The End of Teacher Education? 
Strong Signals and Weak Directions

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Preamble

This paper is an attempt to generate discussion about the provision of teacher education and its possibilities in a rapidly changing labour market and education and training environment. The authors contend that in this environment there are hardly perceptible historical, social and political indicators which, like loose pavement bricks, have the capacity to trip the unwary. The contents of the paper then are unashamedly generalised and simplified in order to challenge taken-for-granted beliefs about teacher education in a stark manner. The paper is meant to be speculative while anchored in the past and present with a view to causing discussion about future teacher education and how it might be done. While some readers might think the issues in the paper are largely unthinkable, our view is that teacher education, like other ‘professional’ preparation, can operate more effectively in ways quite different to those in existing arrangements.

Teacher education in Australia today looks much the same as it has since the 60s. More globally, commentators and critics, including agencies such as the Queensland Board of Teacher Education and the Board of Teacher Registration on occasions, have noticed this in nearly every decade since the Second World War (for example, Tom 1991, Wideen 1995, p.1). Nevertheless, although the duration of courses for teaching has increased from one to four years over that time, the fundamental form and content of courses has remained conventional as it has in other countries (for example, Lundgren 1987, Tom 1995).

The conventional model has the following features:

- a four (3, 1, ...) year course structure centred on sequenced subjects devoted to ‘foundations’, teaching and school subject content, curriculum and teaching methods and some mix of practice teaching;
- reliance on psychology, sociology, philosophy...to underpin methods and practice in the belief that they contain requisite principles and theories for practice;
- planning, organisation and delivery of course content on-campus;
- teaching program arranged around permanent university-based staff pre-occupied with segments of the overall course;
- formal, bureaucratic relationships with employers (schools) and teachers, typically tempered and mediated by one or more university staff who develop collegial ties with school personnel;
- research agendas skewed towards a perceived ‘gap’ between the university and the schools and the behaviours of newly graduated teachers.

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1 By ‘teacher education’ we mean preservice teacher education of the four year Bachelor of Education degree variety, although our general comments about teacher education logic can be applied to other variants.

2 There are many variations on the theme. The depiction of the conventional model is at the level of structures, culture and epoch and is not tied to the efforts of particular individuals or institutions.
This model, developed on the legitimate experiences and understanding of industrial age institutions, is recognisable the world over as a distinctive paradigm of teacher education, a way of doing things.

The invariant scaffolding of this model is the set of fundamental relationships it creates between universities, school systems and the teaching profession\(^3\). No matter how the model is adjusted, these relationships place constraints on what is possible by defining limited pathways. Accordingly, the model generates a set of concepts and ways of talking and interpreting that legitimate specific kinds of knowledge, identities, players and definite cycles of sequenced, paced events that reflect the logic of the relationships. In turn, teacher education practices, policy-making and research conform to and affirm the existence of such ideas, categories of people and activities like ‘teaching’ by making them the substantive content of theories about and practices in teacher education (see Naish 1990, p.27ff). Consequently, ‘teacher education’ theory and practice take on an existence of their own so that arguments about conditions of existence and futures take place within the constraints and reinforce them.

The impeccably reasoned recent Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project (1998), for example, remains within the existing system. The Report notes the diversity of programs in Australia and the range of stakeholder interests, but remains firmly locked into the preservice model led by university-based teacher education providers. While we endorse the professional repertoire for graduate teachers that the Report advocates, our point is that the key elements and relationships of the conventional model are left untouched and remain the weakness of the model and in turn the Report itself. Thus, the Report (1998, p.28) [emphasis added] notes that teacher education providers ‘do not have control over the schools’ (or other external settings) in the which their students have field experiences’, that they ‘remain constrained by the reality that higher education institutions do not control schools’ (p.36), but acknowledges that ‘[q]uality field experiences are an essential part of initial teacher education’ (p.28) [emphasis added]. Because the relationship between university, profession and labour market is irreconcilable in the conventional model, readers of the Report are left with sentiments such as ‘[w]e hope that school authorities, the teaching profession and individual schools can work with higher education institutions...’ (p. 36).

Similarly, at the operational level, on-campus attempts to control the ‘teaching’ and other professional behaviour of student teachers in schools falters. The prescriptions and knowledge for bridging the gap often seem to represent an imaginary world unrelated to much apart from themselves. In this sense, the connections between the folk knowledge and prescriptions of teacher education and the reality of schools and teaching have the same logic as magical spells incanted in the hope that they have technical outcomes (Malinowski 1931, p.636).

