

# Pragmatics and Articulation:

## A Case Study of (R)evolving Secondary Education

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*Teacher education course and program development responds to various forces that shape, inform and influence the way that teacher educators develop new ways of preparing teachers. While well articulated theories of practice and evidence based approaches are well explicated in the literature of teacher education, pragmatic forces such as funding, institutional structures and the pattern of institutional amalgamation are also vital in shaping the way that teacher education is developed and offered. One of the reasons for the establishment of the Teacher Education Review in New South Wales in the late 1990's was the perception that changes to university funding and operation (especially in regards to the priority given to research in universities and the high cost of practicum, leading to falls in practicum experiences) were negatively impacting on teacher education. There is little reference in the literature to the role that pragmatics plays in influencing the way that teacher education is developed. This paper chronicles the evolution of the secondary teacher education program at the Penrith campus of the University of Western Sydney.*

### **BACKGROUND**

The story of the evolution of secondary education programs at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) needs to be understood above all in the context of the “defunding” of universities in 1996 by the incoming Liberal Government, by the application of new funding models and institutional rationalizations and amalgamations. These pragmatics have increasingly meant that course developers need to rationalize the cost of courses whilst valiantly attempting to uphold quality. The focus of this article is on the structure and content of our current double degree programs, and it is necessary to understand something of the background to their creation. Since the double degree programs only currently run at the Penrith campus of University of Western Sydney, the story of their evolution is largely the story of Secondary education on that particular campus.

Prior to 1996, a substantial Diploma of Education, Secondary, taking in a number of subject areas, had been running at the University of Western Sydney Nepean (an effectively independent member of the UWS federated structure which existed before 2000). In that year, a review of graduate-entry courses at Nepean, including secondary, was undertaken. We first set out to investigate what appeared to be high quality practice across Australia by accessing the “end-on” secondary programs of every university which ran such a course. At the time, Sydney University had just begun the two-year Master of Teaching mode, Tasmania and Melbourne were moving in that direction and the Queensland universities had taken up that state’s new requirement for a minimum two-year professional secondary qualification. We also adopted a two-year Master of Teaching (MTeach) model, which had nested within it a one-year Diploma of Education exit point. The two-year model was not yet mandatory in NSW, but we felt our program was anticipating the advent of that requirement. As luck would have it, the review coincided with the election of the Howard government and the consequent retreat from an intellectual culture in Australia. We were soon working not so much in the pursuit of quality as under constraints of survival and cost-cutting. The two-year nested model which eventually emerged had a number of key characteristics aimed at “efficiencies” - among which were a structure that gave all subjects the same credit point loading, hence allowing first and second year MTeach students to take the same subjects and the teaching of K-12 issues in “Professional Foundations” subjects which allowed us to group both Primary and Secondary MTeach/Diploma of Education (DipEd) students in the same classes (in practice, this was not without its problems). In the event, the two-year MTeach model was taken up by very few students, most choosing to exit with the one-year DipEd.

Along with the re-structure of the courses, the Faculty itself re-structured from a departmental model into a program-based model, under Associate Deans. The two Faculty program areas were Undergraduate and Graduate Entry/Postgraduate areas, with the latter undertaking the supervision of both Secondary and Primary MTeach/Diploma of Education courses, and the former the undergraduate Primary and Early Childhood programs. As yet, University Western Sydney (UWS) Nepean had no undergraduate secondary programs.

## **RE-STRUCTURE #2**

In 1997, the university (still as UWS Nepean) announced a total university re-structure in which Faculties were to be done away with and replaced by small, quasi-autonomous academic units, which would have no control over courses, but would own subjects and be funded through attracting EFTSU (funding) loading. Despite the opposition of the majority of the Education Faculty, the Education area was split into three, effectively competing, Schools. Again, this re-structure was set out in the context of increasingly reduced funding and it was presumably seen as a model that would encourage the greater pursuit of independent funding. In order to oversee courses under this structure,

Course Management Committees were set up, one of which ("Interstudies") was responsible for cross-discipline courses. It was at this time, for example, and under this committee, that the university introduced its first Liberal Studies degree.

