did a bit of brainstorming around that because it was really important to hear the mixed reactions. You must remember that a few of those pre-service teachers were mature-age students and were also parents. It was really good to ask that question and when we asked for a show of hands, out of 100 people, five hands went up indicating those who had actually been to a school council meeting or a parent association meeting.

Ms CROWLE — We have actually had feedback from teachers who have said that they really have not encouraged parents to be part of their classrooms in their early teaching days because they are afraid that they are still new and learning and that parents will criticise. We certainly want to do everything we can to get over that. Parents realise that new teachers are just learning, but we still have a part to play. We certainly want to encourage new teachers to use the expertise of parents in the classroom rather than excluding them because of their inexperience.

Ms McHARDY — Or past fears.

The CHAIR — Do you have a view on the adequacy of pre-teacher training. Has Parents Victoria talked about it and said about new teachers, 'They are hopeless' or, 'They are good'? Do you have a view about different institutions?

Ms McHARDY — The only time that would come out is if we have actually had a report at a local level and parents are seeking advice on how to go through the process of bringing that to someone's attention. As you can appreciate, our organisation is made up of volunteers. We have been around a long time but usually we are dealing with the issues of the day. At the same time there are lots of opportunities for these things to be discussed but unfortunately we do not get time to pursue them. This is something that we have been looking at very closely over the last two years because we feel that we should be out in these training institutions talking to people.

Ms CROWLE — In my experience over the years with Parents Victoria a lot of different issues have come up and we have thought they should be included in pre-service education. They might be things like health checks on kids; being able to establish whether a child might need to have their eyes or hearing checked; or things like that. We are always adding to the list of things we would like to be included in the curriculum for teachers, but I guess we need to find a balance in what they need to know. As I understand it, in their course they might have a fortnight where they talk about the development of a child or whatever, and that is such a small amount of time compared to the implications for a child's development and the way that they are going to learn. I suppose it is matching the relevance of the curriculum to what it will actually be in practice.

Ms McHARDY — We can also direct you to the Better Schools: Better Outcomes program and the things we brought up there regarding teachers around students with disabilities, impairments and educational needs. That

is a huge area that faces our organisation. Parents are saying, 'Are these teachers being trained in preparation for when they have a child in that situation coming into the classroom?'.

Ms MUNT — I think you brought up something today that no-one else has brought up — that is, professional development. Teacher training is not just for new teachers who graduate, it is for the ongoing training of teachers in the system. Could you just expand on that a little bit? Do you see ongoing professional development as important — I think I do.

Ms McHARDY — Certainly, and it is something that is brought up regularly. We believe that from the experiences we have had with parents sharing stories— and again, without generalising — there is some form of resistance from some schools and some teachers at certain stages of their careers. They may not be prepared — and I can give you lots of little anecdotal items outlining where that has happened — but in general we can tell you that it is very evident that for a school to have a whole-school approach there has got to be some sort of commitment from the teaching fraternity. They must be prepared to look at and revisit things.

We recognise that there are time restraints and it also comes back to teachers' salaries and becomes an industrial issue. But from an educational perspective and from what parents have said, it is really important that these things are revisited and that they have refresher courses. If there is an issue about class management, it is important that they have that opportunity. You can do professional development in lots of different ways; it does not necessarily have to be outside the school. We could have a team of people come to the school and do working group observation in classrooms. There is lots of documentation — for example in the blueprint that the Boston Consulting Group did — that we firmly agree with. So in answer to your question, yes.

Ms CROWLE — We certainly have a policy on teacher professional development as well. Parents are very happy for teachers to have time away from the classroom for professional development, as long as it is relevant. I guess the relevance of the professional development is the most important thing. Sometimes you think, 'The teachers have a day off to do x, how is that going to benefit my child?'.

The CHAIR — Just before a public holiday!

Ms CROWLE — Before Melbourne Cup Day, that day in between. If parents can see the relevance and their child is going to benefit, they are certainly in favour of teachers having ongoing professional development.

Ms McHARDY — And parents' reaction to that professional development and the time out to do it, whether internally or externally, could be far better received depending on how it is communicated to the community — why they are doing it, what it is for. In our experience, people want the communication. Communication is probably the key thing in all of this. It is not just about ideas but also in the training.