In recent years, the conventional model has been under increasing criticism by its major users (employers, schools) and by teacher educators themselves (for example, Clifton, Mandzuk & Roberts 1994, Wideen & Grimmett 1995, Andrews 1997). These criticisms no doubt have impetus from the unprecedented challenges faced by the conventional teacher education model today, brought about by the immediately obvious pressures on the education sector. These include: changes in the structure and governance of schools, changing expectations of education and schooling by various fragments of the middle class, the impact of communication technologies and an aging teacher and teacher education

\(^3\) Each these categories of course can be further elaborated as relationships between academics, schools and teachers; knowledge bases, teaching cultures and the labour market and so on.
workforce facing monumental cultural shifts. Our contention is that faced with these and other often hardly perceptible early warning signals, teacher education is always in catch-up mode because the conventional model, developed for different circumstances, cannot cope with emergent conditions. The historical times require a new vision of teacher education and a different structure that operates according to a different logic and with players other than the present universities alone.

Contexts of teacher education

In such an unstable historical period when the unthinkable becomes common-place on a day-to-day basis, it is prudent to think about and imagine implications for the standard model of teacher education in the widest possible-cultural context.

Change ‘is a leading motif of our times’

Like a host of others, Gee, Hull and Lankshear (1996, p.xii) observe that change ‘is a leading motif of our times’. They refer to the birth of a new world, the ‘new work order’ dominated by ‘fast capitalism’. It calls for nothing less than a revolution in the ways people are defined and the relationships they enter into and perform (Gee, Hull & Lankshear 1996, p.26ff). The new conditions embody disorienting trends like the emergence of new identities, the fragmentation of institutions and time, the shift from content to context and to the production of customised commodities for niche markets.

The idea that time itself is in transition is of considerable interest to a profession that seems more predisposed to transmit a presumed consensual cultural heritage than to renew it. As time is increasingly experienced by individuals as episodic rather than continuous, skills and other teacher work-place requirements seem more transitory and difficult to pin down than they did even recently. Moreover, the relatively static logic of the conventional model makes it difficult if not impossible to deal with emergent social characteristics like heterogeneity, variety, discontinuity, regionalism and pluralism at either a conceptual or an operational level. In the education field, there is neither a national or state consensus over a vision for education nor a set of social values that has convincing support from key stakeholders. Similarly, all the pressures on education seem to indicate an increasing differentiation of the teacher workforce. These conditions of the age appear likely to intensify. For example, Broderick (1997) argues that there are deep-seated, inexorable changes abroad in the social and cultural fabric of societies that will move off the scale of standard measurements sometime in the early to mid-2000s. Then, at the ‘spike’, when change goes asymptotic, ‘all the standard rules and cultural projections go into the waste-paper basket’ (Broderick 1997, p.2). At the point of ‘spike’ Broderick maintains, many of the current debates about existing institutions will become redundant. If Broderick is correct in predicting an increasing rate of change, then the conventional model will exhibit more difficulties in greater succession and in shorter cycles than it has for the last 30 years.

Epochal shifts mean changes of orientation in the sentiments of people. Using generations born in the 1920s, late 1940s and 1970s, Mackay (1997, pp.4, 11, 12) shows that these three age groups represent radically different phases of a developing Australian society that affect perceptions and action. These different value and sentiment complexes ‘symbolise’ different historical eras and while the three groups live together in a ‘rapidly evolving society’, the present only seems ‘normal’ to the youngest of the three generations.

Similarly, Brockman (1995, p.18) also argues that there is a major shift in public knowledge and interest towards what he calls ‘the third-culture’. His view is that people in
the street have an intellectual hunger for new and important ideas that will affect their lives and which point to the future rather than the past. His contention is that the public appeal of powerful concepts and theories in 'science' and of scientific thinkers rather than 'literary' pursuits is an indicator of momentous historical changes on a global scale. It is not surprising then that Mackay (1997, p.137) describes the children of the baby-boomers thus:

Life, thus far, has taught the generation born in the 1970s to keep their options open, to wait and see what happens next, to postpone long-term commitments in favour of short-term goals and temporary solutions.

And why not? This is the generation born into one of the most dramatic periods of social, cultural, economic and technological development in Australia's history: the age of discontinuity, the age of redefinition, the age of uncertainty...

It is difficult to imagine modifications of the conventional teacher education structure developed in another age that properly account for, let alone enrich, these kinds of cultural dynamics.