This committee presented the opportunity for double degrees to grow - and, in NSW, its beginnings coincided with the first real "bite" of teacher shortages in Secondary. It was in this context that we undertook the development of a series of undergraduate secondary programs. Discussions were initiated with staff in the Science and Humanities areas - a total of five Schools - as to their interest in double degrees or concurrent Diplomas of Education. The negotiating principles were that, in Education, only existing subjects would be offered, and the pattern of Education offerings would be based around these subjects. Having undergraduate students fit into these subjects would create efficiencies and economies of scale. A further principle was that practicum subjects would be offered in Education-only semesters in order to alleviate one of the most common structural problems in double degrees - the clash of practicum with non-Education subjects. Science and Humanities staff were interested in creating courses to prepare teachers of Mathematics, Science, English, History and Languages. In the event, the Interstudies Committee approved the creation of BOTH concurrent DipEds AND double degrees in the Arts and Science areas - ie BA/DipEd; BSc/DipEd; BA/BTeach; BSc/BTeach. The concurrent Dip Ed pattern favoured students who wished to complete more Arts or Science subjects than Education and included only the ten subjects that constituted the end-on DipEd. The double degree pattern had equal weightings of Education and Arts/Science subjects and included all 10 end-on DipEd subjects, plus a selection of subjects from the additional MTeach year and subjects from undergraduate Foundations areas. All patterns were 4 years full-time. The advantage for a student undertaking the degree at an undergraduate level instead of "end-on" was an earlier introduction to teaching through an earlier practicum.

In addition, the Head of the School of Teaching and Educational Studies, had a special interest in the Technology and Applied Studies area of schooling (known as "TAS" in NSW) and wished to develop a degree for TAS teachers that would address the growing shortage in that area, and be able to offer places to tradespeople to address especially the shortages in areas like Technics. TAS is a huge and diverse area that includes Food Technology, Textiles, Computing Studies, Design and Technology, Wood Technics, Metal Technics, Technical Drawing, Engineering Studies and other subjects. No other metropolitan university was by this time preparing teachers of TAS for the government system - the Australian Catholic University supplying teachers mainly to the Catholic system. Our model was the University of Newcastle. Discussions were held with the (two) Schools of Engineering, with the Schools teaching Design and Computing and with the Humanities area over the creation of an integrated BEd (Secondary Technology) degree that would prepare teachers of Technics (Industrial), Design and Technology, Engineering Studies and Computing. In addition, tradespeople in areas such as Wood and Metal Technics would be given advanced standing for content-based areas, which would effectively put the emphasis in their study onto Education subjects and practicum.

### RE-STRUCTURE #3

In 2000, the university underwent yet another re-structure - this time aimed at doing away with the federated structure of three independent members (Nepean, Macarthur and Hawkesbury) to create one integrated university with campuses in number of locations in Greater Western Sydney. The impetus for this move, under a new Vice-Chancellor, was again a response to further government funding restraint and the fact that the costs of running three sets of administrative infrastructures was prohibitive. Under this re-structure, Education was given the task over a few months of creating academic units from three Schools of Education at Nepean and a Faculty of Education at Macarthur. In addition, other Faculties and Schools had had input into Education courses at both campuses. Of most interest here, however, was the demand that all courses in Education be totally integrated within 12 months - this meant that, in Secondary, the courses at the former Macarthur (now Bankstown) and Nepean (now Penrith) campuses become identical courses. Macarthur had done away with undergraduate secondary courses a few years before and had an 8-subject DipEd integrating into a 12-subject Bachelor of Teaching integrating into a 16-subject MTeach. The Nepean campus had a 10-subject DipEd integrating into an 18 subject MTeach. The relevance of all this to the double/concurrent/integrated degrees was that whatever structure was eventually determined upon, as at the former Nepean, this structure would form the Education component of those degrees - ie no new subjects would exist or be created for the double/concurrent/integrated degrees. Eventually, it was decided that the university would offer as its base degree in Secondary an "end-on" 12-subject/18 month Bachelor of Teaching degree, which would be timetabled in an accelerated mode of 12 months for those students wishing to complete early. All Secondary Method areas would initially be offered, though not all were offered on both campuses - students in LOTE, Drama and Computing, for example, needing to travel between campuses.

Once this structure was decided, it was transferred to the existing double/concurrent degrees in Arts and Science and to the integrated BEd (Secondary Technology) at Penrith. Of course, Arts, Sciences, Engineering, Computing etc were also undergoing massive re-structures themselves, so that all previous course structures had to be fundamentally re-designed.

