

January 1980

Work Experience and Trainee Teachers

Roger B. King
Claremont Teachers College

Bruce T. Haynes
Claremont Teachers College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

King, R. B., & Haynes, B. T. (1980). Work Experience and Trainee Teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 5(1).

<https://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.1980v5n1.4>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol5/iss1/4>

WORK EXPERIENCE AND TRAINEE TEACHERS

*by Roger B. King and Bruce T. Haynes
Claremont Teachers College*

An educational policy problem currently receiving some scrutiny is the advisability of school teachers being persons with experience of work and life situations outside of educational institutions (See Williams, 1979, Vol. 1, p.99 and The Schools Commission, 1979). Proposals on this matter include enrolment of more mature age students in teacher training; requiring teacher trainee students to have significant work experience prior to or during their period of training; providing teachers with seminars and other interactive opportunities for improving their knowledge of industry, the world of work and the wider society; and providing opportunities for secondment of teachers to industrial organisations for significant periods.

Various rationales are offered in support of such proposals. The Schools Commission discussion paper suggests that mature age students will have a broader perspective on life and this will result in a "more effective teaching force" (p. 12); that work experience will place trainee teachers in a better position to make their career choice and will provide them with a better understanding of pupils' social environment (p. 15); and that industrial contact and experience will keep practising teachers abreast of changing technological and vocational requirements and will result in them returning to teaching with new enthusiasm (p.31).

Another rationale alluded to in the Williams Report is the argument that problems of youth employment are partly due to unrealistic expectations and negative attitudes of school leavers; that such expectations and attitudes are developed in schools; that this is due to the teachers' lack of experience outside of educational institutions; that teachers and present trainee teachers do lack such experience; and thus teachers and trainee teachers should be required to have such experience (I will call this rationale the Effects on Youth Employment rationale). One suspects that the support of this rationale by the ACTU and the Employer representatives are based on different interpretations, with the ACTU concerned that people should understand the perspective and attitudes of the workers and the Employers concerned that people should understand free enterprise and not see "profit" as a dirty word.

This paper is concerned with this Effects on Youth Employment rationale as it applies to the proposal to require trainee teachers to have some significant work experience. The paper is shaped by two questions:

1. To what extent do present teacher trainee students already have significant work experience?
2. What are the students' perceptions of the possible benefits of such experience?

If a major proportion of such students already has significant work experience then it will not be lack of teacher work experience that leads to employment problems for their pupils. In addition, the proposals on work experience for trainee teacher students assume different dimensions depending on whether only a few such students already have such experience or whether a major proportion does. It is one thing to encourage a few to do something it is another to coerce the last 50% to do it. Thus, we need an answer to the first question.

The second question is of some importance because of the emphasis on acquisition of experience in work contexts. If one is attempting to promote some specific structured learning, such as learning to type or learning names of components, the highly structured nature of the task minimizes the influence of the student's perceptions of the activity. However, the acquisition of experience in work contexts is not a highly structured task. What a person gets from such contexts will depend on the structure that person imposes on the situation. That in turn depends on their perceptions of their activities. If one perceives a service job as just a way of earning money one will acquire a different experience than one would if one saw that job as a way of understanding people from different backgrounds or as a testing out of a possible career choice. Thus a proposal of work experience for trainee teacher students is unlikely to fulfil its rationale if the students' perceptions of their activities under such a proposal, particularly their perception of the point of the proposal, differs notably from the rationale for the proposal. Thus, an effort is made here to learn about student perceptions or proposed work experience activities.

In an attempt to find the answers to these two questions a survey was conducted of the Diploma of Teaching students (3 year training in primary teaching) at Claremont Teachers College in October, 1979.¹ The results are limited to one group of trainee teacher students at one college at one time. Nevertheless such results should give some indication of the appropriate responses to the two questions.

The questionnaire was distributed and completed during lecture periods in the week commencing October 22. Some 367 completed forms were returned representing 80% of the enrolled Dip. Teaching students (it is difficult to determine the number of students actually undertaking units at any particular time but 461 students were still officially enrolled at that time). It should be noted that the response rate among third year students was over 90% compared to some 70% (approx.) in first and second years.

