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What Happened to the National Review of Teacher Education?

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Conclusion

While this paper has attempted to highlight the continuing impact of amalgamation on one tertiary institution, it needs to be stressed that amalgamation has not all or even primarily been a negative process. Indeed there is little doubt that in the Australian political climate small tertiary institutions are exceedingly vulnerable and the creation of a large, multi-purpose, multi-campus institution like W.A.C.A.E. opens up enormous potential for growth and development. This can be seen in the development of the many new strong academic programs successfully accredited, in the increasing qualification level of academic staff, in the diversity of applied research engaged in, in the high profile the College has taken in providing a wide variety of services to the community all over the state, and in the stature the College is developing as W.A.'s fourth tertiary institution. Given the state government's change of the Western Australian Institute of Technology to the Curtin University of Technology, it is likely that W.A.C.A.E. will become the major provider of C.A.E. sector education in Western Australia, a highly significant role and one which the College is arguably better able to take on as the large, diverse amalgamated institution it has become.

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WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NATIONAL REVIEW OF TEACHER EDUCATION?

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Introduction

Inquiries and reviews of teacher education have occurred with remarkable regularity in Australia over recent years. What is also remarkable about these often major and expensive enterprises is how regularly their recommendations have been deflected or ignored.

We are all familiar with the political and bureaucratic strategy of using inquiries or evaluations to give the impression of serious intent or to delay positive action. But, after so many inquiries making similar recommendations with so little effect, the time has come to consider whether the reasons for inaction may not lie elsewhere. It may be that little happens because the task of implementing reform proposals is not one's final responsibility. The buck stops nowhere in particular. Action based on recommendations typical of these reviews has required commitment from the Commonwealth Minister for Education and a co-ordinated response from federal agencies, such as the Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC), and state-level employing authorities and teacher unions. One reason why such action has not taken place is because there is no national body which brings such parties together with the responsibility for co-ordinating policy and planning with respect to teacher education. This deficiency is particularly apparent when teacher education is regarded, as all the recent enquiries have argued it should be, as a continuum embracing both pre- and in-service education. There is also a pressing need for co-ordinating authorities at the state-level which could bring employing authorities, teacher organizations and tertiary institutions together over matters concerned with professional development across this continuum.

All states, except Tasmania, have conducted major inquiries into teacher education since 1978. *The National Inquiry into Teacher Education* (1980) was one of the most comprehensive (and expensive) investigations into teacher education ever conducted in Australia. Except for Queensland, which has a powerful statutory authority, the Board of Teacher Education, the recommendations of these inquiries have led to few changes in teacher education policy or practice. Following the National Inquiry in Teacher Education (NITE), the Commonwealth Minister of Education passed the responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the report, which he had initiated, to state employing authorities and individual tertiary institutions. CTEC, representative of a wide range of interests other than

teacher education, also had alternative priorities in the early 1980's. The demand for new recruits into teaching was declining, thereby creating room for expanding new programs in areas such as business studies and technology. As there were no specified additional funds forthcoming from the Commonwealth Government, CTEC rejected those recommendations of the NITE report which had major funding implications for the CTEC (e.g. four years of initial training), and also advised that the responsibility for implementing the NITE report's other major recommendations (e.g. one term of study leave every seven years for teachers) rested with the employing authorities. And so the buck kept passing. Hindsight gives us the benefit of seeing that the NITE report gave too much attention to detailed recommendations on almost every conceivable aspect of teacher education and not enough attention to ensuring the establishment of decision-making structures at Commonwealth and system levels with the on-going authority and responsibility of working toward the implementation of its recommendations. Establishing such structures became a high priority for the National Review of Teacher Education.

The National Review of Teacher Education

The latest in this line of inquiries, the National Review of Teacher Education, has been in the final stages of preparation for nearly eighteen months. (An *Interim Report on the Review of Teacher Education* appeared in February 1985.) One feature which distinguished this Review from earlier inquiries was that it was to be a joint undertaking of the CSC and the CTEC, a move designed to overcome some of the deficiencies mentioned earlier.

