



Department of  
Education Services

# Teacher supply and demand and student placements in Western Australia – *Strategic Issues*

December 2006

# TEACHER SUPPLY AND DEMAND AND STUDENT PLACEMENTS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## STRATEGIC ISSUES

### INTRODUCTION

In July 2006, at the request of the Minister for Education and Training, a Working Party was established to address emerging issues of teacher supply and demand and student placements in Western Australia.

The strategies outlined in this paper are aimed to address the following goals:

- To provide timely and accurate advice on teacher supply and demand.
- To improve the status of teaching, attract entrants into the profession and to retain good teachers in the classroom.
- To address issues of new technology and rural education.
- To ensure the availability of teaching experience placements for all teacher education students and encourage placements in country locations.
- To promote effective State-Commonwealth interaction on teacher education workforce planning and funding matters.

In pursuit of these of these goals the Working Party has identified key issues that will need to be considered.

### AIM

*Ensure an adequate supply of qualified teachers available for all Western Australian schools into the future.*

**GOAL 1: To provide timely and accurate advice on teacher supply and demand**

### General Data Issues

The complexity of the teaching workforce makes it difficult to predict supply and demand with any great degree of precision, mainly because of the large pool of qualified teachers who are not currently employed as teachers in WA. This pool is drawn on to supply over half of the recruits needed in any year. Currently it is not possible to estimate the numbers who are available in this pool at any given time. A teacher's availability varies according to his or her location and to a range of other factors including the availability of other employment opportunities. However, despite the problems associated with precise estimates of supply, broad indications of global needs are required to ensure that university education faculties are recruiting sufficient entrants to service the profession in future.

The Working Party used a model based on previous work by the Australian Council of Deans of Teacher Education in 2000 to assess overall teacher supply and demand in Western Australia. However, investigations have confirmed that the data that are readily available from the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Catholic Education Office (CEO) are

currently inadequate to apply the model effectively. The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) does not collect the required data from its member schools.

Discussions with other States/Territories and with staff responsible for the ACER/ACE *Australian School Teacher and Leader Survey* (ASTLS) project indicate that no States/Territories appear to have adequate data or information to be able to assess teacher supply and demand in any detailed way.

Recent work undertaken by the Australian Council of Deans of Science (ACDS), *The Preparation of Mathematics Teachers in Australia* (July 2006) and *Who's Teaching Science* (January 2005), which attempted to get data on the situation for maths and science teachers had difficulties due to low response rates to surveys.

In view of the inadequacy of available data, the Working Party was unable to reach an unequivocal conclusion that there is a pending shortage of teachers in terms of overall numbers. However, while the data is incomplete, the analysis to date suggests a very tight labour market - which is consistent with the anecdotal evidence. The recent downturn in applications through TISC for education courses in 2007 emphasises the potential problems facing the State in meeting the demand for teachers in the short and medium term.

Any undersupply of teachers is a significant issue for the State and every effort must be made to improve the data and identify the true extent and nature of the problem. This work should build on, and be complemented by, national surveys on longer-term approaches to workforce planning undertaken by the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) and the Australian College of Educators (ACE) such as the current *Australian School Teacher and Leader Survey* (ASTLS) project.

The Working Party has identified the following problems in obtaining the required data:

- This report has been compiled for the whole of the education system of WA. The Department of Education and Training (DET) is the major provider, having 60% of secondary and about 70% of primary enrolments. DET manages its staff centrally and consequently has more comprehensive data on teachers than is available for the Catholic and Independent school sectors. As most of the data used come from DET, assumptions have to be made about the extent to which the key parameters for the government school sector apply to the other sectors. These assumptions are critical ones and must be tested by future survey work and data collection.
- While DET has extensive amounts of data, the data readily available has not been organised to provide the complex information required by any model designed to provide adequate estimates of supply and demand. For example, key parameters that can dramatically influence supply/demand include trends to part-time employment and increases in resignations by both permanent and non-permanent teachers. It is essential that there be accurate monitoring of data for permanent and non-permanent teachers including teacher resignation rates by sector.
- In the wider community there is a pool of 'qualified teachers' who are not working as teachers that is drawn on to provide a percentage of the teachers required at any one time. The size of the pool and the percentage of potentially available teachers within it needs to be monitored as there are perceptions that the available pool is declining.

- Data is available on graduating students however their work intentions and preparedness to take up non-metropolitan or hard-to-staff posts need to be monitored as it has a major impact on teacher supply.

### **Key Issues**

- 1.1 *Broad indications of teaching workforce needs are required to ensure that university education faculties are recruiting sufficient entrants to service the profession and to support teacher recruitment strategies generally.*
- 1.2 *Data needs to be collected to ensure that government and non-government teacher employers can readily monitor key teacher supply and demand variables including full-time equivalent staff numbers, resignation and retirement rates for permanent and non-permanent staff, and recruitment trends from the 'pool' of qualified teachers.*
- 1.3 *A Workforce Project Team/Taskforce should be established to ensure that better data is available on teacher supply and demand.*
- 1.4 *Planning mechanisms should accommodate the fact that 30-40% of the workforce is outside the DET system.*

### **Specialist Teaching Areas**

A significant problem with the available data and methodology is that it cannot provide details of the demand for teachers in specific learning areas. Additional monitoring is required in relation to vacancies in specific learning areas. Better information systems would enable emerging trends to be identified quickly in respect to shortages in particular schools and locations and in particular learning areas. Consideration must be given as to whether this data can be derived as a by-product of existing staffing systems, or whether regular surveys or other approaches are required.

As indicated, the current methodology and data do not address the demand for teachers in specific learning areas and consequently this information was sought through interviews with all major stakeholders. All those interviewed confirmed increasing difficulty in recruiting to a number of secondary specialist areas: in particular, Mathematics, Physical Science, Design and Technology, English, LOTE and Home Economics.