In addition, it is commonly understood now that new communication technologies generate, support, maintain and are affected by new social and cultural perceptions (for example, Smith & Curtin 1997). Such perceptions provide the metaphors for describing ourselves, our minds, the world, and all of the things we know in it (Brockman 1996, p.xxvii). In this kind of world, it is the processes and services that connect parts of human life that seem to take on significance rather than the certainties of previous ages. In this respect, in the electronic economy, content is context and information is a verb (Brockman 1996, p.xxiii), providing a fundamental challenge to conventional concepts of education and schooling, let alone teacher education.

The more important issue is that the communications age facilitates extra-institutional education expansion because informed users who have access to technology realise that they do not need teachers. In turn, IT (Information Technology) encourages the insight that schooling does not necessarily lead to much education and education does not necessarily require schools. In short, developments in IT have the potential to undermine the reasons for existence of teacher education. It is perhaps fanciful but not beyond possibility to imagine a transformation of schooling based on these notions. Extra-institutional schooling and the specialisation of institutionalised schooling could lead to a new hierarchy of school provision that sharply differentiates schools from each other, and alters the content and modes of delivery.

Finally, the world view of fast capitalism is encapsulated not only in the management texts and discourses of the 1980s and 1990s but has also entered the 'new vocabulary' of higher education itself (Slaughter 1996, Barnett 1997). Numerous observers have remarked that one of the characteristics of the emergent times is the transformation of the elite, monopolistic university into an accessible, accountable, responsive institution. In the conventional teacher education model, the relationships between universities, schools and employers include the right to determine the content, sequence and pacing of knowledge and skills on the part of the university. Teacher education then is fundamentally a 'university' enterprise. However, as universities make the shift from mass market delivery to customised production and consumption, the needs of interested parties, including service users (Robertson 1997, p.81) are paramount. The university-based conventional teacher education model (along with nursing, social work and any other 'professional'
faculty relying on university–work place links to undertake the university course) has increasing difficulty meeting commitments and maintaining credibility.

This is acknowledged in the Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education project (1998, p.32) in the observation that initial teacher education programs should enable graduates to meet the needs, aspirations and circumstances of ‘particular types of schools, students, communities and/or teachers’. Moreover, as the Report notes, the context for this is one where the university providers have considerable cost constraints and little or no control over key work place sites. Teacher education finds itself in the university sector that is itself in rapid transformation.

Challenges to the university

Loss of monopoly

The unquestioned right to set the canon and to have a collective monopoly over course ‘content’ then has slipped from the hands of university academics (Bauman 1997, p.21-23). For teacher educators, the trend is especially significant in a double sense. In the first place, teacher educators are themselves involved in, and are subject to, the re-structure initiatives of universities seeking to adapt to new global university environments. As Barnett (1997, p.33) so eloquently argues in relation to universities struggling with this world, ‘The speed with which we change our understanding of higher education may be surprising...The external agendas of the wider society are, to a significant degree, internalised.’

These developments quickly disturb the ideological equilibrium of teacher education by squeezing the funding-base and more critically in the long-term, key traditions about resource allocation for doing teacher education. Together with increased productivity demands on academics, these conditions counter much of teacher education occupational culture and the conventional model begins to break down by omission with all of the consequential disorientation, confusion and anger that such change engenders. Again, the effects of model disintegration and internal stress are typically seen where it matters most for the logic of the model, such as persuading university staff to supervise practice teaching, the raison d'etre of their existence.

In the second place, as school systems restructure and set new rules, novel challenges and demands are placed on teacher educators to produce a new kind of graduate as Lundgren (1987) predicted so accurately. Teacher educators have always had difficulties convincing critics and friends alike that on-campus courses are ‘relevant’ but the conventional model of teacher education has never achieved its major goals at an industry level. There are of course always examples of good experiences and individual successes, but the logic of the model ensures that there is also always inherent conflict between what happens in schools and teaching about it on-campus (for example, Holmes Group 1986, Board of Teacher Registration 1994).

De-authorisation and de-skilling of teacher education

With the rapid emergence of new schools sector policies, new teaching and administrative jobs and skill requirements in ‘reformed’ schools, teacher education folk-knowledge and experience, accumulated over years, are inexorably made obsolete. In this way, teacher educators are decisively de-authorised and de-skilled. Such developments have ominous cumulative labour market effects in the present climate as governments attempt to achieve steering capacity and social justice by a mix of government and non-government providers.
Public institutions which do not provide services that user groups require 'can find themselves replaced by other entrants to the service market' (Robertson 1997, p.79).