Ms MUNT — I am also interested in one other thing if you could bear with me for a second — that is, parents coming into the classroom as helpers. Is there any feedback on how that is working? Being a mum who does this I know that sometimes it works very well, but sometimes it does not work too well at all. Perhaps the parents need a little bit of development before they go into the classrooms to be helpers. Once again it comes down to communication. Do you have any evidence on that?

Ms McHARDY — We have some strong views on this. As you can appreciate, a lot of people are returning to the work force, particularly women, so the numbers of people available as helpers are reducing. We have strong feelings about parent-friendly environments. For lots of reasons some schools have adopted policies where pre-schoolers cannot come to school with their parents any more and that reduces your voluntary list of helpers.

Ms MUNT — Why has that been done?

Ms McHARDY — That is just what is happening in the times we live in. Years ago you could bring as many children as you like to school and just give them a toy box.

Ms CROWLE — One of the reasons is the risk factor. Schools are worried that if a pre-schooler has an accident, they are not covered. Mum is a volunteer so she is covered if something happens but the pre-schooler is not covered. This is a particularly big factor on excursions. Once upon a time you could take your pre-schoolers along to the zoo and have a lovely day out, but that is certainly discouraged now. At the other extreme, while we

really want parents to be part of the classroom environment we do not want to encourage any expectations by parents about taking a teacher's role and we would certainly be against any moves to have volunteer parents doing a teacher's work.

Ms McHARDY — There have also been questions in other arenas about para-professionals and things like that. We have some issues with that. We want accredited, qualified people doing these sorts of things, but by the same token we want parents to participate. Our organisation has a strong history of participation, but there must be firm protocols and practices in relation to how that is done. Parents should be aware of the school's expectations and schools should be aware of the parents' expectations.

Unfortunately, we have anecdotal evidence that sometimes what one parent did in the past has been held against the school for 10 years. Do you know what I mean — against other parents doing things because someone has overstepped the line. It is therefore really important for people to understand that our organisation is very pro-parent participation, but we do understand that in the times we live in there must be some sort of understanding about rules, responsibilities and roles, and that they must be set down in collaboration with school management and the parent community.

Mr HALL — First of all, thank you for coming in today and having a chat; that is great. You have emphasised throughout your presentation that communication is one of the key things you are concerned about, and how essential communication is between teachers and parents. In your view is there a problem, and is it because teachers simply do not communicate enough with parents, or is it because teachers do not have the skills to communicate?

Ms McHARDY — A bit of both.

Mr HALL — Is it not then partly to do with school policy and the level of communication that exists between parents and teachers?

Ms McHARDY — We could spend hours talking about school policies. We make these policies, but are they actually put into practice?

Mr HALL — We have to make a decision whether it is the pre-service training that teachers undertake that prevents that communication, or is it school policy that prevents it.

Ms McHARDY — I think you have to hit it from both ends; you have to do it in the pre-service training so they know that that is the expectation when they get there; and then in the school environment we have to work strongly, as we do, lobbying the department and saying, 'Where is the accountability? Is this happening?'. We have just had a meeting today around those issues. It is really important to equip these teachers with an understanding of what is expected of them so that they can operate in their environment like everybody else does in their profession. This is why pre-service training is important to us and why we came today. We still feel that these teachers unfortunately are not given all the tools that they need to practise their craft.

Mr HALL — What sort of communication do you expect from teachers? Is it verbal or is it written communication?

Ms McHARDY — It could be a variety. With the world we live in today parents do anticipate email communication if it is possible, particularly in secondary schools. One of the criticisms parents have is that they are always told about a problem when it is too late or there was not enough notice. We have to have some agreed arrangements with teachers about communication at the beginning of the school year. Our organisation has some strong beliefs on that issue which we have supplied to the department. Then the teacher knows, 'Okay, this is my class, these are the parents and this is what they expect from me for the year'. Then he or she knows what they need to do for the whole of the year. We would hope that would happen across the board.

There are also some expectations about communication from one colleague to another. That is another issue we have. Parents are saying, 'My daughter went into this subject and then the other subject teacher did not know', especially with things like homework. There needs to be communication about what teachers are setting for each of the classes. That is an issue for parents because parents are saying, 'Well, who are talking to each other?'. Again, that is communication.

Ms CROWLE — A lot of these things are probably school-based issues, depending on what students are being taught in their education. For example if there is a problem with learning, say maths, parents would much rather know when it is happening than find out at the end of the semester or the end of the year that their child has failed grade 4 maths. If they had been told in May they could have been doing some extra homework with the child themselves and working on strategies as a team together with the teacher and the child to deal with these issues. We have done a lot of work around assessment and reporting and a lot of that involved communication issues. Parents want to know when things are happening and they also want to know how they can help. They probably know that the child is struggling with maths, but they want to know how they can help.

