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END-ON INNOVATION: A SCHOOL BASED APPROACH TO SECONDARY TEACHER EDUCATION

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One year 'end-on' teacher education programs following a degree have long been a common approach to initial preparation of teachers, particularly secondary teachers. These programs have also been the subject of consistent criticism. They have been variously described as too brief, too theoretical, overcrowded with too many topics, superficial, short on school practice. Major reviews such as the *Report of the National Inquiry into Teacher Education* (Department of Education 1980) and the *Discipline Review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science* (DEET 1989) have recommended increasing both the length of the programs and their emphasis on preparation for classroom practice.

If one year 'end-on' programs continue to be used for initial teacher preparation how can they be made more effective? Consideration of this problem has given rise to the development of an innovative program in the Faculty of Education (Salisbury Campus) of the University of South Australia as one positive response to the problem. So far it has been offered in 1992 and 1993.

This article describes the development of the program, the key concepts on which it is based, its implementation and evaluation in 1992, and modifications subsequently made in 1993. The article then discusses problems related to funding and issues to be taken into account in adopting or adapting the program for wider use.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM

For many years the Salisbury campus had offered a four year concurrent Bachelor of Education (Secondary Arts). The program was disestablished on the grounds that the cost of a four year integrated course was no longer justified to meet the needs of schools.

Given the existence of substantial expertise in teacher education at the Salisbury campus the opportunity was taken to develop a one year 'end-on' program. There were a number of factors which influenced the development of the program.

First, as there was no existing one year program it was possible to design a program without having to deal with entrenched practices and perceptions.

Second, a number of reports on teaching and teacher education such as those already mentioned and also *Teacher Education in Australia* (Australian Education Council Working party 1990) and *Australia's Teachers: An Agenda for the Next Decade* (National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1990) had expressed the need for innovation in initial teacher education preparation. It was felt that a new program could incorporate some of the proposed innovations. Those adopted are identified in the key concepts which appear below.

Third, existing good relationships between the university, the Salisbury East High School, which shares the same campus as the university, and other neighbouring secondary schools provided a firm basis for potential co-operation.

Fourth, a group of university staff who were committed to, and experienced in various forms of partnership, internship and mentorship were available to develop and take part in the proposed program.

Planning commenced in mid 1990 and involved university staff, representatives of the South Australian Education Department, local school principals or their representatives and practising teachers. The program was accredited by the university late in 1991.

KEY CONCEPTS

The following were identified as key concepts in the development of the program:

- The program was to be a genuine *partnership* between the university, participating schools and the Education Department. The partners would provide, in varying degrees, staff, facilities, time and other resources to the project.

- Practising teachers would be selected, on appropriate criteria, and used as mentors in each of the four participating schools (Salisbury East High School, Salisbury High, Paralowie R-12 School, and Thomas More Catholic College) and would be expected to give about 0.3 of their time to the program. The funding of the mentors was mainly by the Education Department with some funds provided by the university.

- Students would be *interns* in that the majority of their time would be spent in the participating schools with a home base at Salisbury East High School in an area specifically set aside for their use. Their participation would not only be in the classroom but in other teacher-related tasks.

- The program would emphasise *theory/practice links* throughout using the school workplace as the integrating point of the practical, theoretical and professional aspects of the course.

- The dominant mode of teaching and learning would focus on *student inquiry and reflection*.

IMPLEMENTATION 1992

Because the accreditation of the program occurred late in 1991 the new program was not widely known and the pool of applicants was relatively small. Potential interns were contacted by the course co-ordinator to ensure that they were aware of the nature of the course and the specific requirements which they would be required to meet.

The program was 36 weeks in length. It included two camps at the beginning of the year, nine weeks of block teaching practice (five in the first semester and four in the second), and compulsory attendance by interns four days a week throughout the rest of the program. Of these four days, interns normally spent two at the university campus and two in a participating school. Interns spent a total of 99 days working with school students or in schools.

Twenty one interns were admitted to the program, 15 females and 6 males. The main teaching areas of the interns were in the social sciences and English. Other areas included business, mathematics and languages.

Three university staff each gave about 0.7 of their effort to the program providing expertise in

language and learning, teaching and curriculum and methodology in social sciences and English. The staff worked closely with the interns in a counselling and supportive role. They also liaised with the participating schools.

There were five mentors, two at Salisbury East High School and one at each of the other participating schools. The mentors were chosen on the basis of their ability to:

- model exemplary teaching;
- develop and maintain professional credibility with their fellow staff and interns;
- articulate the profession of teaching in relation to specific contexts;
- teach and counsel interns;
- assist in the professional placement of interns and their matching with co-operating teachers and other professionals.

It is evident that there was a very substantial staff input for a small number of students. This is an important issue which will be returned to later in this article.