Of particular interest to the authors is the struggle over pedagogical philosophy that school reform and national curriculum initiatives have nurtured. The conventional teacher education model relies on and reproduces child-centred pedagogy and its associated curriculum and 'learning' ideologies about teaching, teachers, children and 'knowledge'. These ideologies, derived in the main from the 1970s and 80s, emphasise 'learning' and processes of learning theories internal to 'the individual' which reveal 'uniqueness' rather than gradable performances (Bernstein 1990, p.71). There are predictable points of emergent conflict between them and demands for outcomes driven curricula and national or state-wide benchmarks. Moreover, as Lundgren (1987, p.57, 53) pointed out, over several decades these ideologies diverted teacher education from serious concerns which seem so important right now5. They include: deciding what knowledge is worth teaching, the development of presentation methods for new kinds of students socialised in an entertainment and commercial culture, and a better understanding of teaching as work, including, of course, the understanding of the professional transformations underway (see Andrews 1997).

Moreover, these ideologies underpin 'developmental' and gradualist assumptions that require long periods of instruction and incubation in neophyte teacher learning (Tom 1995). In contrast, the pedagogies of the age identified by people such as Lankshear, Mackay, Brockman and Bauman are more targeted on client participation needs and on knowledgeable specialists selected for what they know and can do. In contrast to the present conventional model, the new pedagogies embody concepts like ‘flexibility’, ‘just-in-time’, ‘intensive’ and work at a pace acceptable to the learner. Nowhere are these considerations more obvious and pointed than in university–school links.

**University–school links**

Our view is that appropriate connections between conventional university-based teacher education courses and schools are impossible to achieve in the late 1990s. The key point here is that the conventional model logic in principle relies on bureaucratic practice teaching arrangements that function both as the core of the program and crucially, as the efficient distribution agency for teacher education in the university. Once the practicum takes on the aura of information and people distribution, the whole teacher education program assumes the colour of the bureaucratic requirements. Even where there is skilled PR and affable personal and professional relationships between university staff and school personnel, creativity and professional verve are the price of the practical component. It is perhaps ironic that the response of some universities to internal cost-cutting is the increased bureaucratisation of the distribution system under the guise of rationalised practicum arrangements.

Notwithstanding this criticism of contemporary times, we propose that the university-based conventional model has always interfered with the accomplishment of preservice

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4 The average age of Australian primary teachers is about 43 years.
5 Commenting on the same phenomenon, Wilson (1997) makes the point that:
   Somehow, while we weren’t watching, knowledge became a bad thing. It was erased from the educational offer, or at least reduced substantially in importance...The symbol of that submission was my failure, in many years of English teaching in Victorian schools, ever to teach any of the great writers of the English language...I rejected the categories of knowledge contained in great literature. Instead, I embraced the categories of knowledge held in the heads of my students.
teacher education in a number of ways rather than facilitating it. It is especially pertinent that much of the professional criticism of the conventional model arises from the following concerns.

On the one hand, the university–school link *mediates* student contact with schools and teaching and the school–teacher contact with the prospective teacher. Faced with the continuing difficulties of this contradictory relationship, the teacher education industry has both institutionalised it as an enduring research ‘problem’ (for example, ‘theory–practice’ dilemma, first year of work–induction and so on) and attempted to circumvent it with various add-ons like internships and school-based courses. Either way, the relationship remains fundamental to the logic of the conventional model and cynics are perhaps right to be suspicious of add-ons that prop up the very relationship that generates the need for the add-on. In short, the add-ons create the illusion that the basic conceptualisation has been accomplished when it has not (see Tom 1995).

On the other hand, the literature seems to suggest that where there is direct access to the school and teacher(s) on the part of the student and where the school generates in-school activity, prospective teachers are likely to integrate the experiences more successfully. Our reading of the research literature suggests that smaller, distributed ‘practice teaching’-cum-teacher-education units do better than the large, centralised operations that characterise teacher education programs. Put simply, what one might call ‘below the line’ activities are more likely to achieve the overall goals of preservice teacher education than the ‘above the line’ mediated programs of the conventional model. There are too many elements of the ‘above the line’ conventional model that serve the interests of the teacher education institutions rather than those of the students and the systems. Accordingly, one might expect to see in the near future some concerted moves against the privileged and traditional mediating role of the university in professional preparation. To hazard a guess in this respect, the arguments for prescribed, time-based programs as a prerequisite for entry into teaching seem especially fragile in the 1990s on conceptual grounds quite apart from whatever economic arguments that might be made6.

