



# The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

In 2022 *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* transitioned to fully Open Access and this article is available for use under the license conditions below.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

# Preparing Beginning Teachers

## The Postgraduate Diploma in Education at The University of Queensland

**Bernard Cox**

*The University of Queensland*



The Wiltshire Committee's *Review of the Queensland School Curriculum* produced some surprises. One of these was for teacher educators. The Committee had not originally intended to investigate the preparation of teachers, yet several recommendations were made. The Wiltshire group say that practising teachers made so many adverse references to the quality of their preservice training that comment and recommendation were justified. The committee's recommendations are interesting in that they focus quite heavily on the links that might exist between teacher preparation on campus and teacher preparation in schools.

The recommendations include:

- Teacher education faculties should forge formal links with particular schools and systems in collaborative partnerships.
- Dual appointments to universities and school systems of teacher/teacher education staff be established.

Those of us working in the Postgraduate Diploma in Education program at The University of Queensland were particularly interested in Wiltshire because a thorough restructuring of the Diploma program had been completed only a few years ago. Wiltshire gives us cause to look again at our program and the opportunity to reflect publicly on the program is accepted here.

Let's first put our ideas into some perspective.

The Wiltshire group did not refer specifically to any model of preservice teacher education that would serve to give internal logic to the conclusions they made. Yet it seems inescapable that the design of a preservice program should gain internal consistency from the adoption of some such model of teacher education. Several of these have been formulated over the years. They include the following:

- (a) **a model emphasising discipline-based scholarship.** This has more often affected people preparing to teach in secondary rather than primary schools. Where this model implies that knowledge of content is sufficient preparation of teachers, there have been many objections, not the least being the apparent assumption that teaching is transmission of information to passively receptive pupils. Teachers who are not themselves scholars are not likely to value scholarship, but though scholarship is necessary for beginning teachers, it is not sufficient.

- (b) **a model centred on pupil teacher training** in which beginners are prepared through apprentice-like attachment to exemplary teachers. Critics of this model point to the probability of the socialisation of the beginning teachers in the practice of the present at the expense of their capacity to promote the future development of many aspects of schooling.

Other models include:

- (c) **the preparation of teachers** so that they will be equipped to contribute to social reconstruction toward a more socially just society, and
- (d) **a developmentalist model** focused on preparing beginning teachers with strong emphasis on understanding human development. This is seen to provide a means of fostering many facets of human growth in their school students.

The University of Queensland restructured its Postgraduate Diploma in Education program in 1990. This program prepares teachers for secondary schools. The restructuring was organised by two guiding principles, notably:

- promoting growth in the students. The growth is particularly in professional skills and knowledge, but also in several personal dimensions; and
- integration, which guides the delivery of the program.

The central task of the initial professional education program is to foster the professional development of beginning teachers, taking into account their knowledge, experience and intentions as they enter the program. A partnership of the students themselves, university staff and supervising school personnel seeks to help

students to take advantage of school experience linked with on-campus tuition. The students' development is fostered by the structure of the program which provides an early experience of schools and classrooms along with induction to pedagogic skills and the curriculum organisation of syllabuses.

This is apparent in Figure 1 which shows that these activities are engaged before the first block practicum in April-May. The weeks between the two block practicums are largely used in two ways, both of which seek to relate the work in schools with the work on campus. The first use of this time is to extend the repertoire of teaching techniques possessed by the students, while the second is to strengthen the basic skills in some students, either on the recommendation of their supervising teachers, or because they volunteer for further tuition.

Examples of this process are:

- the extension of the repertoire of teaching techniques varies among the curriculum studies. For example, the social education class learn how small group discussion may be used effectively in class; the geographers learn the advantages of inquiry/discovery techniques and apply them in field studies; English students engage in poetry presentations; others make their first acquaintance with gaming, role play and simulation in the classroom; while LOTE students extend their range of techniques associated with resource-based teaching.
- students whose voice projection or diction in class requires development are given the opportunity of working with a speech pathologist.
- students who feel that their classroom persona is somewhat lacking élan may join a class conducted by an experienced drama teacher

**Subject**

Curric 1      Curric 2      SEP      PIPE

INDUCTION			

VACATION

PRACTICUM			
<b>SPECIAL PROGRAMS</b>			

VACATION

PRACTICUM			

VACATION

<b>REVISION, EXAMS</b>			

**Comment**

Orientation and early experience of schools, their staff and students. Context for future studies.

Initial training phase. Introduction to syllabuses, basic teaching techniques, classroom management, and principles of learning and adolescent behaviour.

First block period of secondary practice. Developing teaching skills; formative assessment.

Extension of repertoire of teaching/learning techniques.

Coaching in skills in small groups.

Major practicum. Summative assessment of teaching.