The origins of the National Review go back to July 1983 when the new Labor Government Minister for Education included in her Guidelines a request for a joint review of the Commonwealth's roles and responsibilities in teacher education in the following terms:

Professional development currently is supported through the Schools Commission's program, and the very substantial allocations made by the Commonwealth for teacher education through the Tertiary Education Commission. Primary responsibility for the general support of the professional development of teachers rests with employing authorities and the profession itself. The Commonwealth's support in this area should in general be in pursuit of specific national objectives. The Government believes that insufficient attention has been given in recent years to defining and co-ordinating the relative roles and funding responsibilities of these various parties in professional development.

Accordingly, it proposes that the Schools Commission and the Tertiary Education Commission should undertake a joint review of these matters and report to the Government in 1984. (p.4)

These were ominous guidelines for those who worked with State and Regional In-Service Education Committees whose job it had been to meet the strong demand for courses and school-focused development activities arising from locally identified needs, rather than 'national objectives'. The question 'Who should pay, and for what, in the area of professional development?' had been raised in no uncertain terms. The guidelines, in part, reflected pressure that had been placed on the Department of Education and Youth Affairs for some time to justify why the Commonwealth Government should be subsidizing professional development costs for teachers at all. In fact the CSC had already been forced to respond to this constant pressure over recent years, reducing the Professional Development Program by 60% since 1976 to an inadequate \$11m in 1984.

Not only was the Commonwealth pointing out that the CSC's Professional Development Program should serve national objectives: it was also indicating that higher degree and post-graduate diploma courses funded through CTEC represented a major Commonwealth contribution to the professional development of teachers and an investment which might also be more closely geared to national objectives.

The 1983 guidelines set out the essential features of the brief for the Review. The Tertiary Education Commission and the Schools Commission were asked to consult and prepare co-ordinated advice by the end of 1984 on the direction, effectiveness and co-ordination of Commonwealth policies on the allocation of resources for improved pre-service and in-service teacher education, particularly as it related to the Government's objectives in education. (p.13)

The Process of the Review

The intended level of collaboration between the two Commissions was not reflected in the conduct of the Review as fully as it might have been during 1984. The two Commissions followed separate paths mainly, in planning their studies, gathering their data and preparing their advice during the 1984 period of the Review. The CSC appointed an external review team (Frank Coulter from Canberra CAE and Lawrence Ingvarson from Monash) and set up its own steering committee to which its external review team reported. The CTEC did not commission an external team to carry out its part of the responsibilities for the Review, relying instead on an internal officer who was allocated the task.

In effect, the brief for the Review was divided between the two Commissions, with the Coulter and Ingvarson team taking on those tasks which related mainly to non-award in-service education for the CSC, and the CTEC officer those which related to pre-service education and post-experience award courses in tertiary institutions. A small joint CSC and CTEC

co-ordinating committee met occasionally during 1984 while the Review was in progress to share draft material and matters concerned with the presentation of the joint report.

Coulter and Ingvarson produced a detailed and comprehensive analysis for the CSC concerning the resources, strategies and co-ordination needed to support Commonwealth Programs and objectives for school improvement late in 1984. Their report was favourably received by the CSC and, after circulation to systems, teacher organizations and other interested parties, gained widespread acceptance of its major recommendations. CTEC undertook a survey of tertiary institution courses to examine the nature and extent of attention which was given to national objectives, such as participation and computer education, but, as yet, no report based on the data gathered has been released.

The joint CSC and CTEC co-ordinating committee produced a brief interim report in January 1985. But it was more than eighteen months later (September, 1986) before the final report of the Joint Review was presented to the Minister. There may be a lesson here for those involved in any further joint projects between the CSC and CTEC. If 'jointness' had been built into all phases of the Review from the beginning it may not have taken so long to produce a final report.

In retrospect, it is apparent that the purposes of the Review would have been better served if a single team of researchers had been used, working closely with on joint steering committee representative of the two Commissions. Given that this was the first time that the two Commissions had been asked to prepare joint advice it is perhaps understandable that there was caution on both sides. However, given the current concern about teacher education generally, it is now clear that a rare opportunity to review pre-service, induction and in-service education in terms of a co-ordinated continuum of professional development provision was lost. With increasingly crowded pre-service courses (twenty teaching weeks for post-graduate courses, including teaching rounds) and more diversified and complex in-service teaching responsibilities, pressure is mounting to formalize the links between these phases and to conceive of initial teacher education as a sequential program that extends into the first years of experience, perhaps before tenure is granted.