**Integration**

With all of its incremental planning and interest in developmental sequences, the conventional model has managed to avoid questions of integration and agreed content. It is not difficult to see why this is the case given the staffing patterns that reflect the various dichotomies that the model constructs such as university–school, theory–practice, teaching–learning, foundations–curriculum and teaching, and so on. Such divisions help construct the notion that teacher education is ‘complex’ and thus beyond codification and governance.

Part of the reason why the possibilities to integrate the university–school link are not generally realised is that teacher educators and the universities invariably adopt a technicist, lecturer-interest and balance-sheet strategy respectively to the development of teacher education courses. Course development and curriculum planning processes typically focus

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6 Notice that this is in no way an argument against a graduate profession but an indicator that teachers for tomorrow’s schools do not necessarily require the present preservice entry pathways. There are other ways of preparing people that retain such qualities as academic preparation, professional education, theoretical knowledge and high levels of technical competence. Compare this view with the conventional recommendations of the Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project (1998, pp.22, 23, 34) on duration of programs which appear at odds with the expected conceptual and practical ‘outcomes’ tone of the Report.
on filling up the four year timetable with traditional ‘subjects’ taught in real time in lockstep sequences (for example, subjects in weekly lectures and tutorials over a semester x 4 years), the financial and calendar restraints of the practicum (the ‘how-many-weeks-after-Easter…? syndrome), and staff teaching loads (school supervision is always a contentious issue). Making explicit the logic of the theory behind the course and planned integration of the course experience is left to the student. Remarking on this ethos, Tuinman (1985, p.14), a former Dean of Education, says:

The unwillingness of education faculty members to agree on content and approach to a particular course makes a shambles of the concept of a university curriculum and a mockery of the idea that teacher education entails the preparation for a profession.

Moreover, rationales for new teacher education courses are frequently constructed to suit institutional politics and ends by a judicious selection of the teacher education literature rather than breaking new ground (Gore & Morrison 1995, p.6).

**Critical approaches and applications**

There are two additional factors here that receive little recognition. The first is that for some teacher educators, school system policies are there to be resisted in principle so that what is taught to student teachers is a litany of ‘problems’ rather than a theoretically informed school practice. This is not a defence of the passive transmission of official knowledge but an observation that initial professional preparation in any field ought to be focused on both the conceptual apparatus and the application of the concepts in ways that ensure graduates are capable of doing the work. For example, it may well be defensible to criticise ‘literacy’ and ‘numacy’ policies but it is not defensible to graduate new teachers who cannot implement structured, coherent literacy and numeracy programs in ways acceptable to school systems, no matter how well such persons ‘know the literature’. Similarly, it is incumbent on teacher educators to demonstrate how difficult policy requirements like those of social justice can be implemented in schools, as well as rehearsing the standard hype around them from the safety of a university teaching space.

**Teacher education expertise**

Second, many of the brightest ideas about teacher education and teacher professional development now reside in the school systems or elsewhere. Consequently, teacher educators are generally distanced from the creation and application of current school education policies that transform the relationships between schools, the community and knowledge. In many of the ‘reform’ policies current today, teacher education is more than likely to be factored in as a ‘problem’ than as a solution because of the kinds of issues canvassed in this paper. In addition, as government and other school system bodies develop in-house professional development and policy creation capabilities for curriculum, teachers and teaching, key decisions about teacher professional development are increasingly generated and made in the school systems. The use of national and international consultants rather than local teacher educators creates the situation where the systems are better informed about contemporary issues and theories than university-based teacher education staff (Smith 1993). This development is of course another symptom of the times and is not
unique to teacher education, but it underlines the nature of the historical shift that we referred to earlier and to the dangers of replacement by competitors.

No advantages for teacher education from school reforms

In the historical context then, not one of the fundamental training sector and school transformations presently underway advantages teacher education institutions or teacher educators. On the contrary, as time slips by, teacher educators, an aging group in the university sector, are increasingly distanced from the contemporary experience of schooling.

Our observation on these developments is that neither school teachers, nor the employers nor anyone else involved in the work of school teaching mourns the passing of conventional teacher education. Speaking of the USA, Tom (1995, p.129) says:

I do not see many school-based practitioners, state department personnel, state legislators, and members of the general public who have much confidence in our current efforts.