Three types of information were sought in the questionnaire. Firstly, information on general student characteristics, such as age, sex, enrolment type and year of enrolment, was requested. Secondly, information on the student's work history was sought. This information covered such matters as whether the student had had a break between school and college, the character of their activities in any such break, the extent of their experience in private enterprise and the extent and character of their work activities while at college. Thirdly, an attempt was made to ascertain

¹ Maureen Chandler did the coding and Claremont Teachers College provided the funds.

student views on the desirability of a required work experience break between school and college and on their ability to prepare school pupils for the world of work. The data was analysed using SPSS frequency and cross tabulation procedures. The probability level accepted for significance of the chi-square results was 0.05.

RESULTS

(a) Student Characteristics

Nearly all of the students in the sample were full-time students (97%) and nearly three-quarters (74%) were female. What was somewhat surprising was the high proportion of older students. Of the sample 49% were under 21, 26% were between 21 and 25, and 25% were over 25. Thus, in fact, the majority of students (51%) were 21 or over. This proportion might be compared with the Mount Lawley Diploma of Teaching course where 25% of the students were over 21 (Haines and Collins, 1978).

Given the small number of part-time students the enrolment category was not utilised to further analysis. The other characteristics were investigated to determine any significant relationships but only the age by year interaction was significant. One might note, though, that the proportion of males declined from the senior year (31% in third year, 24% in second year and 21% in first year) and that some 49% of the females were in the 18-20 age group (compared to 34% of males).

One might expect some relationship between later years of the course and age but the degree of relationship among students already over the standard 18-20 age range suggests that other factors are operating.

TABLE 1
Age by Year Level

Age	Year Level			
	First	Second	Third	
<18	10	0	0	10
18-20	68	70	31	169
21-25	17	32	47	96
> 25	23	39	30	92
	118	141	108	367

$$K^2 = 53.47, 6 \text{ d.f. } p < 0.001$$

One factor here could be a higher retention rate for mature-age students. However, the most likely account is that there have been shifts in the percentage of mature-age students in initial enrolments. Prior to 1974 few mature-age students enrolled in Dip. Teaching courses. However, with the abolition of fees, the reduction in bonding practices, a general economic downturn, greater numbers of married females looking for work and positive enrolment policies, the proportion of mature-age students has risen. At Claremont the introduction of mid-year enrolments in 1974 also provided greater entry opportunities for mature-age students (it has continued to be the case that mature-age students form a high percentage of mid-year enrolments). The decline in the proportions of mature-age students towards first year suggests that there was a bulge of available mature-age candidates which may now be past.

(b) *Work Experience*

The students at Claremont generally have experience of employment. In response to the question of whether they have ever held a job 304 (83%) say that they have while only 61 (17%) have never held a job. Of the 61, some 50 were in the 18-20 year old range and age was clearly related to experience here. There was no significant difference between males and females in regard to having held a job.

In regard to the transition from school to Claremont Teachers College one notes that 146 (40%) came direct from school to college. If one adds in the 32 (9%) students who went direct from school to other study and then direct to Claremont one has 49% of students with no experience break between school and Claremont. The 51% who had some experience break generally had a break of 1 year or more (43% of the total).

TABLE 2
Experience Break Between School & College

Break	Male	Female	No.	%
Direct school/college	29	117	146	40
Direct school/other study college	6	26	32	9
Break less than 1 year	7	9	16	4
Break more than 1 year	49	110	159	43
Other	3	11	14	4
	<u>94</u>	<u>273</u>	<u>367</u>	

Males are significantly more likely to have had a break than females ($K^2 = 6.42, p < 0.05$) with 63% of males having had some experience break compared to 48% of females. As one would expect there are significant relationships between student age and whether they had an experience break between school and Claremont Teachers College. Some 86% of

the students who were less than 21 years of age had no experience break compared to 13% for students 21 or over.

There were notable differences between the extent to which first, second and third year students had come direct from schools. Some 50% of first years, 38% of second years and 31% of third years came direct from school.