After extensive and detailed discussion, the BEd (Secondary Technology) was re-designed to take account of new subjects and new "assumed knowledge" requirements in the content areas, as well as the fact that different subjects were now being offered in different areas of the university. The key point to be made here is again the question of efficiencies of scale - with only one exception (a subject on industrial experience for secondary teachers) the Education component of the BEd degree consisted of only the 12 existing subjects from the "base" end-on BTeach degree.

With respect to the double/concurrent degrees, the first decision made in Education itself was to do away with the concurrent DipEd model - obviously because a "base" DipEd no longer existed to feed into new structures, but also because it was felt that the difference between the double and concurrent degrees was insufficient to justify both

continuing. Thus, in Arts and Science, only a BA/BTeach and a BSc/BTeach were to now exist as undergraduate secondary courses. In Arts courses generally, majors had been replaced by 12-subject (now called "units") "key programs" and the majors structure in Science courses had also been re-designed. Our undergraduate pattern needed to fit into these new structures. Also, as with the BEd (Secondary Technology), the key point is again the question of efficiencies of scale - the Education component of the double degrees was to consist of only the 12 existing subjects from the "base" end-on BTeach degree. Within a year or two, the 12 "base" Bachelor of Teaching subjects will all include students from the end-on degree, from both of the double degrees and from the Bachelor of Education (Secondary Technology).

The principle still exists that practicum subjects would be offered in Education-only semesters and the double degrees are currently offered in Mathematics, Science, English, History and Languages.

As a typical, and illustrative, example the final course requirements for BA/BTeach are outlined in figure 1 on the facing page.

## **CONCLUSION**

The University of Western Sydney is the largest single provider (supplier) of teachers in New South Wales. Any forces influencing its teacher education courses are important in the way that teacher education is evolving and developing in Australia. It needs to be emphasized that funding restrictions, institutional structural change and entrenched cultural histories are also vital determinants of the way that teacher education is shaped and developed.

## **REFERENCES**

- Ramsey, G. (2000) *Quality matters. Revitalising teaching: critical times, critical choices*. Sydney, NSW.  
The Review of Teacher Education in New South Wales.

**Table 1. Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching Structure**

All students must complete a 12 unit key program in both Teaching and Arts.  
The relevant key programs in Arts are:

for ENGLISH: English, Text and Writing

for HISTORY: History, Politics and Philosophy

for LANGUAGES other than English: Languages

- There are three routes which students may take in choosing to become a teacher of English and/or History and/or LOTE. The course structures for each of these routes are as follows:

**FOR A SINGLE TEACHING SUBJECT:**

Students must complete a key program.

For the key program in English, at least 4 units must be in Literature. Other units can come from, in particular, Creative Writing, Cultural Studies, Film and Media studies – still within the key program of English.

For the key program in History, at least 6 subjects must be in History.

For the key program in Languages, at least 6 subjects must be in a single language.

**FOR A COMBINATION IN ENGLISH/HISTORY:**

Students must complete a key program in one area and 4 units in the other area, of which 2 should be above introductory level. These 4 units in the second area may or may not be able to be included in the key program of the first area.

If English is the “minor” in such a combination, at least 2 of the 4 units must be in Literature.

If History is the “minor” in such a combination, all of the 4 units must be in History.

**FOR A COMBINATION IN LOTE/AND EITHER ENGLISH OR HISTORY:**

Students must complete a key program in Languages and 4 units in the other area, of which 2 should be above introductory level. These 4 units in the second area may or may not be able to be included in the key program of the first area.

If English is the “minor” in such a combination, at least 2 of the 4 units must be in Literature.

If History is the “minor” in such a combination, all of the 4 units must be in History.

- It is also possible for students to complete requirements for another teaching area outside English, History or LOTE. A common instance of this is Drama. This should be done on academic advice.

**FOR A COMBINATION IN LOTE or  
ENGLISH or HISTORY AND ANOTHER TEACHING AREA:**

Students must complete a key program in English or History or LOTE as per the instructions for a “single teaching subject” above. In the second teaching area, students complete 4 units of undergraduate study in that area, of which 2 should be above introductory level.