Interviewees reported major difficulties in recruitment to Primary and Secondary schools in rural/remote locations and to some hard-to-staff metropolitan schools. Recruitment to Independent schools in remote locations was also of major concern.

The evidence about shortages provided to the Working Party was anecdotal and it was not possible to obtain hard data to confirm the extent of shortages in the specialist areas identified. One of the difficulties in obtaining more factual data on shortages was, as one of the Deans noted, that officially there are no 'specialist' shortages because Principals are required to manage the staffing configuration they have to the best of their ability and only if no staff are available will a shortage be recorded. Some of the other difficulties of this issue include how to define a 'specialist' and whether schools need 'specialists', depending on the definition and on the year levels of students.

One avenue for a more precise assessment of where shortages are occurring is through consideration of vacancies. The Western Australian College of Teaching (WACOT) has conducted a relief teacher survey to identify locations and in what specialist areas schools were having difficulties accessing relief teachers. Regular monitoring should be undertaken so that

emerging trends can be identified. The sectors also should ensure that they have systems in place for ongoing monitoring of vacancies in particular locations and learning areas.

A MCEETYA survey, which is undertaken every two years, should provide useful information when the latest findings become available, as will another nationwide survey, which is in its planning stages and will report in March 2007. This latter survey is being undertaken by ACER with funding from DEST and will target a good-sized sample of government and non-government schools in different locations in WA. It is seeking information on retirement intentions, vacancies and teachers teaching in areas for which they are not qualified. The findings from the survey should provide useful information on areas of shortage which need to be addressed.

(Additional information on the supply and demand issues associated with specific learning areas and locations is outlined in **Attachment A**).

### **Key Issues**

- 1.5 Systems should be set in place by the employers to ensure regular monitoring of staff vacancies so that emerging trends can be identified quickly in respect to shortages in particular learning areas, schools and locations.*
- 1.6 Consideration must be given by the proposed Workforce Project Team/ Taskforce as to whether this data can be derived as a regular by-product of existing staffing systems, or whether regular surveys (such as undertaken by ACER/ACE) or other approaches are required to ensure accurate data is available.*
- 1.7 As soon as findings from surveys currently being undertaken (or in the planning stage) by WACOT, MCEETYA and the ACER/ACE are available, action should be taken by the employers and Deans of Education to address any areas of shortage highlighted.*
- 1.8 Anecdotal evidence from the teacher employers and Deans of Education is sufficiently strong to imply a need for immediate action to address teacher shortages in rural and remote locations, in hard-to-staff schools and in Secondary specialisations such as Mathematics, Physical Science, English, Design and Technology, LOTE and Home Economics.*

<p><b>GOAL 2: To improve the status of teaching, attract entrants into the profession and to retain good teachers in the classroom.</b></p>
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Information was sought on strategies currently in place in WA and other States and proposals for new initiatives. A review of the information suggests consideration of a number of actions to address some of the concerns about teacher shortages.

(Information on current strategies in place in Western Australia and other States to address teacher shortages is outlined in **Attachment B**).

### **A State-wide Campaign to Improve the Perception of Teaching**

While any campaign or strategy should highlight the wide range of benefits associated with teaching, it also must be carefully structured to reflect the changing demographic picture for new teachers and address the characteristics and aspirations of the target groups. Key issues

for teacher supply and demand are the ageing of the workforce and the changing expectations of succeeding generations.

Most interviewees voiced their concern about the ‘talking down’ of the teaching profession in the Press and several mentioned successful campaigns undertaken in the UK and in California to improve the perception of teaching. The Teacher Development Authority (TDA) in the UK, for example, actively campaigns to attract teachers and promotes aspects of teaching which might appeal to young people or those looking for a career change, such as the leave, pay, where graduates can teach and where they can travel, etc. Its website provides information on becoming a teacher, on highlights of teaching as a career, and presents videos of life as a teacher.

It must be acknowledged that any improvement in the valuing of teaching as a profession is a long-term objective. WACOT should be supported by all educational stakeholders to achieve its objective of raising the status of teaching through such means as advertising in the media, brochures for schools and the Web. The universities and the employers can also be expected to advertise widely for teacher education applicants but classroom teachers themselves, especially those involved in areas of shortage, should be expected to play their part in encouraging their better performing students to consider teaching as a career. This is a professional role that can be encouraged by WACOT and school principals.

### ***Key Issues***

#### ***2.1 A State-wide Campaign to Raise the Perception of Teaching***

- *The State and all key stakeholders should contribute to a campaign to raise the perception of teaching as a profession. The campaign will need to be an extended one to be monitored and adjusted as required.*
- *There should be greater attention to the objective of improving the perception of teaching following the model used by the TDA in the UK.*
- *Practising teachers should be expected to play their part in encouraging their better performing students to consider teaching as a career. This is a professional role that can be encouraged by WACOT and school principals.*

#### **Retaining Good Teachers in the Classrooms**

The interviews with the Deans of Education and a review of the literature suggest a need for retaining good teachers in the classroom. Currently teachers move out of the classroom into administration in order to obtain promotion and financial rewards, as there are currently no significant promotional benefits for good teachers who remain teaching. This is a broad issue, which will presumably be taken up through the current House of Representatives Standing Committee to Inquire into Teacher Education (the National Inquiry). However, if the State is facing a shortage of good classroom teachers, employers should consider providing further incentives to retain senior teachers in all schools and particularly in hard-to-staff learning areas, schools and locations. Consideration should be given to incorporating additional stages in the Senior Teacher category.