TABLE 3
Break by Year Level

Break	Year Level			No.
	First	Second	Third	
Direct school/college	59	53	33	146
Direct school/other study college	6	10	16	32
Break less than 1 year	6	6	4	16
Break more than 1 year	43	67	49	159
Other	4	4	6	14
	<u>118</u>	<u>141</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>367</u>

$$K^2 = 15.79 \quad 8 \text{ d.f. } p < 0.05$$

The 189 students who had an experience break undertook a variety of activities during that period with the highest proportion, 47%, working in private enterprise.

TABLE 4
Activities During Break

Break Activities	Male	Female	No.	%
Public service job	11	28	39	21
Private enterprise job	36	53	89	47
Self-employed	3	2	5	3
Military service	2	1	3	2
Travelling	3	9	12	6
Home duties	0	22	22	12
Unemployment	0	4	4	2
Other	0	2	2	1
Unclassifiable	5	8	13	7
	<u>60</u>	<u>129</u>	<u>189</u>	

The students were asked whether they had ever worked for a private employer or been self-employed for a continuous period of 6 months. Some 175 students (51%) said yes and 168 (49%) said that they had not. Males, older students, students in later years and students with a break experience were more likely to have had such private employment than were other students. Particularly interesting in light of the type of jobs undertaken is the significant difference by sex.

TABLE 5
Extended Private Employment By Sex

	Male	Female	No.	%
Extended private employment	54	121	175	51
No extended private employment	36	132	168	49
	<u>90</u>	<u>253</u>	<u>343</u>	

$$\chi^2 = 3.94 \quad 1 \text{ d.f.} \quad p < 0.05$$

The students were asked to specify the type of job performed during such extended private employment and the following responses were received from those who had such experience.

TABLE 6
Job Type in Extended Private Employment by Sex

Job Type	Sex		Total	%
	Males	Females		
Manual labour	16	2	18	11
Skilled trade	5	7	12	7
Clerical work	8	45	53	31
Sales	10	32	42	25
Transport	6	0	6	4
Service	2	18	20	12
Entertainment	2	2	4	2
Health, education or social service	1	8	9	5
Unclassifiable	3	4	7	4
	<u>53</u>	<u>118</u>	<u>171</u>	

The majority of those students who did have extended private employment were in clerical or sales work (56%). They were primarily female

students. There was not much difference in job type by age here though 27 (51%) of the clerical jobs had been held by females who are now over 25 years of age.

While there were a number of standard job types well represented there was also a diverse range of jobs listed. This diverse range included among others:

TABLE 7
Selected Job Types During Extended Private Employment

Company director	Fruit packer
Lab assistant	Navigating Officer M.N.
Owner antique shop	Musician
Industrial Relations Officer	Prawn fishing
Plumbing & Gasfitting	Religious sister
Nanny	Roustabout
Psychiatric Nursing	Television performer
Cafe Manager	Nursing sister
Diesel mechanic	Cleaner

- A. Cartage contractor, law enforcement, building trade (over 25 years)
- B. Assistant manager (Retail), Long distance driving (heavy haulage), Control Room Operator, Miner.
- C. Confidential Secretary to Managing Director.
- D. Book-keeper, Actress, Speech & Drama Teacher.
- E. Wife and I still own a delicatessen.
- F. Governess, jillaroo, cook.

Students were asked whether they worked in the 1978-79 summer vacation given that they were enrolled at Claremont Teachers College in 1978. Some 85 students omitted any response presumably mainly due to lack of 1978 enrolment. Of those who responded 146 (52%) said that they did work during that summer vacation and 136 (48%) said that they did not.

Males were more likely to have worked in the summer vacation than females, partly because a majority (70%) of the females over 25 did not have such employment (presumably related to family support & responsibilities).

TABLE 8
Summer Vacation Work by Sex

Summer Job	Sex		No.	%
	Male	Female		
Summer job	52	94	146	52
No summer job	28	108	136	48
	<u>80</u>	<u>202</u>	<u>282</u>	

$$\chi^2 = 7.83 \quad 1 \text{ d.f.} \quad p < 0.01$$

Between 60 & 70% of males worked in the summer over all ages. But though more females in the 18-20 age group worked than did not, the proportion in that age group who worked was still only 56%.