These pressing purposes would also have been addressed more effectively if the Review had not been tied so directly to analysing teacher education needs mainly in terms of national objectives. Teacher education courses, whether they be pre- or in-service, or whether they be provided by tertiary institutions, system authorities or in individual schools, are not in practice readily or fruitfully analysable in terms of the degree to which they serve national objectives. With such a narrow brief the Review could not give as much attention as it would have liked to such central concerns as teacher

education curricula as a whole, the actual process of learning to teach and means for promoting personal knowledge and professional development over the long-term of a teacher's career.

In the extensive report which Coulter and Ingvarson prepared for the Schools Commission, *Professional Development and the Improvement of Schooling*, as part of its contribution to the Joint Review of Teacher Education, comprehensive changes to the present arrangements for the funding and co-ordination of professional development were recommended. These included:

- the establishment at Commonwealth level of a representative joint co-ordinating committee for teacher preparation and professional development.
- the replacement of existing intersystemic Professional Development Program (PDP) Committees in the States and Territories by more powerful co-ordinating committees *within* each system employing authority, with overall responsibility for policy, co-ordination of resources and liaison with tertiary institutions.
- major changes to the basis of funding professional development designed to ensure that this responsibility would be shared between the Commonwealth and system authorities and *that funding would be a stable proportion of recurrent expenditure*. The existing PDP would continue to support Commonwealth priorities augmented by funding elements for professional development from specific purpose programs; and the Commonwealth would accept a responsibility to support employing authorities in improving the *general* quality of teaching by an allocation from an additional \$18m which had been made available for 'betterment' through the General Recurrent Grant, negotiated through resource agreements system authorities and the Commonwealth.
- the allocation of the bulk of these additional funds, together with contributions from system authorities, to schools as discretionary resources to enhance their capacity to plan their own long-term policies for professional development based on their own curriculum evaluations and State *and* Commonwealth priorities.
- measures to enable tertiary institutions to respond more flexibly to teacher development needs; including shorter post-graduate courses, and formal recognition for staff involvement in non-award courses and activities such as school-focused in-service education and action research projects.

The report strongly affirmed the vital importance of professional development in any plans for improving the quality of education in Australia and the essential role which the Commonwealth had to continue to play

in its funding. The primary purpose of the report was to set out arrangements which would stimulate and support co-ordinated planning for professional development and school improvement at school, system and Commonwealth levels and to gain acceptance of the view that Commonwealth and system rhetoric about quality in education could only be taken seriously if it was accompanied by concrete policies for enhancing the quality of professional development opportunities for teachers.

CTEC also completed a report late in 1984 for the review called *Issues for Action: Some Preliminary Views on the Improvement of Teacher Education*. Both reports were circulated widely for comment early in 1985. However, before these broader issues had been considered fully in the light of responses from system authorities, teacher and parent organizations and tertiary institutions, CTEC pressed for a brief interim report to be presented to the Minister focusing on small number of recommendations which it was confident the Government could support and implement readily. CSC representatives expressed concern that recommendations addressing short term issues to achieve quick outcomes might be in conflict with recommendations in the final report supporting long-term collaborative planning between interested parties to establish mutual understanding and commitment to developing new structures for co-ordination teacher education. In the event, a brief *Joint Interim Report on the Review of Teacher Education* was presented to the Minister for Education in January 1985 recommending that a Joint-Committee on Teacher Education be established 'as an essential element in future planning and co-ordination of teacher development activities'. The government agreed to this proposal, but the joint committee which has been set up consists only of two full-time commissioners, one from the CSC, and one from CTEC, an arrangement which the two Commissioners wish to maintain. In contrast, the Coulter and Ingvarson report to the CSC had recommended that if such a committee were established, it should also be representative of State and Territory system authorities, national teacher and parent organizations, and tertiary institutions.