### ***Key Issues***

#### ***2.2 Retaining Good Teachers in the Classroom***

- *Teacher employers should consider all avenues to retain senior teachers in the classroom including providing more promotional opportunities for good teachers.*

- *Teacher employers must consider providing further incentives to retain senior teachers in hard-to-staff learning areas, locations and schools.*

### **Incentives and Supports**

A review of the literature indicates the importance of country practicums as a means of encouraging graduates to take up positions in country schools. For most trainee teachers the costs of travel and accommodation and income forgone are a major disincentive to applying for country placements. However, there are two programs currently operated by DET that provide financial support to encourage trainee and beginning teachers to take country postings. These are the Final Year Teaching Scholarships and the Student Teacher Rural Experience Program (STREP). The Catholic Education Office (CEO) also has a scholarship program similar to the STREP.

DET's Final Year Teaching Scholarship Program provides funding of \$30,000 each to a limited number of students entering their final year of a teacher preparation course. The Program targets particular learning areas or areas of shortage such as country schools. Scholarship areas of need for 2006 were Maths, Physical Sciences, Home Economics, Design and Technology, Indonesian, Japanese and Italian. This year the program is giving 50 scholarships and may provide more in the future. Scholarship winners receive up to \$22,500 during their second semester of study, plus other benefits. The teachers are bonded to the Department for two years.

DET's STREP 'aims to encourage more final year teaching students to experience country teaching in a supported teaching practice'. Final year students doing ATP in rural schools receive a stipend for accommodation (\$150 per week) plus funds for travel. Students get \$1,000 on average and this goes to 120-150 students.

Apart from the need for financial support, trainee teachers and beginning teachers also benefit from greater mentoring support.

In general, mentoring support should be seen as an essential support for all new teachers, however it is important that it be an appropriate and well-resourced activity. Mentors should be trained and the process effectively supported and monitored.

One initiative which would be at no cost or very little cost and which might help to retain teachers in the profession, is to support an effective 'mateship' program for young teachers in which trainees or beginning teachers are sent out in pairs so that they can provide each other with support with mentoring by experienced teachers.

WACOT has established a profession-wide mentoring program for new teachers in the category of Provisional Registration. This affords them the support of a more experienced mentor, or as the College terms it, a Collegiate Support Person (CSP), who provides support and guides the new teacher through a formal process of professional reflection to achieve full registration. The College developed this evidence-based process in response to the high attrition rate of beginning teachers. Additional features that would improve the efficiency of this process would be the provision of training for Collegiate Support Persons.

Another suggestion is for the establishment of an internship program to reduce the barriers to entry to teaching. Mature-aged people find it difficult or impossible to change careers because of the time it takes to retrain and the related loss of income. However, there are examples

overseas of internships, which allow students who already have a relevant undergraduate degree to acquire a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT). A program could be developed where a student can teach on a LAT for three days a week and undertake an education preparation course two days a week, over 18 months. The universities could provide a mentor to give support and the student would undertake practice in target areas and in certain schools. The program would reduce concerns about practice placements and students would have guaranteed employment. In the WA context, universities could be asked to tender for the program, which would need to be undertaken in partnership with the employers and supported by WACOT. The project could be initially set up as a demonstration project with twenty students and there could be a metropolitan and a rural package: perhaps one for Design and Technology and one for Maths/Physical Science. Consideration should be given to paying HECS for a couple of years and the employers would need to develop appropriate wage structures. The universities would need staff to run the program as there would be six months of intensive work.

### **Key Issues**

#### **2.3 Incentives and Supports**

- *Given the success of existing scholarship programs, such as the Student Teacher Rural Experience Program and the Final Year Teaching Scholarship, consideration should be given to providing additional funding support for these programs.*
- *WACOT should be supported by all stakeholders in education to provide greater support for the new graduate and the Collegiate Support Person (CSP) whilst undergoing the mentoring process to move from Provisional to full Registration. Funding should be considered to support the professional development of the CSPs.*
- *Mateship programs could be facilitated by the employers to provide support for trainee teachers and beginning teachers taking up positions in rural and remote locations.*
- *A demonstration project should be considered to support career change of people with a relevant undergraduate degree to undertake an internship with professional practice in a rural location or in an area of shortage. The universities should be invited to tender for such a project.*

<b>GOAL 3: To address issues of new technology and rural education</b>
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#### **New Technology**

Where small rural/remote schools are finding it impossible to attract and to retain teachers and are increasingly unable to offer programs in a number of specialist learning areas, one solution is to offer such programs online. This is becoming more viable with recent improvements in broadband access. Under the auspices of the AISWALearningnet Project, the Scholaris Learning Gateway application currently being trialled in Independent schools will soon exhaust its initial funding. The next phase of the AISWALearningnet Project would involve experienced practitioners sharing their knowledge and resources with less experienced or less qualified teachers and, at the same time, assisting disadvantaged students, such as remote Aboriginal students, to have equity of access to Secondary courses which would otherwise not be available.

There is the requirement that schools have the necessary bandwidth for students to work online, and where this is deficient, such as in some remote schools, funding might need to be

sought from the Commonwealth for this aspect, given that Commonwealth funding is currently being directed towards improving the reach of the new communication technologies.

### **Key Issues**

#### **3.1 New Technology**

- *A project should be established to prepare a status report on strategies currently being used to deal with education issues across the State. Such a review would document and evaluate technology-based strategies to improve opportunities for:*
  - *rural and remote students generally;*
  - *rural and remote students in Mathematics/Science areas;*
  - *rural and remote students in Design and Technology; and*
  - *support for students subject to the higher school leaving age who would otherwise have left school.*
- *A continuation of State funding might be considered to proceed with Stage 2 of the AISWAlearningnet Project. In support of this, a submission should be made to the Commonwealth for funding to improve the bandwidth available for remote schools so that they can access the Web. The technology would allow schools to link to the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education and would be particularly useful for remote Aboriginal communities.*

### **Rural Education**

The difficulties associated with recruiting teachers for rural and remote schools have been discussed at the national level with particular reference to Science, ICT and Mathematics. At a recent Roundtable meeting of the Rural Education Forum of Australia (Melbourne, October 2006), findings from a National Survey were presented. The report recommended a whole-of-government approach be developed and implemented in the form of a National Rural School Education Strategy. It also recommended that a National Rural Education Research Network be established and funded over the life of the Strategy. The research would need to be conducted through a body or bodies having a coordinated national focus and a presence at universities in each State and Territory. The concept of a National Strategy for Rural School Education, based on the model of the National Health Strategy, is a valuable one; however, WA needs to be strongly represented in its development and should be involved in the selection process for the Research Centre of Excellence. One suggestion received was that it be placed at the Geraldton Universities Centre. This would facilitate working with the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health which could lead to significant benefits both to the universities involved and to rural education in the region and the State.