As expected relatively few first year students responded to the question (those who did were presumably enrolled elsewhere in 1978) but there was still an interesting pattern of an increasing proportion of students working in the summer vacation as their years of enrolment increased.

TABLE 9
Summer Vacation Work by Year Level

Summer Job	Year Level			
	First	Second	Third	No.
Summer job	11	68	67	146
No summer job	26	71	39	136
	<u>37</u>	<u>139</u>	<u>106</u>	<u>282</u>

$$K^2 = 13.20 \quad p < 0.01$$

Students were asked whether they had ever held a part-time job during a semester they were enrolled at College. Some 215 (60%) of students said that they had while 141 (40%) said that they had not. There was no difference between males and females on this item and little difference by age, though there was some tendency for females over 25 to answer no (60%). The students' number of years enrolled did relate to the occurrence of part-time jobs during College study, at least partly because they had more semesters in which they could have held such jobs.

TABLE 10
Semester Part-time Job by Year Level

Part-time Job	Year Level			
	First	Second	Third	No.
Semester part-time job	48	91	76	215
No semester part-time job	59	50	32	141
	<u>107</u>	<u>141</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>356</u>

$$K^2 = 16.301 \quad 2 \text{ d.f. } p < 0.01$$

Students were also asked whether they presently (during the week of 22 October 1979) held a part-time job. Caution must be exercised in generalising this data since that week may not be typical (it was, for instance, the first week back after a 2 week teaching practice session for first & second year students).

Some 158 (44%) of students said that they held a part-time job during that week while 203 (56%) said that they did not. There was no significant

difference between males & females here. The strong tendency for females over 25 not to have a present part-time job was somewhat balanced by a majority of females (53%) in the 18-20 age group having a part-time job. This age trend was significant for females ($K^2 = 13.567$, $p < 0.01$) but not for males. Again there was a relationship between year of enrolment and part-time work with senior students more likely to presently have a part-time job. This would not be just a reflection of length of study. It would most likely reflect initial feet-finding on the part of first year students. (First years were the ones who complained about the difficulties of holding a part-time job with a heavy study workload.)

TABLE 11
Present Part-time Job by Year of Enrolment

Part-time Job	Year Level			
	First	Second	Third	No.
Present job	38	67	53	158
No present job	74	74	55	203
	<u>112</u>	<u>141</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>361</u>

$$K^2 = 6.45 \quad 2 \text{ d.f. } p < 0.05$$

The most common type of part-time job (47%) presently held by students was in the service area (barmaid, waiter, etc.). Such jobs were mainly held by females.

TABLE 12
Present Part-time Job Type

Part-time Job	Male	Female	No.	%
Manual labour	11	7	18	11
Skilled trade	1	3	4	3
Clerical work	1	9	10	6
Sales	6	26	32	20
Transport	3	0	3	2
Service	7	36	43	27
Entertainment	3	2	5	3
Health, Education or social service	3	19	22	14
Unclassified	4	17	21	13
	<u>39</u>	<u>119</u>	<u>158</u>	

(c) Student Views

The students were asked for their views on certain points about work experience and trainee teachers. For instance, they were asked:

As one might expect from the age differences, students who had an experience break between school and Claremont Teachers Collge significantly favoured work experience compared to students who came through direct study ($K^2 = 85.538$, $p < .001$). Similarly, students who had experienced extended private employment significantly favoured work experience breaks compared to other students ($K^2 = 46.111$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, the relationship between year of enrolment and the desirability of work experience was not significant.

Students were asked to nominate the main advantage to the teacher trainee student of a work experience period. The attempt was made to force the students to choose the most desirable of a number of possible advantages but in the event this was somewhat unsuccessful (incidentally suggesting possible difficulty in requiring students to have work experience since that would be a more difficult choice). Some 31% of students picked several of the advantages while 30% picked "Improve maturity & self-confidence" and 15% "Improve basis for career choice". Some students added categories of "Gain money" or "Gain a fresh approach to study". Two other points should be noted. Students could still pick a main advantage even if they were doubtful or negative on the desirability of requiring work experience. Secondly students were not asked about disadvantages here, it being assumed that the main disadvantages of coercion & difficulty in finding satisfactory work were obvious.