Ms McHARDY — But significant evidence around pre-service teaching is that the majority of these students have had practical experience but not to the extent where they are very familiar with the environment, for example the inner workings and behind the scenes et cetera. They will get a snapshot, but I am not strongly convinced that that is enough.

Ms CROWLE — I am sure they do not face a parent-teacher interview in their training.

Ms McHARDY — They may observe.

Mr HALL — They are probably put through a mock parent-teacher interview; that sort of stuff, for sure. Are you happy with the way teachers generally assess kids, as parents, and the reporting on that that comes back to you?

Ms McHARDY — I think that is another — —

Ms CROWLE — Can of worms.

Mr HALL — It is part of your pre-service training.

Ms McHARDY — I am just looking at this.

Ms CROWLE — A lot of that is based on the school policy, though; the report format is usually based by the school. Some teachers are very good at it.

Ms McHARDY — Some are exceptional.

Ms CROWLE — Within the same school you will have teachers who are very good at communicating with parents and others who are very poor; the same with the reporting.

Ms McHARDY — On a positive note, when we ran forums around assessment, I had a teacher telling other teachers what she does with her class, and that was that she gets the students to do a self-assessment on her in the class, but by doing that she then was able to read and style her reports accordingly because of how they wanted information. That to me was a very innovative teacher.

Ms MUNT — It would be a very brave kid who would give her a bad report, too.

Ms McHARDY — There were some guidelines there. The other thing, too, if they did not want to do it on her, they could do it on their family. But there again it was clever because it was a way of getting information about the family in preparation for the parent-teacher interview. So if dad was a shift worker, she knew some of the questions to ask. This is what we talk about — skilling these people with the strategies to be able to go and do their profession in a way that they are equipped and supported, and they have an understanding before they are in that setting.

Ms ECKSTEIN — We heard this morning from the primary principals and to some degree also from the secondary principals later on about the importance of preparing kids for this millennium and how different that is — that it is an information age we are talking about, thinking curriculum and skilling kids and problem solving, and those sorts of things. How much do parents feel that that is a significant priority and, if they do, how adequately do parents think — or the organisation, if you want to comment from that point of view — and are teachers prepared to do that in their pre-service training and to be able to do that effectively?

Ms CROWLE — Whatever pedagogy is current that they are pushing at the teacher training institute I think as parents from Victoria's point of view we are very much into preparing our kids to ask questions, to be lifelong learners, to be able to think through issues and problem solve. We have had a lot of very good speakers in our conferences lately on those sort of topics. It is something we are very aware of.

Ms McHARDY — It is very topical with parents.

Ms ECKSTEIN — Do parents think it is important?

Ms CROWLE — Some do, some do not.

Ms McHARDY — It is like homework — 50 per cent down this end think very strongly about it, and there a lot in the middle too.

Ms CROWLE — There are always the ones where it is most important that their children be able to spell properly and write legibly and all those sorts of things. There are others who would rather their children knew where to go to find the answers, not necessarily to have them all up in their heads.

Ms McHARDY — To navigate and know those sorts of things. It is a difficult one to answer.

Ms ECKSTEIN — The second part is how adequately do parents feel that the teachers are prepared to be able to do that?

Ms McHARDY — I think sometimes it is about their own adequacy, too, depending who their child's class teacher is and what they come home with. Homework is a good example. You will then have sometimes in the home environment, 'I would have hoped you would have had a discussion about this' and, 'This is more of a revision of what you have learned through the day'. So that is where parents question the purpose of homework. That is what Elaine was saying earlier about relevance and so forth.

The other part of that is that parents are sort of frustrated. I think there is a little bit of an underestimation of parents today. A lot of us are well educated today and a bit more outspoken, have higher expectations — all those things — and I think people are not very clear about what their levels of experience are and what the level of their training is because it is different today. They would hope the IT teacher would be very well equipped, and sometimes I think they are not, and they are judged on that.

Ms ECKSTEIN — And they are disappointed.