The difficulty for the conventional model, exposed by developments elsewhere in the public and private sectors, is that the opportunities opened up by the demise of institutionalised teacher education are more exciting and than the world it replaces. The trend to ‘unbundle’ services in the marketing field for example has released users from the monopolies and restrictions of large private and public institutions and provided them with more varied, flexible and competitive options. In contrast, the conventional model of teacher education isolates the university from its industrial and professional users, inclining Wildeen (1995, p.15) to the view that teacher education has ‘virtually squandered its central mission’. The effects of historical change and the failure to deal with it will be fatal for the conventional model we believe as serious deficiencies in ‘street cred’ become obvious (see Bauman 1997, p.21).

Teacher education plans for the future

Finally, the greatest challenge to teacher education in our view is the future, prefigured in present conditions. Teacher education, like universities in general, has generally failed to create its own vision of the future in the context of increased university participation and restructured labour markets (Tapper & Salter 1992, p.246; Bessant & Holbrook 1995; Robertson 1997, p.76). In many respects, adapting to new pressures under the guise of numerous teacher education course restructures and policy revisions without internal reconceptualisation and the welding of external political alliances, has diverted the attention of teacher education from accountability and responsiveness. Widespread contemporary attempts to bring teachers, schools, systems and the universities closer operationally and to establish industry-wide guidelines are predictable responses by providers to perceived threats, albeit well-intentioned. The proposed initiatives, however, remain in the existing model of teacher education and within standard public policy practices rather than providing a holistic logic for the future of teacher education.

The conventional model cannot be sustained: The end of teacher education?

Our main argument then is that the belief in teacher education as an institutionalised activity
based on the conventional model and its supportive discourses cannot be sustained in future years. The structures of the conventional model, no matter how they are tweaked with ‘partnerships’, ‘internships’ or whatever other innovative ‘practice arrangements’ that people might think up (twenty years too late?), remain premised on, and reproduce, the schools and outcomes of the industrial age, even in thoughtful, innovative modified forms⁷. Already, there are weak and strong signals everywhere suggesting that the operational capacity of Schools of Education to maintain, let alone improve, the conventional preservice teacher education model, have been severely curtailed in recent years.

There are growing difficulties in obtaining sufficient school placements and willing supervising teachers for preservice students, especially in urban areas where large Schools of Education jostle for limited offers. Schools of Education budgets have suffered in the university-wide funding reductions of the last decade, registered as a ‘concern’ and a ‘problem’ for universities without a proposal for how these might be overcome in the Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project (1998, p.35). In some cases, the funding of conventional model practice teaching arrangements consumes such a large proportion of total budget that the School of Education is severely constrained in what it can do apart from teacher education. Moreover, there are industrial issues centred on the responsibilities of employers, individual teachers and teachers’ unions that are exacerbated by the kinds and rates of change in the schools sector and financial constraints in universities⁸. Finally, there is a growing recognition that teacher education, the preparation of new recruits for the profession, is an industry responsibility that lies in public sector management and is not just a ‘problem’ for the universities.

Another way of stating this challenge is that teacher education is experiencing the passing of an age, the end of its historical epoch, so that it is out of sync with historical changes. All around it there are concomitant transformations of organisations, labour and intellectual markets and social identities which are not well recognised or anticipated by the teacher education field⁹. As Bauman (1997, p.24) points out, institutions faced with new demands in a familiar field tend to ‘resort instinctively to the repertory of tried and thus habitualised responses’ in ways that jar with the possible and/or desirable solutions to changing environments. In this respect, the search for a new teacher education model opens up the certainty that:

…it is not just a matter of teaching more students on fewer resources, or of paying more attention to alternative sources of university income, or vainly trying to maintain standards in a tumultuous time. The changes are altogether more fundamental... (Smith & Webster 1997, p.104).

⁷ Developments of the Master of Teaching like that at Sydney University are somewhat more adventuresome, but they retain the key elements of the conventional model.
⁸ These issues are taken from the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration Working Party on the Practicum in preservice teacher education, 24 September 1997. This working party was established by the Board to discuss the Practicum and wider issues of teacher education and included representatives of employer, teachers’ unions, the Board, and Deans of Education.
⁹ Tom (1995, p.128) challenges ‘the validity of the deep structures that undergird conventional programming’ in his proposals to scrap the university teacher education course defined by time and location, stockpiling teaching-related knowledge and university staffing that compartmentalises courses and isolates the university from schools. Our reading of the literature suggests that proposals like these have been systematically ignored by the teacher education field.
In our view, teacher educators will need to grapple with the transition from an industrial culture of mass, system-wide education provision to a more individualised, customised and dispersed form of education rather than attempting to plug the dykes around a doomed territory.