"If jobs *were* readily available would it be desirable for teacher trainee students to be required to have at least 6 months work experience before entering college?"

In response, some 246 (68%) said yes, 81 (22%) said maybe and 36 (10%) said no. There was no difference between male & female response to this item. However, 88% of students 21 or over favoured work experience compared to 47% of students under 21 (though one should note the high "maybe" score for the under 21's).

TABLE 13
Desirability of Work Experience by Age

Work Experience Break by Age	18	18-20	21-25	25	No.
Desirable	2	80	80	84	246
Maybe desirable	6	59	10	6	81
Not desirable	1	28	6	1	36
	<u>9</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>363</u>

$$K^2 = 77.13 \quad p < 0.001$$

TABLE 14
Main Advantage of a Work Experience Break

Main Advantage (Single Response)	Male	Female	No.	%
Improve und. world of work	3	13	16	5
Improve maturity and self-confidence	29	78	107	30
Improve basis for career choice	10	43	53	15
Improve und. socially different	7	14	21	6
Improve und. society	11	22	33	9
Several of above	25	83	108	31
Gain money	4	5	9	3
Gain fresh approach to study	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>
	91	261	352	

Main Advantage (Multiple Responses)	Responses	%
Improve und. world of work	86	14
Improve maturity and self-confidence	205	34
Improve basis for career choice	120	20
Improve und. socially different	84	14
Improve und. society	86	14
Gain money	11	2
Gain fresh approach to study	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>
	600	

There was little difference here by sex, age or break experience, though the older students were over-represented in "Improve understanding of society" and 7 of the 9 students who wrote in "Gain money" had come direct from school.

In addition to their views on the desirability of requiring work experience for trainee teachers, and on the main advantage thereof, the students were asked for their perception of whether they had sufficient understanding of the world of work to help prepare school pupils for work in private enterprise, trade union participation and possible unemployment.

Some 212 students (59%) said that they had sufficient understanding to help pupils prepare for work in private enterprise, 86 (24%) said "maybe" and 64 (18%) said that they did not have sufficient understanding.

Some 95 students (27%) said that they had sufficient understanding to help pupils prepare for trade union participation, 75 (21%) said "maybe" and 186 (52%) said that they did not have sufficient understanding.

Some 205 students (57%) said that they had sufficient understanding to help pupils prepare for possible unemployment, 94 (26%) said "maybe" and 61 (17%) said that they did not have sufficient understanding.

In regard to preparation of pupils for private employment, males and females do not significantly differ in their rating of their level or useful understanding of such work contexts. However, as might be expected, older students, students who have had break experience and students who have had extended private employment express significantly more confidence here than other students.

The pattern is a little more varied with regard to the students' confidence in their level of understanding which would help prepare pupils for trade union participation. Males do differ significantly from females in their ratings here with males contending that they do have adequate understanding and females saying that they do not. Again older students, students who had an experience break, senior students and students who had extended private employment experience were significantly more confident about their level of understanding than other students.

The pattern shifts again in regard to level of understanding which would help prepare pupils for possible unemployment. Males and females do not differ significantly in their responses to this item. Older students, senior students and students with an experience break also do not differ noticeably from other students in their responses to this item. Only students with extended private employment differ significantly from other students on this point. This may be because such students have more occasions of unemployment, job change and job search. For instance, students with extended private employment experience were significantly more confident about their level of understanding and their ability to help pupils prepare for private enterprise (82% yes compared to 37% yes for other students); to help pupils prepare for trade union participation (40% yes compared to 16% yes for other students); and to help pupils prepare for possible unemployment (65% yes compared to 50% yes for other students).

This relationship is not reflected in the other groupings partly because of confidence among less experienced students about their understanding of unemployment contexts. For instance, while 67% of students with more than a 1 year break between school and College expressed confidence in their ability here so did 50% of students who came direct from school to College. Whether this latter group's confidence was well-founded or just optimistic is open to question.