Ms McHARDY — And they are disappointed. So again another anecdotal — you could go to a parent-teacher interview and talk to an English teacher. If you are talking about email communication and the teacher is saying to, say, someone like me, 'I actually don't use my email because I've got to get the kids to run me through it on the holidays' — —

Ms CROWLE — We find that a lot with older teachers. There might be six computers in the classroom and parents are coming to us and saying, 'My child has not used the computer all year'. This is where obviously with PD every teacher in the school should be computer literate.

Ms McHARDY — It is not intended to be a criticism. It is an observation that they are assumed by the community to be up to that level, and they are not.

Ms BUCKINGHAM — This morning the principals association gave us some statistics that they have been gathering Australia-wide that suggest that of first, second and third year-out teachers in Victoria, if my memory serves me right, about 48 per cent were not satisfied with the training they had received inside their teacher training courses, but they had a very high incidence of 91 per cent of how much support they got in schools in their teacher training during their practicums. This leads me to believe that what you do inside the school during teacher training is really very important. Does your organisation have a view on whether there should be some more workplace learning, how long teacher practicums should be?

Ms McHARDY — The policy, even though I said it is outdated, does say that all students intending to become primary teachers should do one year of student apprentice teaching before commencing a course at a tertiary institution.

Ms CROWLE — That is certainly going back to the very old days of teacher training where you worked in the school for 12 months.

Ms MUNT — Why put them off? Then they will not do the course.

Ms McHARDY — I think that is where that was coming from. In answer to your question, I think there could be a lot more done in that area. It is difficult because every school is so different. People do not think that, but — —

Ms BUCKINGHAM — Can I ask you why you formulated that view, or is that something you inherited?

Ms CROWLE — We have inherited that particular point of policy.

Ms McHARDY — Yes.

Ms MUNT — It must be fairly old.

Ms CROWLE — In 1925 we started, so the policy has been developed. It is like a living document.

Ms ECKSTEIN — But when would that particular policy — —

Ms McHARDY — That is our predecessor, so we are not sure when that dot point would have been incorporated.

Ms MUNT — Between now and 1925?

Ms CROWLE — Sometime between now and 1925.

Ms BUCKINGHAM — Do you have a personal view on the value of an internship, of putting trainee teachers inside schools for a period of time — a day a week, all year or what?

Ms CROWLE — I think it could be very valuable provided it was not in the place of a trained teacher. That would be our reservation, that we would be using interns and perhaps paying them a pittance to do the role of what a qualified teacher should be doing. We would be careful about that. I think it could be very valuable, but again we are looking at length of courses. Our teaching courses are already four years now. Are we becoming more like doctors? We are not paying our teachers the sort of salary to have a five-year course.

Ms McHARDY — This is where I said it gets to be very complex because you are asking us questions that have other implications on salaries and things like that.

Ms BUCKINGHAM — I appreciate that.

Ms McHARDY — Even though in a perfect world they were paid what they surely deserve, we could be having quite a — —

Ms CROWLE — I know from a personal point there is a lot of pressure even on the supervising teachers when the students are doing their practicums to push them through. My husband is a teacher and he quite often has student teachers. I think perhaps we need a bit more accountability about the passing and failing of the students in their practical performance. It may be that some need extra and others do not. You might have to do an extra term or an extra six weeks, or whatever, but it does not necessarily have to be completed in the four years of your course.

I know from the feedback I hear from schools that sometimes the teachers reluctantly give ‘satisfactory’, but it might be that there are plenty of areas that they are good at, but there are some areas — it might be even just the use of the blackboard or something like that — where because they are encouraged to push them through and to find positives, it is a bit like kids, that no-one likes to fail anyone any more, and you say they have a nice smile and they have lots of friends, but you are ignoring some of the more nitty-gritty things.

Ms MUNT — We have been talking earlier today about the benefits of having a degree with a year of Dip. Ed. for primary teaching as well, where the year Dip. Ed. had a lot more time in the schools. Would you have a view on that rather than a four-year bachelor of education?

Ms McHARDY — What would be the time frame?

Ms MUNT — Still four years but structured differently.

Ms McHARDY — What would you be majoring in in your degree?

Ms MUNT — All sorts of different things.

Ms CROWLE — In the secondary sector you do your degree. You might be majoring in maths, and then you do your Dip. Ed. and you have got your subject areas where you might do maths and science. So you have your theory background. I would want to know what the primary teacher would be majoring in — whether it is child development. It would have to be a limited range of courses, because otherwise there would be just so much they would need to know in that 12 months. You would never pack it into that 12 months.

Mr HALL — A specialist in a primary area, like music, IT, something like that?