Orientation of studies is toward first appointment. Consolidating education principles and practices as a basis for continuing professional growth in the teaching service. Intensive study of principles of social justice.

SEP = School Experience Program  
 PIPE = Professional Issues and Practices in Education

- Graduation Ceremony

who involves them in 'putting their best foot forward'.

- students who experienced stress in making the transition from being a student in lecture theatres to managing a class of school pupils are introduced to stress reduction techniques.
- those preparing to teach LOTE engage in activities aimed at targeting language maintenance because it is such a vital component of communicative approaches to learning other languages.
- Review Officers from the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies extend the general work on student assessment undertaken by university staff. This is done by the application of the Board's assessment procedures to specific curriculum studies.
- a brief program of assertiveness training is provided for students who elect this after their practicum experience and to those whose supervising teachers have recommended it.

These examples illustrate the links that are forged between the on-campus and school experience elements of the Diploma program. In doing so, they would appear also to meet the call of the Wiltshire committee for systems of collaborative partnerships. Nonetheless, many university staff are concerned to proceed beyond fostering in their preservice trainees skills and knowledge that would merely reproduce prevalent approaches to schooling.

In offering ideas which might some day enable our graduates to contribute to programs of school development, university staff find it is sometimes necessary to avoid creating an impression in the minds of students that there are ideas which are respected on campus, but contrary to general practice in the schools. These need careful reconciliation. Almost invariably, students respect

practical advice that enhances their work in classrooms. But they do well when provided also with the bases of future professional growth.

The Wiltshire recommendation that dual staff appointments to universities and school systems be established has much merit, and indeed The University of Queensland has adopted such a policy for some time. Dual appointments at The University of Queensland are of two kinds. First, several of the curriculum studies lecturers are practicing teachers with established reputations, both for scholarship and for pedagogic skill. Second, the number of regular Diploma staff is supplemented by part-time appointments of registered teachers for the purposes of liaison with schools and supervision of students during periods of practice teaching.

The same faculty associates contribute to the training in practical classroom management that takes place before the first period of block practice. The examples of special studies in the period between the block practicums also illustrate the other major organising theme in the Diploma program — that is, the professional development of our beginning teachers. The figure represents the developmental sequence: early school experience, to initial training, to establishing teaching skills at practice, to extension of repertoire of skills, to major block practice which concludes with a summative assessment of the teaching skills of the student teachers. After this, a period of some 10 weeks remains.

The professional growth of the students is now oriented toward the consolidation of the year's studies, concurrent with preparation for a first appointment to the teaching staff of a school. The figure also represents the parallel development of the subjects in the Diploma program. This program, formulated for the 1990s, represents a

move from the traditional collection of subjects toward integrated studies.

The integration is apparent in the organisation of the curriculum studies in several ways. First, each is centred on the major components of the concept of curriculum; notably, aims/goals/objectives; learning and teaching; disciplinary content; and assessment. Second, the curriculum studies subsume language and reading in the subject area, computing as applied to the subject in schools, and special approaches to working with disadvantaged students. Third, a concept of area of curriculum studies was introduced in 1990 as the major curriculum study for each student. The area of curriculum study represents a group of cognate school subjects, such as English, Social Education, and Natural Sciences.

The integration is also apparent in the organisation of the foundations of education subject, which is called Professional Issues and Practices in Education (PIPE). PIPE addresses a range of common interests, needs and immediate concerns of beginning teachers within an inter-disciplinary framework. Many of these commonalities are matters of equity and social justice.

The subject is grounded in relevant bodies of knowledge. For example, it draws from educational sociology and educational psychology to provide foundations of such topics as: conditions and contexts of learning and teaching in formal education, contemporary policy frameworks, learning theory, adolescent development, education and social theory, and self reflection and professional development. Curiously, separating the practice teaching from the curriculum studies was the most effective way of linking it with the Diploma program as a whole. So, teaching practice is now a major part of a separate subject called School Experience

Program. This facilitates access to the practicum to all Diploma lecturers, who contribute in turn to the liaison program with schools.

The article has briefly described ways in which a couple of organising principles — professional development of students, and integration — contribute to the internal cohesion of the Diploma program as a whole. The figure and the program it represents illustrate the ‘journey’ which the students begin in their Diploma year, ‘a journey from the back of the classroom to the front’. This journey symbolises changes over the year in our students, especially in their capacity to take responsibility not only for themselves, but also for groups of school students. The distinctive features of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education at The University of Queensland have been briefly stated in this article. We believe that they help the program meet several of the qualities called for by the Wiltshire Committee.

**Editor’s Note:** This article originally appeared in *Education Views* (26 August 1994, page 16). We thank *Education Views* and Bernard Cox for allowing us to reprint the article here. □