(d) Student Comments

The themes of the desirability of a work experience break, the gain in maturity from such a break and the usefulness of such a break for decision-making on a career come through strongly in student comments. What is interesting is the emphasis on the advantage in dealing with the course at College. There is far less emphasis on the advantage in actual

teaching. For instance:

"I feel that students entering college directly from school have very little idea of the pressures placed upon people who work everyday. Their personal maturity and sense of responsibility need to be developed after leaving school and prior to entering College. This is very obvious in the attitudes of the mature-age students within this College."

"Work experience I feel is necessary for social maturity and self confidence, however, it will not necessarily make a good teacher."

"If trainee teachers worked before entering College it might change persons' ambitions for teaching. Entering College after a period of work would mean that trainee was definite in goals because she has had opportunity to experience other forms of employment. This is better than to be in 1st or 2nd year of course and still be undecided about true feelings towards teaching as a career."

"After working in a mundane job there is more motivation to be successful at College".

"I worked for 2 years before College and value it as one of the best and most important things I've done in life - it matured me - I learnt about a sense of responsibility. On coming to College I found the workload much easier to handle than many of the students who came direct from school to college. Any employment gives valuable experience."

Even the notion of prior work as a teacher's aide is primarily endorsed for College oriented reasons:

"I feel that a period of work in a school as a teaching aide would also be an advantage before commencing as a student teacher - this would orientate studies; assist in the student knowing whether the career choice was wise etc."

Some of the students felt quite strongly in favour of requiring a work experience break and suggested that 6 months would be too short. Compulsory breaks of 1 or 2 years were advocated by some while one person suggested a minimum age of 20 before College enrolment (and also a maximum age limit). The reasons generally provided for such proposals suggested that 6 months was too short a period for adequate development of maturity and career interests. This is interesting because 6 months might well be adequate to get some understanding of the world of work.

Some students did cite more general gains from an experience break:

"Work experience is, I think, essential, before embarking on a teaching career, because through this one gains maturity, experience of the world, experience in dealing with different situations, children of different cultures, etc."

"Most of the turn off by primary pupils occurs when they cannot

relate what is being taught to what they experience outside the classroom. Some experience outside will help the teacher relate academic to outside interests."

"Some students are very ego-centric about their jobs (i.e. they're superior to all other workers). Doing some sort of physical or different jobs gives a bit of humility and understanding of others life-styles."

Other students had more mundane concerns:

"Students should have something to fall back on as far as work experience is concerned which would help with part-time work and career choice."

"It would be difficult to take a young potential teacher from the workforce and expect him to live on T.A.E. and cope with studies after the break from them."

"Heavy workload at times at College makes it difficult to hold a part-time job and also I don't get enough T.E.A.S. At times I'm really scratching."

"Afraid (I would lose a teaching) job opportunity. College has become *too* competitive."

Still other students were sceptical about the whole idea of requiring an experience break:

"You see people all the time so what's the use of 1 work experience break."

"I cannot see how work experience can help *all* people doing teacher training. Some people are very well prepared coming out of school whilst others after *years* of work experience will never be prepared. Anyway what would be classed as appropriate work experience — road digger or shop assistant, office worker, grave digger, etc."

"How can anyone generalize over a topic such as this. We are 'individuals' . . . their values, skills and large percentage of knowledge will *not* change during 6 months or 12 months of working in our society."

"Not all work experience is good. It has its drawbacks, at least it did in my case."

Conclusion

The results of this survey, limited though it is to one group of primary teaching trainee students at one College, support two propositions. One proposition is that some 50 to 60 per cent of trainee teacher students may have significant work experience (much of it in private enterprise). At Claremont 83% of students have held a job at some time; 51% of students

had an experience break between school and teacher training (with 50% of those holding private enterprise or self-employed positions during the break); 51% of students had been employed in private enterprise for six months or more; 52% of enrolled students worked over the previous summer vacation; 60% of students had held a part-time job during college study; and 44% of students held a part-time job at the time of the survey. Claremont might be above average here since Tisher (1979) found that in a national sample of trainee teacher students at Universities and Colleges 19% had an experience break of 1 year or more between school and study. However, differences between students at Universities and Colleges, differences between primary and secondary trainees and the incidence of part-time work experience may be important further considerations. Even if one can show that Claremont is exceptional in its proportion of experienced students that point itself has implications for applying any blanket policy of requiring work experience for teacher trainee students at all Colleges and Universities.