### **Key Issues**

#### **3.2 Rural Education**

- *Western Australia should lobby for a Research Centre of Excellence in rural education to be located in a rural centre with a university presence.*

**GOAL 4: To ensure the availability of teaching experience placements for all teacher education students and encourage placements in country locations.**

An examination was undertaken of the issues arising in obtaining school experience placements for Teacher Education students. Discussion with Deans of Education and professional practice staff at the universities, and also with the teacher employers, indicated that there are major difficulties because of the sheer numbers involved. Other factors, which are impacting on the universities' ability to provide placements, are:

- the reluctance of some Principals and teachers to participate in practice supervision;
- students' commitments in terms of family, rent and employment and the costs of accommodation if on practice away from home, which preclude country placements and put more pressure on metropolitan schools;
- the more competitive environment which has developed with the involvement of The University of Notre Dame seeking placements in government schools; and
- the costs associated with the practicums, especially in the context of what the universities see as the general under-funding of Teacher Education by the Commonwealth.

As has already occurred in some other Australian States, a further deterioration of practice opportunities could impact on students' ability to graduate within the specified time due to incomplete supervised teacher practicums. The teacher practicum is at the heart of pre-service teacher education and every possible measure should be taken to alleviate the problems.

Each year universities have over 7,000 practice placements which must be arranged so as to ensure students from different programs and different universities do not focus on the same schools at the same time. University staff are having increasing difficulty in finding schools willing to take practising students, particularly in the secondary sector. One estimate provided to the Working Party was that 10-15 per cent of primary schools are not involved in practice supervision but that in secondary schools the percentage is much higher. The response of schools to practice placements is variable with perhaps half of the metropolitan schools taking 90% of all practice students.

The Queensland concept of maintaining a list of the schools which have or have not participated in practice is a strategy which might be considered. Providing for student practice should be part of ongoing performance appraisal and if schools are not taking students, DET, CEO and AISWA should counsel the Principals as schools need to be reminded that it is part of their professional service to provide students with an intrinsic part of their preparation.

There are legitimate reasons why schools or individual teachers do not participate. Finding what these impediments are, and also what would encourage greater involvement by schools, is something that WACOT and the sector authorities should consider addressing through focus groups in the near future.

One incentive for individual teachers to supervise practice is that to be recognised as a Senior Teacher they should be seen to be mentoring new staff. More specifically, the DET Level 3, and the Senior Teacher category should be expected to be involved in mentoring.

The Professional Learning Requirements for Renewal of Registration set out in WACOT's *Membership Policy Part 2* (August 2004) state that *the following activities may be undertaken by a member for the purposes of this regulation –*

- i. acting as a mentor providing guidance to a student teacher, new teacher, re-entry teacher or another colleague (p. 27).*

Practice supervision might be seen to be important enough to warrant this being given extra weighting by WACOT for re-registration rather than being one option in a large range of activities. This is likely to require specific provision being made in the WACOT Act and regulations.

Other States such as Queensland, are just now moving towards a more collaborative approach across the universities in the organisation of professional practice. Reducing competition relieves some of the pressures on the professional practice staff and also minimises pressure on the schools. AISWA has indicated its willingness to join the Western Australian School Experience Committee (WASEC) and to facilitate teaching placements in Independent schools. The Deans should therefore consider inviting AISWA to membership of the Committee.

The Student Teacher Rural Experience Program and the Final Year Teaching Scholarships operated by DET have already been mentioned. Both these programs relieve some of the pressure of finding placements in metropolitan schools and both could be extended if additional funding were made available. The issue of how these programs might be supported in the non-government sector needs to be investigated.

The Internship program described in the previous section is another program that has the potential to reduce concerns about practice placements.

Another strategy to address this issue is currently being discussed by the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC). This strategy proposes the establishment of a Rural Teaching Association.

The strategy is based on research which shows that students who are enabled to participate in a rural teaching practice are more likely to apply for a rural appointment upon graduation and if they are from a rural location, they are more likely to return there at some stage. One of the intended aims of the Association is to facilitate this especially at the local level. RREAC sees considerable value in local communities playing an active role in encouraging student teachers to participate in rural and remote practicums. RREAC also sees the Association working very closely with the nine Regional Development Councils in building the partnerships between all stakeholders in not only providing encouraging and supportive environments for student teachers in rural and remote communities but also in addressing the wider issues of recruitment and retention of quality teachers across regional Western Australia.

(Additional information on school experience placements is outlined in **Attachment C**).