STRUCTURE OF THE 1992 PROGRAM

Semester 1

The program started in 1992 with two weeks of participation in school camps, one for Year 8 students and one for Year 12 students. This gave the interns an opportunity to encounter students in a less formal setting and provided an initial bonding of the intern group. This was followed by a one week intensive educational technology workshop before interns commenced a ten week study/practice period.

During the ten week period Mondays were spent in three study areas: Studies in Education, Teaching and Curriculum, and Language and Learning. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays interns were in one or other of the participating schools from 8.30 a.m. to 3.45 p.m. undertaking a variety of activities structured by the mentors and related, where possible, to the Monday sessions. On Thursdays interns had time for private study. Friday was another full day of activity, reflecting on the week and undertaking further study and discussion in selected areas related to the teaching profession.

The first semester concluded with a five week teaching block in one of the four participating schools.

By the end of the first semester interns were required to have identified a project of their choice which they would undertake during the second semester for presentation and assessment.

Semester 2

The pattern of activities in the first five weeks of the second semester was similar to that in the ten week period in the first semester. Themes introduced on Mondays dealt with the historical and policy contexts in which schools operate. Further work was also undertaken in curriculum and each intern was asked to pair with another intern to study a major school policy and present a report on it later in the semester.

The time in schools was divided between Salisbury East High School where interns examined the history and resource base of that school, and the schools in which interns would undertake their second teaching block. Most interns undertook this block in a school other than one of the four participating schools in order to gain wider experience. For three weeks prior to the teaching block they spent two days a week at their chosen school preparing for classroom teaching and becoming familiar with the context and orientation of the particular school, its staff and students.

Thursday continued to be a day for private study and reflection. Friday activities were related to understanding the South Australian Certificate of Education, further work on curriculum and discussions on the teaching profession, the interns independent research topics and planning for the teaching block.

This five week period was followed by a four week teaching block.

The remainder of the year was spent on a variety of tasks including time in the participating schools to look at such matters as school staffing, budgeting, final student assessment and examination arrangements. The most demanding and significant task in this period was the organisation and conduct, by the interns, of 'University High School'. This was a one week school held on the university campus for 120 year 9 and 10 students, drawn from the participating schools. It was the final practical experience and provided the interns with the opportunity to be

involved with a wide range of processes related to running a school.

REVIEW OF 1992 PROGRAM

A formative evaluation of the program was undertaken throughout the year assisted by a grant from the Projects of National Significance Program.

The interns agreed that the program was demanding in time and energy but were very positive about its value in preparing them for classroom teaching. The comment, "rather heavy, but has prepared us for the rigours of being a full time teacher," was typical of the positive comments about the internship approach.

The university staff had a strong investment in getting the program off to a successful start. Towards the end of the year one wrote, "... this way of delivering is very time consuming and because of the small group intensive approach somewhat emotionally draining."

The mentors were generally satisfied with the program and their involvement in it, although the two mentors from Salisbury East High School felt they could contribute more on matters such as classroom management and teaching strategies. One school principal, commenting on the partnership between the university and the school in this internship model, said "we 'own' this program and these students in a way we don't own other programs or students."

Given the rapid introduction of the program there were a number of minor 'teething problems' caused by some decisions having to be made without time for adequate consultation, and some communication and briefing problems. These were matters not difficult to rectify. The evaluation, however, brought into focus a number of substantive matters which it was believed required attention for 1993.

Location

"You are where you park your car," wrote one mentor. Apart from the teaching blocks, intern time was divided between the university campus (two days) and the participating schools (two days). Interns commented that they felt they were not really university students nor entirely part of the schools; it was like "shifting your tent" almost on a daily basis. It was proposed for 1993 to move the whole program out of the university campus and use the Salisbury East High home base as the

key location for lectures, discussions, study and demonstration lessons. The interns would be expected to mix more with the school staff in the staff room for lunch and other breaks.

The three other participating schools would continue to be involved in much the same ways as in 1992.

Theory/Practice

While the interns were generally satisfied with the link between theory and practice the university staff considered by the end of the first semester that they would need to review the sequence of the program for future years. In particular they were aware that the theory/practice link may, in some cases, be better achieved by letting theory arise out of questions asked in practice rather than attempting to move from theoretical considerations to implications for practice.

Camps

Rather than attend two camps it was proposed for 1993 that the interns attend one camp only (Year 8) and then follow up with a continuing care relationship with the Year 8 students.

Earlier Opportunity to Teach

Interns considered that they needed more methodology earlier and that they would appreciate an earlier opportunity to teach. Consequently, it was proposed for 1993 that interns begin individual and small group teaching very early in the year. In addition, the first teaching block was to be moved forward so that it could be followed by debriefing activities prior to the first semester break.

Timing of Assessment Tasks

The experience of the time and effort involved in planning for University High School proved to be very demanding and coincided with the completion of important assessment tasks. To balance the load it was proposed to shift some of the assignment work to an earlier time in the year.