Ms McHARDY — It would be an interesting thing because unfortunately teachers have to be all things to everyone in a school setting. Even though that may be their speciality, it is just that unfortunately people may be and they have to take another class, and there will be an expectation from the community and students that they are equipped.

Ms CROWLE — I think primary schools are moving ahead. When I went to school, my primary teacher taught me everything, whether they were a PE person or a music person. We sang in the classroom whether the teacher was tone deaf or whether they were a trained music teacher. Now we have all the specialists who come in, so we are moving in that way, but schools are not well enough resourced to be able to have the specialist, and that is the problem — unless teachers can come in pick up those things, particularly smaller schools, they miss out. We know of schools that do not have music programs because they do not have a music specialist.

Ms McHARDY — It is all very well to specialise in these specialist areas, but the difficulty then is, as Elaine is saying, then to have that opportunity for all schools to access those specialists, and in our experience from our members that is the most difficult thing at the moment.

The CHAIR — Getting back to communication, does your organisation have regular contact with deans of education? Do you have contact with deans at the teacher training institutes?

Ms McHARDY — Not currently; only recently.

The CHAIR — Only occasionally?

Ms McHARDY — This was via our colleague in the Victorian Council of School Organisations (VCSO), Jacinta Cashen; she did her training. She is a trained teacher, and Gloria invited her along, as we all network, and Jacinta invited me along. I think that was the beginning of quite a grand relationship at RMIT.

Ms CROWLE — We do have connections with Roger Holdsworth. We do have connections with some teacher training in some institutions, and we have talked about perhaps the parents coming in and doing a session on communication to parents, but nothing formal.

The CHAIR — I am just trying to get a handle on this. There are issues in teachers training, over and above academic, like bullying, sexual issues, gender issues, a whole range of student welfare that is evolving in schools, and what happens in schools is very different to what happened 20 years ago.

Ms McHARDY — Correct.

The CHAIR — How in your opinion do the teacher training institutes and the staff there, who might have been there for a long time, keep themselves informed about what is happening in schools and what the issues are that they have to teach new teachers how to handle? What is happening in schools is a transitional, constantly evolving thing.

Ms McHARDY — This is where we all have to work smarter and there are opportunities for the likes of Lacma Primary School, even though it is virtual, there is an opportunity where these institutions have access. It has

to work both ways, so governments have to be supportive in having that, even at the local level, at regional offices. It might be that they invite people in for certain things. The difficulty is that everyone wants all this for free, so there has to be some sort of formalisation about how that support is incorporated in a formal sense to contribute, because it is like you say — even though they go and do their practicums, they are not necessarily — —

The CHAIR — Do those who teach the teachers come out and spend a couple of months teaching or speaking to the parents about what the issues are?

Ms CROWLE — You think of the school system itself where we are constantly developing a curriculum to meet current situations, and things are dropping off or more things are coming into the curriculum all the time.

The CHAIR — How does that get fed back to teacher training courses?

Ms McHARDY — For those people to have that experience, they have to talk to other people outside so that when they are doing their course planning and so forth, they know what to incorporate. Someone like Gloria obviously has done a lot of thinking about it.

Ms CROWLE — It would be probably a great recommendation that some of the people that are teaching the teachers need to go back into the classroom every so often. Someone I admire quite immensely who has been in administration in the department of education has done just that, and they have taken some time off from their administrative role and gone back into a classroom to get a feel for what really is happening. I do not know whether it could be made compulsory, but it certainly would be highly recommended for teacher trainers to go back and then they get a better measure of whether they are teaching the right stuff.

Ms ECKSTEIN — But it is the exception rather than the rule?

Ms McHARDY — Yes, definitely. I think in the feedback evaluation from the students themselves, there should be question on there about their own — —

Ms CROWLE — We would really like to see some tracking of students 12 months down the track: what was it that you found valuable in the course? What did you find after 12 months of teaching that you would have liked to have known before you entered a classroom?

Ms McHARDY — Where were the weaknesses in that course?

The CHAIR — So you would see the employer having a more active role?

Ms McHARDY — Definitely. It is difficult for us being in an external organisation, not knowing what happens in the faculties of education.

The CHAIR — Of course. Any there are more questions? Thank you very much. We appreciate your time and the effort that parents around the country put into schools and making the education system better. I dare say we will see you in future inquiries, if not to have more discussions about this particular topic.

Committee adjourned.