Towards a new model

In the present circumstances, proposals for a new model cannot avoid the heuristic proposition that ‘postmodern troubles cannot be adequately handled by modern means’ while dealing with possibilities in the present predicament (Bauman 1997, p.24). Thus, as Schwartz (1991, p.38) insists, such models are not about predicting the future ‘but they are about perceiving futures in the present’ [emphasis added]. Following such advice, there are conceptual weaknesses in the present teacher education arrangements that have been identified in the literature and people’s experiences for several decades, and that provide points of renewal. The source of renewal can be identified in social trends. Together these include the need to embed the governance of teacher education into structures and components that include but are not necessarily coextensive with respective users like employers, students, professional organisations, curriculum authorities and teachers’ unions. Another trend is that of ‘unbundling’ services, or dismantling monopolistic service provision so that it is possible to imagine alternatives to the university-based teacher education operation. Again, in keeping with literature findings and contemporary trends, unbundling opens up the possibility of democratic provision for user needs and aspirations rather than maintaining the rigid ‘teaching delivery’ structures governed by time favoured by most universities. In this respect, the vision for teacher education is one of studentsensitive niche programs that run in any medium in flexible schedules at optimum cost and that are endorsed by users because they produce creative and expert graduates.

In order to reach such a vision, a new set of relationships and intentions are required to supplant the conventional model. We discuss these in turn.

Preservice teacher preparation must become an ‘industry’ matter

Here we advocate a new settlement between governments, education systems, teachers’ unions, professional teacher education organisations, curriculum authorities, universities, prospective teachers and other potential providers to govern teacher education. We would include funding powers as part of the governance responsibility, probably in state-level teacher education-dedicated statutory authorities with commonwealth government participation along the Ministerial Committee for Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)—Curriculum Corporation relationship lines. Our view is that such arrangements have proved effective in Australian curriculum matters and provide a workable precedent for a new set of structures, notwithstanding the warnings of Whiting, Whitty, Furlong, Miles and Barton (1996) about such arrangements.

Under the multiparty ‘bargain’ (Robertson 1997, p.79) we have in mind, teacher education services would be unbundled, opening up the possibility to better customise teacher education programs for diverse schools, locations and so on. Moreover, the bargain notion recognises that the conventional university-based model over the last 30 years has attempted to deal with labour market issues without having any leverage to change them, as the Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project (1998) points out. By refocussing teacher education as an ‘industry’ interest, important matters such as funding, staffing, professional knowledge and structures are on the table as
it were for all stakeholders (see Raffe 1992). Paradoxically perhaps, given the history of failures by teachers to gain some professional control over teacher accreditation, such an alliance could result in the teaching profession, now ‘industry-based’, having a leading part to play in the teacher accreditation process.

Knowledge–skill base of teacher education

We advocate that the source of the knowledge–skill base of initial teacher education should shift to school systems, the teacher workforce, community agencies and other such locations, exemplifying the ‘Mode 2’ knowledge shift from producers to consumers identified by Gibbons et al. (1994). In this respect, we endorse a much stronger impact on the form and content of the preservice program for potential recruits by schools and school systems, especially in respect to the ‘know-how’ for teaching in the context in which the graduate recruit is expected to work, and an orientation on ‘exit’ outcomes rather than on the conventional university preoccupation with entry qualifications (Robertson 1997). We would like to see what are presently separate teacher education domains like ‘curriculum and teaching methods’, ‘foundations’, ‘psychology’, and ‘supervision’ replaced by theoretically sophisticated, integrated, practice-focused knowledge.

Teaching–learning model for prospective teachers

Following the advice of Bauman and Schwartz, we advocate the use of teaching staff drawn widely who have specialised know-how about given schools, curriculum, information technology and pedagogical approaches (see Smith & Webster 1997, p.106). Such people would be professionally committed to participation in teacher education and to the goals of school systems within a global context. Prospective teachers would enjoy a mix of teaching modes, including coached and mentored practice, individual study and intensive courses, work-shops and electronic materials. As well as the usual academic sources available electronically, prospective teachers would have access to information through school system intra- and internet facilities so that their preparation will be individually ‘customised’, ‘relevant’ and current. It is likely also that the new settlement would witness the development of specialised facilities like ‘demonstration’ and ‘practice’ schools and cyber sites for teacher professional development including preservice preparation, some of which might be off-shore.