### **Key Issues**

- 4.1. A list of the metropolitan schools that participated in professional practice in 2006 should be maintained on an ongoing basis. The list should be aggregated and provided to DET, CEO and AISWA, with the suggestion that Principals be counselled that practice supervision is part of a teacher's professional service to provide students with an intrinsic part of their education.*

- 4.2 *WACOT should be asked to consider giving priority to the requirement that teachers undertake professional practice supervision as part of re-registration.*
- 4.3 *WACOT in partnership with other stakeholders in education (employers and universities) should consider arranging school focus groups to discuss what are the impediments to taking practice supervision and also what would encourage greater involvement by schools.*
- 4.4 *The Deans should consider inviting AISWA to membership of the Western Australian School Experience Committee.*
- 4.5 *Strong support should be given to the proposal from the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC) for the establishment of a Rural Teaching Association in Western Australia. The Association is planned to facilitate and coordinate the support required for student teachers to participate in rural teaching practice in the State.*

**GOAL 5 To promote effective State-Commonwealth interaction on teacher education workforce planning and funding matters**

In the past few years Western Australia together with most States and Territories, has introduced a range of initiatives designed to address the issue of teacher supply, particularly for schools in hard-to-staff geographic areas and for hard-to-staff learning areas. A number of these initiatives involve financial incentives in the form of scholarships or grants to individuals to take up employment in a hard-to-fill vacancy or to retrain in a hard-to-staff subject area.

In most cases the grant or scholarship provided is subject to Fringe Benefits Tax or personal income tax under Australian Taxation Office regulations. There is broad public interest in ensuring an adequate supply of teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas such as Mathematics and Science, and in rural and remote areas. Given the Commonwealth has declared teacher education as a ‘national priority area’ it would be of significant benefit if the Commonwealth were to exempt from taxation State Teacher Scholarships and grants relating to teacher supply initiatives. NSW has made similar arguments to MCEETYA as part of a submission on higher education and workforce planning issues and MCEETYA has supported the thrust of the arguments.

In November 2005 MCEETYA agreed to bilateral consultations between Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments on workforce planning signalling recognition that there needs to be better alignment of graduate supply with workforce priorities.

More recently the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has also recognised the need for a cooperative approach in its ‘New Reform Agenda’ for human capital development, stating that “to achieve the level and breadth of progress on national needs, COAG agreed that all governments would commit to reform across health, education and training and encouraging and supporting work”.

Most States acknowledge that teaching workforce needs remain an area of concern, particularly in key teaching areas and every effort must be made in national forums to ensure that addressing teaching workforce needs remains at the forefront of the policy agenda.

**Key Issues**

- 5.1 *The State must lobby in national forums including JCHE/MCEETYA, to ensure that the Commonwealth and States and Territories give high priority to education workforce planning issues.*

Declaring teaching to be a National Priority area (as the Commonwealth did in Backing Australia's Future (BAF) "reforms", is fine in principle but in practice there are problems which need to be addressed.

First, being a National Priority area, teaching has a HECS cap applied which means that universities cannot increase the associated fees by up to 25%. While the HECS cap was intended to provide an incentive for students to undertake teacher education courses, this policy has also capped Education funding at a level which Deans of Education argue was too low to start with.

The HECS cap for National Priority places was devised as a means of quarantining teaching and nursing courses from future fee increases and there were even some expectations that competition could result in fees decreasing at some universities. However, a key problem is that the cap only applies to units of study within the teacher education field, while in many cases teacher education courses, of necessity, include units from other fields.

As a consequence the HECS cost of teacher education courses in many universities is actually well above the "cap" set at \$3,920 per EFTSL in 2006. It is also noted that students undertaking a separate undergraduate degree, followed by a Diploma of Education, face a similar cost above the priority cap.

It is clear that, despite its intent, the implementation of the HECS cap for national priority places has not addressed teaching workforce priorities:

- Some of the highest cost courses are in critical areas of teacher education shortages nationally: mathematics, science and technology at the secondary level.
- In the case of science, mathematics and technology this is because of the inclusion in teaching degrees of units of study from higher HECS bands (mathematics, science and technology) or the combination of teaching degrees with degrees in these higher HECS band disciplines.
- Universities are having to balance the competing demands of containing course costs so as to attract students, and providing appropriately constituted courses to meet the workforce needs of employers.
- State Vice-Chancellors have argued against the imposition of the HECS cap on the basis that it is effectively a cap on university funding and does not provide any real incentive for students to choose education courses related to the nature of HECS as a deferred cost scheme.

### **Key Issues**

5.2 *It is questionable whether the HECS cap has been a successful strategy in attracting students to the 'priority area' of teacher education. Unforeseen anomalies in the implementation of the HECS cap policy, as outlined above, appear to have limited its effectiveness as a strategy. A review of the HECS cap is required as a matter of urgency to ensure that universities are not further disadvantaged.*

5.3 *In any event if teacher education is to be designated a 'priority area', the matter of appropriate funding for education courses generally must also be further considered by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). In particular the funding of the Graduate Diploma program needs to be reviewed as its workload is equivalent to 1.5 EFTSL and it needs to be funded accordingly.*

5.4 *Teacher education is a practical profession and appropriate funding and resources are essential to maintain community confidence in the quality of education courses and to ensure that it is identified as a true priority area. It is important that the current DEST review of funding clusters give close attention to the needs of teacher education.*

In terms of Commonwealth funding, the cost of the teaching practicum is recognised in funding for Teacher Education under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) and is currently about \$690 per education EFTSL (unchanged for 10 years). This is included in the overall CGS Education 'cluster' rate (not paid as a separate loading), but the Funding Agreements with providers identify it specifically and require that it be spent for the purpose for which it has been provided.

***Key Issues***

5.5 *The State should take up with the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training via the Joint Committee on Higher Education the question of increasing and quarantining the Student Practicum allowance such that the full amount is available for supporting this core activity.*

**(Attachment D** outlines people interviewed and references consulted)

### SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR TEACHERS IN SPECIFIC LEARNING AREAS AND SPECIFIC LOCATIONS

The methodology used by the Australian Council of Deans of Teacher Education in 2000 “Preston methodology“ does not allow for estimating supply and demand in specific learning areas. An indication of supply is provided in Table 1 derived from information provided by the Deans of Education of the five WA universities. Most universities are not in a position to make long-term projections about future graduate numbers with respect to Graduate Diploma students who are not yet enrolled in Education faculties and there is difficulty in looking more than four years ahead in respect to the Bachelor students. However, it is useful to consider the current distribution of graduates across sectors and learning areas to compare with likely demand, assuming there are no major shifts in the distribution. The estimates and projections are based on the Education specialisations in which current BEd students are enrolled and the GradDip students’ previous Majors in other (non-Education) courses. It should be noted that many students have Minors in learning areas other than their Majors and some graduates have also taken double degrees. To avoid double counting, this additional information is not included in the Table but it should be acknowledged as numbers in particular learning areas are possibly understated.