In one discussion group at Claremont this topic came up and one student present who had come directly from school was asked why this was so. Her reply was simple. She had always wanted to be a teacher and she wanted to get on with her training and not waste time doing other things. It is such students who are the prime focus of the proposal to require work experience, if the first proposition is accepted. Rather than a matter of encouraging some it may be a matter of coercing the few.

The second proposition is that students; (a) see an experience break as desirable; (b) see the benefits to be improved maturity and improved decision-making; and (c) see these attributes as benefits because they increase capability to deal with their College course.

Some 68% of students favour a required six months experience break, with the experienced students being most strongly in favour. Students are fairly confident about their capacity to help pupils prepare for private enterprise work and possible unemployment. However, they do not feel competent to prepare pupils for trade union participation. What is noticeable here, though, is that the experienced students, particularly those with extended private employment backgrounds are the most confident of their capacity to help pupils. This is not only in regard to private enterprise and possible unemployment. It also applies to trade union participation. Thus, if testimony from those with personal experience counts heavily one has strong support for encouraging work experience breaks, particularly in private enterprise.

However, a close scrutiny of the advantages of work experience as seen by the students casts doubt on both employer and union rationales for work experience breaks. The students take the main advantages of work experience to be increased maturity and self-confidence and improved basis for career choice. There is no major agreement with the employer's rationale of improving understanding of the world of work, particularly the requirements of private enterprise. In fact most students contend they have picked this up anyway. There is also no great emphasis on breaking down social class and cultural barriers by improving understanding of different sorts of people, as is suggested in the union rationale. While the

students do not feel capable of introducing pupils to trade union participation it is plausible that many students (judging by some comments) would see this to be an advantage rather than the disadvantage it would be from the union point of view.

The students follow neither the employer or union rationale. Rather, they see the advantage of work experience in personal terms of helping them make an adequate career choice and developing maturity. In particular, maturity, self-confidence and commitment to teaching are seen to be advantages in dealing with and getting most out of the college course. The image of the mature, competent, responsible, likeable person as the model for teacher training, dominates here.

This difference between employer, union and student rationales has important policy implications in that work experience program outcomes depend on what the student takes such programmes to be about and what the student perceives to be worthwhile pursuing in such experiences. The problems of students rejecting work experience programmes in China despite a strong rationale and a supporting structure of Party officials is a warning about the difficulties here (See Quadrant, 1979). Students who have already made a broadly-based career choice and who consider themselves mature and experienced are not likely to take kindly to the requirement of a work experience programme aimed at one or other ideological rationale. They are also not likely to achieve the desired outcomes on such rationales.

Another implication here concerns proposals to offer seminars and visiting lectures to trainee students and practising teachers. This policy has been offered as a substitute for a policy of requiring work experience breaks, because the work experience policy is not attractive in a time of high youth unemployment unless the government institutes a job creation policy. Given the student views such an alternative is not likely to be successful. Such activities are not likely to promote maturity, self-confidence and career choice and will not be seen as useful by students. Such seminars can be useful for developing knowledge and positive attitudes in regard to private enterprise, trade unionism and other groups of people in society but the students do not see such learning as central to their own lives, teaching or teacher training.

References

- HAINES, B. & COLLINS, J.M. "The return to study: the mature age student - the Mount Lawley experience." Conference papers. Returning to Study Conference. Sydney University, August 1978.
- QUADRANT. *China issue*. November, 1978.
- SCHOOLS COMMISSION. "Issues in teacher education." Discussion paper. Canberra : AGP, 1979.
- TISHER, R.P. et al. *Beginning to teach*. Vol. 2, Canberra: AGP, 1978.
- WILLIAMS, B. et al. *Education, Training and Employment*. Vol. 1, Canberra : AGP, 1979.