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10 This suggestion worries academics who believe that prospective teachers need substantial amounts of theoretical knowledge, especially critical perspectives during their preservice preparation. There is any amount of evidence that student teachers are (i) unlikely to find this knowledge in schools if universities are excluded from preservice teacher education and (ii) that students often condemn teacher education courses for not providing it (see for example Andrews, 1997)! It might also be argued that it is incumbent on theorists to demonstrate the efficacy of their contribution to the preparation of commencing teachers (see Tom’s (1995, p.121-122) remarks on this). In any case, there might well be merit in more stringent theoretical work in teacher education to fulfil Lundgren’s (1987) vision but if and only if it can be shown that such work informs the prospective teacher’s professional repertoire in an outcomes model. In any case, such knowledge is no longer the preserve of teacher educators.

11 Note that we use ‘schooling’ here to include ‘schools’ as they exist today and probable distributed variants in the future such as home schooling and quasi-private specialised schooling within the present state sector.

12 If the pace of change in schools is maintained, it may well be that schools are far more self-managing than they are now and will provide more specialised preparation for students.
Regulation of teacher education course structures

Teacher education course structures would become performance-based and outcome-oriented so that the notion of a generic preservice teaching course would be redundant and there would be few prescriptions about course length, mode of delivery or prescribed knowledge. Flexible structures designed to achieve exit outcomes would emerge around a professional knowledge-base for teaching located in the intersection of curriculum knowledge, pedagogy and communication. Public accountability procedures would encourage far greater innovation in entry requirements and course structures than exists today even though the price for failure on the part of providers would be higher. Crucially however, the emphasis on performance would require a much better grasp than at present of what student teachers need to know and do in order to become a teacher on the part of delivery agencies, school sector personnel and prospective teachers. In turn, the expectation is that teachers would have more robust theoretical knowledge for understanding education and schooling as well as the work of ‘teaching’. Under these conditions, existing compartmentalised domains such as ‘learning theory’, ‘foundations’, ‘curriculum’ and so on do not make much sense for the initial teacher education experience.

Right to provide preservice teacher education

In order to fulfil the State’s social justice ambitions, the right to provide preservice teacher education will be expanded to include a mix of government and non-government systems and providers according to guidelines established under the new settlement (for example, Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project 1998). Many unanticipated players would no doubt vie for recognition as teacher education ‘providers’, including franchise arrangements and other collaborative services, perhaps on a global basis. Such units may well evolve as research centres as well so that a significant amount of ‘educational’ research is directed at system problems rather than academic careers. Universities would presumably retain the degree accreditation function for as long as governments uphold their monopoly. As Robertson (1997, p.91–92) muses, entry into the degree accreditation market for competitors ‘would take nothing other than a government-inspired requirement for the universities to be accredited only when they meet standards of performance’.

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13 The Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project (1998) and the operations of bodies such as the Curriculum Corporation and the Queensland Board of Teacher Education provide templates for designing such structures. The Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project (1998) is easily modified for such purposes.

14 The recent New Zealand Green Paper (1997, p.27) on teacher education is interesting in this respect as it envisages that individuals might enter or re-enter the teaching force ‘at educational leadership or management levels’, recognizing that ‘in some cases, individuals will have acquired skills and experience in other jobs—careers which enable them to meet the professional standards’.

15 Notice that the argument is about creating a teacher education program that engages with teaching and does not necessarily apply to ‘disciplines’ as such.

16 For example, the Centres for Leadership Excellence and Teaching and Learning Excellence in Education, Queensland, are already professional development units as well as major policy development agents. In addition, it is clear that education departments are intent on contracting key educational research projects to the best bidders so that better quality research on significant questions is the likely outcome.
Professional registration

We advocate graduate status as the base-line entry into teacher education but with alternative pathways kept open both for equity purposes and because of the need to attract diversity into the teaching force. Our view is that all teachers should obtain a professional Masters degree within a specified time (for example, five years after graduation) and that this should be tied to professional registration (for example, the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration model).

Concluding remarks

This paper is an attempt to look ahead and to consider the uncertainties and possible challenges surrounding teacher education. If teacher education is to maintain its station in a transforming higher education sector, then a debate about the future is needed. As Tom (1995, p.129) says, ‘[b]y suspending belief in the old structures and experimenting with new ones, we have precious little to lose.’

REFERENCES


Board of Teacher Registration (1994) Learning to teach: A report of the working party on the practicum in preservice teacher education. Toowong, Queensland: Board of Teacher Registration.