In discussing retirement eligibility age in its *Workforce Profile 2006*, DET indicates that in a range of learning areas there are large numbers of teachers reaching retirement age between 2006 and 2009 (DET, June 2006). This is a concern if exit numbers appear to be higher than could be replaced by projected graduates (English, 168; Mathematics, 141; Science, 107; and Social Studies, 104). In table 1, LOTE numbers are aggregated as not all universities were able to provide numbers for specific languages; however those listed included Japanese, Indonesian, German, Italian, French, Chinese and Spanish (some as Majors and some as Minors). It is assumed that some of these languages, if not all, will have major problems.

On the demand side there is a similar problem as Secondary teachers may teach across two or more learning areas (such as Maths and Science, or two areas of LOTE). An analysis of unfilled vacancies in schools would give a good indication of where supply is not currently able to meet demand. The Work Group has therefore interviewed the major stakeholders, DET, CEO and AISWA, for their perception of the current situation. These interviews also provide some better insights into the situation in various locations. Nevertheless the evidence about shortages provided to the Work Group is anecdotal and the team was not able to obtain data to confirm that the specialist areas named are areas of shortage across the State.

Having more precise information on where positions cannot be filled (and which learning areas are involved) would be useful in gauging shortages. Central administration records are not kept on difficulties in obtaining relief teachers for unfilled vacancies or the length of time they are unfilled, as individual schools organise their own relief. However, this may be an item in the MCEETYA surveys and it should be easy to obtain the same information annually.

Another avenue for monitoring relief is via the WA College of Teaching (WACOT). An analysis of the learning areas in which relief teachers are employed and, more especially, the learning areas of those who take up a teaching position but have only a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) would be useful. WACOT has indicated that it has currently on its records over 400 people employed across all systems who have only a LAT. WACOT began operating in September 2004 and has only the one year of data in its dataset so it is not possible to say whether this represents a trend for increased numbers of unqualified people teaching. WACOT has undertaken a survey of schools to assess relief teacher shortages in particular locations and

specialist areas and once the responses are known, these should be made known to the universities and the employers so that action can be taken. Regular monitoring should then be undertaken so that emerging trends can be identified.

Table 1: Western Australia Supply of New Graduates in Specific Learning Areas\*

	<b>ACTUAL 2006</b>	<b>PROJECTED 2007</b>
<b>PRIMARY</b>		
Early Childhood	186	207
K Thru Primary	194	194
Primary	537	544
K Thru Middle Years	41	45
Special Education	19	19
Other	63	63
<b>PRIMARY TOTAL</b>	<b>1040</b>	<b>1072</b>
<b>SECONDARY</b>		
Art	46	54
Business	21	19
Design and Technology	35	35
Drama	34	31
Information Technology	17	17
English	94	92
Home Economics	8	8
Languages other than English	28	29
Mathematics	33	43
Music	34	35
Physical & Health Education	113	115
Science	76	86
Social Sciences	120	114
Other	38	38
<b>SECONDARY TOTAL</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>716</b>

\* Data shows 2006 graduates (graduating in 2007) and projections for 2007

The surveys identified will assist in obtaining more factual data on shortages. However, as previously noted, there will tend to be no 'specialist' shortages because Principals are required to manage the staffing configuration they have to the best of their ability and only if no staff are available will a shortage be recorded.

This scenario highlights some of the difficulties of this issue:

- How does one define a 'specialist' – is it someone who has satisfactorily completed a subject 'special methods' in their education course at university – or is it someone regarded by the school as competent in an area of learning?
- Schools might claim they don't actually need 'specialists', depending on the definition.
- The need for 'specialists' might change according to the year level of students and the academic/specialist requirements of the course.
- Much of the demand for specialist teachers is from non-government schools, which have some 40 percent of the total Secondary population, and these schools are more difficult to get data from than is DET.

Ideally a large-scale survey of individual teachers is required but school principals are already inundated with requests for information and would not welcome additional requests. The ACER Survey (mentioned previously in this Report) has a good sized sample of both government and non-government schools in different locations and will be seeking information on retirement intentions, vacancies and teachers teaching in areas in which they are not qualified to teach. The findings from this survey will be useful in conjunction with the information from other sources, such as MCEETYA and WACOT, although findings will not be reported until March 2007. If employers also ensure they have systems in place for ongoing monitoring of the vacancies reported to them, particularly in terms of Learning Areas and locations, there should be sufficient evidence to confirm or deny the anecdotal evidence currently available to influence how Deans market their courses.

### **Interviews with stakeholders**

The interviews with DET, CEO and AISWA suggest that there is increasing difficulty in finding staff for rural and remote schools and for some hard-to-staff metropolitan schools. DET is not as concerned as the other employers about remote schools because of initiatives which it has put in place. (These will be discussed later.) The Catholic schools also have initiatives in place although these are not as generous as those provided by DET. CEO advises that recruiting for rural and remote Primary schools is difficult. Specialist areas with shortages are the same as for public schools (ie Maths, Physical Science, Design and Technology, English, LOTE and Home Economics).