Non-Required Attendance Day

It was proposed that the four full days of attendance continue but that the non-required attendance day be Friday, not Thursday as was the case in 1992. This would provide both better continuity during the week, including intern participation in the Thursday pastoral care

sessions at Salisbury East High School, and a long weekend for individual study and recuperation.

University High School

The way the leadership team was determined from among the interns would be reviewed for 1993. In 1992 interns applied for the three positions of Principal, and two Deputy Principals (Liaison and Curriculum). The University program staff interviewed the applicants and made the appointments. The shift from a collegial group of interns to a hierarchical model caused some problems in relationships and participation.

Reflection

Interns kept personal journals as an aid to reflection. This worked well for the most part and will be continued with workshops on modes of reflection introduced early in the year.

Team Meetings

University staff and mentors agreed that they needed to meet more frequently in the future in order to develop their common understanding of the course and keep constantly under review ways of relating theory and practice.

THE 1993 PROGRAM

Twenty two interns were enrolled in the program, 16 females and 6 males. Of these, six were in environmental studies and the remainder mainly in social science and English.

There were some staff changes. However, there was sufficient continuity to maintain the basic direction of the program. This was assisted by team meetings early in the year and on a more regular basis throughout the year.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGES PROPOSED

Location

The decision to locate the program at Salisbury East High home base proved to be very successful. The interns settled in quickly and there was considerable interaction between them and the school staff to the advantage of both. They identified with the school, "felt like teachers", and became familiar with the details of school organisation and activities.

Theory/Practice

Due to interruptions to the contribution of the two key university staff, it was necessary to use other university staff who were not quite so familiar with the particular theory/practice emphases of the program. Some improvement in the theory/practice link was achieved but this is an area which needs further attention.

Camps

As proposed, one camp was attended and followed by participation in pastoral care responsibilities. Interns found the pastoral care opportunity valuable but dependent on the willingness of the class teacher to have interns participate.

University High School

The interns chose not to have a hierarchical leadership team. In consultation with the interns the course team selected three to act as a management team for the group. As in 1992 all the interns put a great deal of time and energy into organising and carrying through the week which was attended by 160 students from the local schools and from one country school.

The other implemented changes concerning earlier introduction to teaching, Friday as the non-required day, and some adjustment of assessment load over the year were seen by the course team as an improvement over the 1992 program.

Mentor Participation

In addition to the tasks undertaken in 1992, the mentors took part in the supervision of interns during their second teaching round, and the two Salisbury East High School mentors taught the interns in the areas of basic classroom management and teaching strategies.

THE PROBLEM OF FUNDING

The program has now been in operation for two years. Both cohorts of students have been enthusiastic about its value for them as an introduction to teaching and the teaching profession.

The key concepts described earlier are seen as critical to the success of this approach to initial teacher preparation. The program is, however, labour intensive for an intern number of about 20. In 1992 the university staff input was

approximately 2.1 (3 x 0.7). In 1993 this reduced to about 1.5 (3 x 0.5) and is probably sustainable. In addition to this the input of mentors must be added. This is approximately 1.5 (5x0.3). The long term funding of the mentors remains an unresolved issue.

The contribution made by the South Australian Education Department has been fundamental to the development and success of the program. Given the tightness of funding this may not be able to be sustained. There may be trade-offs related to the provision by the university of in-service education or other services in return for the provision of mentors. Mentors may possibly be drawn from Advanced Skills Teachers depending on the provisions related to the appointment and responsibilities of such teachers. The university itself cannot make very much direct contribution to mentor support.

Given the crucial nature of the partnership between the university and schools in providing a joint course team the long term viability of the innovation is in doubt unless the issue of time release for mentors is resolved.

Raising the number of interns is no solution. Due to the consistent presence of interns in the schools there is a limit to the number that any school can take. There is also a limit to the number of interns a single mentor can manage.

WIDER USE OF THIS APPROACH

Any wider use of this internship model, variations on it, or other programs endeavouring to implement a co-operative model employing the key concepts need to consider the following:

- The program must be a genuine partnership between the university and the schools requiring a joint course team and the development of a common view about the program.
- There must be agreed criteria for the selection and appointment of mentors, a clear definition of their role, and regular meetings with the university staff members of the course team throughout the program.
- The workplace is the integrating focus for theory and practice and the school is the prime location for the program for both interns and staff.

- Intending interns need to be aware of the level of commitment in time and effort they will need to make to the program.
- The logistics in terms of ratio of interns to school, staff to interns, need to be carefully considered.
- The 'University High School' component, while not essential, has proved to be of such great value that the inclusion of something akin to it should be considered.
- Ways of establishing the program on a cost basis that the partners will accept and can sustain need to be determined.

The next phase in the assessment of the quality of this program will require tracking the graduates to determine both their employment rate and their subsequent reflection on their professional preparation.

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