The Joint Committee has had the task of completing the final report and in the meantime has also acted upon recommendations for three special CTEC proposed projects contained in the Interim Report and endorsed by the Government. One is a pilot program of intensive in-service training for principals and staff in a group of schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged students in the Salisbury/Elizabeth district of South Australia. Another is a program of in-service education for primary and junior secondary teachers of mathematics and science to improve girls' opportunities in these subjects. The Equal Opportunity Unit of the Victorian Education Department is conducting this project. The third special project is a proposal for programs to prepare Aboriginal teachers to teach in

traditionally oriented aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is recommended that developmental funds to establish the latter programs be provided through the CTEC to selected tertiary institutions.

These special projects herald a radical departure from previous practice. In the past, CTEC rarely has used special purpose grants to foster particular in-service programs from tertiary institutions. The Interim Report points out that in preparing the final report for the review, the Joint Committee 'will be examining the scope for, and funding implications of, making greater use of the capacity of higher education institutions to provide in-service teacher education programs which lie outside existing course provision' (p.7). It may be a matter of some concern if this means that tertiary institutions have to become involved in submitting proposals for categorical grants in the way that schools have been with some of the special purpose programs of the CSC since 1974.

The January 1985 Interim Report indicated that the final report of the Review of Teacher Education would be presented in April 1985. However, it was not until February 1986 that a draft of the Final Report was completed for internal comment by the two commissions. And it was not until September 1986 that it was finally presented to the Minister.

There are some understandable reasons for the delay, but they only go part of the way to explaining the length of time it has taken to present the final report. The Coulter and Ingvarson report met with some mild opposition to its proposals for dropping the existing intersystemic form of the Professional Development Program and for setting aside a proportion of the general recurrent grant for professional development. But this opposition can not be considered significant enough to explain the delay. The CSC did run into some problems itself in attempting to implement its proposals for negotiated resource agreements with the States, but these are being overcome. Early in 1985 attention shifted from the Review to the report of the Quality of Education Review Committee (QUERC), and then returned when it was found that QUERC, although placing a heavy emphasis on the importance of in-service education, was not specific about how it should be funded and co-ordinated. These issues had in fact been dealt with in detail in the Coulter and Ingvarson report.

After the QUERC scare, the CSC concentrated on completing *Quality and Equality* (Nov. 1985) as quickly as possible, a report setting out the Schools Commission's own view on the future of its Special Purpose Programs. This report, it should be pointed out, accepted, in general terms, all the recommendations of the Coulter and Ingvarson report. CTEC's reason for the delay was that the Review had to take account of a number of competing tasks, including other major reporting commitments and work arising from various Government policy initiatives.

The Present Situation

At the time of writing this paper (October, 1986) there is some doubt about whether the *Joint Report of the National Review of Teacher Education* will see the light of day. Given the length of time it has taken to complete the final report it will not be surprising if some of its major recommendations have been overtaken by other events. Not the least of these will be the fact that in her *Guidelines to the Commonwealth Schools Commission for 1987* the Commonwealth Minister for Education made the following statement.

The Commonwealth Schools Commission has for over a decade helped finance the professional development of teachers has been accepted as an integral part of effective teaching in our schools and as a basic element in other specific purpose programs. The Government has accordingly decided to terminate its specific program for professional development, while taking steps progressively to ensure that a professional development component is integrated into other specific purpose programs. (p. 3)

There may be some positive outcomes from this abdication of Commonwealth responsibility. Some employing authorities, such as the Ministry of Education in Victoria, have started to give serious attention to their own policies for professional development in terms of system level plans for curriculum change and school improvement. These plans will be based, in part, on a Commonwealth/State Resource Agreement about the expenditure of 'betterment' money from the General Recurrent Grant. However, the decision to tie professional development components to specific purpose programs will not make it easier for employing authorities to improve system-level planning and co-ordination of resources for professional development.

What happened to the National Review of Teacher Education is much the same as what happened to all the previous inquiries. Commitment to reform appeared to be lacking, despite Commonwealth rhetoric about the quality of education. No particular agency or authority exists as yet to take up the on-going responsibility for planning how the recommendations in the Review might be implemented even if it is released. It is to be hoped that the proposed policy initiative in professional development announced recently by the Schools Commission (*Commonwealth Programs and Policy Development for Schools: A Report*) will deal with this issue.

We should not be surprised if another teacher education inquiry or review is set up in the near future – just in case we started to get the feeling that there is not a serious Government commitment to doing something about teacher education.

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