Information from AISWA shows that Independent schools do not expect much change in the number of the enrolments over the next few years with some schools predicting a slight decrease. AISWA advised that in remote locations, schools such as the Aboriginal community schools are extremely difficult to staff and, when teachers are found, the new appointees rarely stay more than a year (and sometimes much less). This staff turnover compounds the disadvantage experienced by the schools. There appears to be an issue also for the schools in recruiting overseas teachers. Teachers from countries such as New Zealand and Scotland show an interest in working with remote communities but, although these are usually experienced teachers, they are unable to get registration to teach in WA. The difficulty appears to be that they are often regarded as only three-year trained; however, this needs clarification by WACOT. The Work Group was advised that some overseas teachers apply and receive registration through Victoria and are then recognised here through mutual recognition protocols. Another issue for the smaller, often under-resourced, remote Independent schools is the change to the school leaving age. Most of these schools do not have facilities or resources to provide upper Secondary courses and a full-time teacher (if one can be found) is costly to employ for a very small number of students. The smaller schools are not able to pay above award rates to attract teachers and the situation is likely to deteriorate if there is a further increase in pay rates across the sectors.

Across all systems, the shortages for particular specialist teachers appear to be making recruitment most difficult in country locations. A recently published report of a nationwide survey of Science, ICT and Mathematics Education (Lyons et al, 2006) highlights the difficulties experienced in trying to recruit these specialist teachers to regional and remote areas. The report indicates that Science, ICT and Mathematics teachers in regional areas are 'about twice as likely as those in remote areas and about four times as likely as those in Metropolitan Areas to report that it was 'very difficult' to fill vacant teaching positions in those subjects in their schools' (Lyons et al, 2006, p. 2).

Deans of Education at each of WA's universities are aware of difficulties experienced by schools in recruiting teachers to teach in specialist Secondary areas such as Maths, Physical Science, Design and Technology, English, LOTE and Home Economics and in recruitment to rural and

remote schools. They also report difficulties in attracting applications for certain courses, often in the areas of need. One Dean commented that:

*the shortage of Science teachers in schools is in crisis throughout the Western world and the crisis has hit WA. The quality of entrants will drop and there will be a need to take Year 12 subjects in first-year university. There will no longer be Physics graduates with 30 years of experience. The State is a stakeholder in the quality of school Science and should take action to encourage students into this area.*

- Murdoch University indicated that there are problems in Physical Science and Maths and there was no optimism that these numbers will improve. In the past, new graduates coming into the Graduate Diplomas in these areas had some Maths/Science background but these people have now disappeared and most entrants come from related workforce areas.
- Like most universities, Curtin University of Technology has continuing problems in attracting male students to ECE and Primary, and attracting sufficient numbers of students to the Physical Sciences, IT and Maths. The Dean believes the drivers behind the current situation are beyond the universities' control.
- Edith Cowan University has continuing problems in attracting students to the Design and Technology program despite job opportunities in the area. Home Science has similar problems and both courses need updating. While ECU encourages entrants from pathways other than the TER, the requirements are stringent and include interviews. Entrants all undertake a unit which assesses their literacy, numeracy and computer skills and if they fail more than twice they are out of the course.

In the context of reported difficulties already occurring in recruiting teaching staff into areas such as Mathematics, Science, English and Design and Technology, the information provided by DET on numbers of teachers in these learning areas nearing retirement age is a matter of considerable concern.

## CURRENT STRATEGIES IN PLACE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND OTHER STATES

### CURRENT STRATEGIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

#### Department of Education and Training ('DET')

A brief overview of each program is provided here and is focussed on the issues for this review.

- **The Final Year Teaching Scholarship Program** provides funding of \$30,000 each to a limited number of students entering the final year of a Teacher Education degree or the GradDip. The Program targets particular learning areas or areas of shortage such as country schools. Scholarship areas of need for 2006 were Maths, Physical Sciences, Home Economics, Design and Technology, Indonesian, Japanese and Italian. This year the program is enabling 50 scholarships and may fund more. Scholarship winners receive up to \$22,500 during their second semester of study with payments made fortnightly to minimise tax perspectives (when recipients don't understand that they will be liable for tax). They also receive a \$3,000 settling in bonus at the beginning of their first year of teaching and \$2,500 at the beginning of their second year, plus \$2,000 worth of other benefits. The teachers are bonded to the Department for two years but DET does lose some people, despite the effort put into the program.
- **The Student Teacher Rural Experience Program (STREP)** was initially funded by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy but has been taken over and extended by DET. In its Submission to the National Inquiry, DET notes that the majority of the Department's teaching vacancies are in rural locations but that graduates are often unwilling to work in rural areas and, when willing, are sometimes not well prepared. The STREP program 'aims to encourage more final year teaching students to experience country teaching in a supported teaching practice'. The Program promotes rural teaching. It now costs \$150,000 per annum (up from \$25,000). Final year students doing ATP in rural schools receive a stipend for accommodation (\$150 per week) plus funds for travel. Students get \$1,000 on average and this goes to 120-150 students. DET states that the program has resulted in increased numbers of student teachers completing their ATP in rural locations with a subsequent increase in teacher graduates applying for rural postings. An ECU evaluation shows that about 60 per cent of recipients end up teaching in the country. It is not really known if they would have gone there anyway but it appears that the program is very successful.
- The Office of Science and Innovation previously provided funding to pay the HECS for people going into Science teaching. DET operated the Program for its sector and wanted to convert it to a final year teaching scholarship, as paying the HECS did not attract students and a significant number did not have a HECS debt. However, the Program was not funded for 2006.
- **The Teacher Entry and Orientation Program** was set up by DET two years ago for teachers who had not taught in WA in the last five years. Applicants have a one-week orientation program and then two weeks of practice including 5 days at one school. If Principals approve their performance they can receive an ID and be employed. Under this program there are 400 people employed each year and about 50 not approved.

- In another new initiative, which is in the planning stage, DET is seeking \$4m to give a range of incentives to experienced teachers or new graduates to travel to certain locations or to teach in certain learning areas for two years. DET does not currently have a problem staffing remote schools because it pays significant benefits (\$15,000 extra pay, local allowances, free housing, three months extra leave on full pay etc). Catholic and Independent schools often can't afford such incentives.

### ***The Catholic Education Office***

The Catholic Education Office has an incentive similar to the STREP to encourage students to do their ATP in the country and eventually seek employment there. CEO provides \$13,500 as a fourth year living allowance and HECS. In the last two years CEO has offered three scholarships each year but only one was actually given. Graduates often don't want to go to the country especially to specific towns in the Mid West and Pilbara but there have been some successes with graduates going to Kalgoorlie.

### ***The Association of Independent Schools in Western Australia (AISWA)***

The Association of Independent Schools is currently trialling a strategy to develop a portal for teachers in small or remote schools to provide a means of delivering key areas of the Secondary curriculum electronically. AISWA received funding of \$1.2 m from the State Government to work on the first stage of a project to assist AISWA member schools enter the on-line environment. AISWA collaborated with a commercial firm, Solutions IT, which had developed their application, the Scholaris Learning Gateway. The program allows a teacher, for example, in Bunbury, to use a lesson prepared by another teacher, for example, at Christ Church. Students are able to study online, receive assessments and feedback etc. The cost is low, \$25 per student per year, and new technology is readily available provided schools have the required bandwidth – although there are unresolved issues to do with Intellectual Property. Other resources are available, particularly VET courses, which help smaller and remote schools cope with the need to provide for Upper Secondary students. The shortage of teachers especially in specialist areas would be addressed as the need for face-to-face contact, while still necessary, is reduced to one contact and perhaps ten virtual contacts at less cost and with improved outcomes. Remote Independent schools have particular problems that can be addressed by this strategy. The project is dependent on further funding to move to the next stage. Tied in with the project and the need to improve the communication technology to deliver programs to students is a related issue of addressing the social and professional isolation of teachers in remote schools. If professional development can be provided online and teachers can keep in contact with family and friends via the Internet, they may stay longer in these schools.

### ***The Universities***

The universities attempt to address shortages, although this is not really their role in a market economy if students choose to study in other areas. One Dean commented that universities are not now prepared to run courses if these are not economic although they do attempt to maintain programs if they are the only provider. While the universities do attempt to address issues such as shortages this does not always work out. For example, in response to the shortage of Design and Technology teachers, a lot of work went into setting up a program at Murdoch's Rockingham Campus, which, despite market research, proved unsustainable because of the low numbers of entrants when it was actually offered. Any proposals for future programs would have to be very sure of the numbers and have both employers and universities presenting the same message. The following are initiatives undertaken by the public universities:

- **Murdoch University ('Murdoch')**

The four-year joint double degree offered by Murdoch is proving successful and there are small numbers of BSc/BEd students coming through. The Secondary BEd program has had increasing numbers over the last few years but most students are Arts rather than Science (in a ratio of 3:1). Also Murdoch's two-year BEd was introduced in 2005 and is available to people entering with a previous degree. However, the potential success of the program is inhibited by cost as most mature-aged people intending to change to teaching could choose to do a one-year Graduate Diploma. Murdoch also offers a Graduate Diploma in Maths Teaching which is supported by DET and is designed for Primary teachers who are already teaching but want a career change. This program is mainly for teachers whose Maths is weak and who teach in rural locations without support. A dilemma for much coursework postgraduate study is that it is full fee. The Graduate Diploma in Special Needs is in an area of shortage and people want to do it with WACOT qualifications in mind, but it is difficult to get the right people with suitable content and it is also full fee.

- **Curtin University of Technology ('Curtin')**

Curtin has improved its attrition rates by using a more pastoral approach in the four-year program. The School is also marketing courses associated with the Science Mathematics Education Centre to see if it can increase numbers in Science and Mathematics. Good numbers are applying (although those doing Science usually choose Biological Science rather than Physical). Double degrees have been on offer for five years but these are not very popular. They are difficult to manage as only 50% comes under the HECS guarantee. This is an issue which will need to be taken up with DEST. Although the double degree should be attractive as it provides for the two degrees in four years, many of the students eventually move back to the single degree, usually away from Education, possibly because of employment opportunities.

- **Edith Cowan University ('ECU')**

A joint DET-ECU scholarship program will run for the first time in 2007. This is the Design and Technology Program which will provide students who already have a degree (Fine Arts, Media etc) with a BEd after a two-year program at ECU. They will be tested for practical aptitude and will do the one year GradDip and one year of practical training at Swan TAFE (both over the two years). Students will receive \$60,000 over the two years in fortnightly payments and have HECS fees covered. Groups will have to be in multiples of 12 or 15 and people from overseas can apply. The scholarships will be attractive to overseas students as they provide for a two-year student visa, which can then lead to sponsorship. Recipients are expected to work for two years for DET.

- **University of Western Australia ('UWA')**

UWA is taking action to try to increase the number of Physical Science and Mathematics graduates coming into Education. The University has appointed a new Professor of Science Education as a joint appointment between Education and the Science Faculty to try to attract students into teaching.

## **CURRENT STRATEGIES IN PLACE IN OTHER STATES AND TERRITORIES**

### ***New South Wales***

NSW is in a different situation than most other States with an expected substantial reduction in the Primary and Secondary age cohorts for the next two decades. According to the Report, *NSW Public Schools: Building on Strong Foundations* (NSW Public Education Council, March 2005) the total school age population is likely to fall by some 45,000 – 85,000 by 2020 (p 69). The projected population decline will have significant planning implications for the government school system because of the need to maintain viability in areas of decline and competition with the non-government schools for the dwindling pool of students (p iii). The Public Education Council supports a proposal to designate some schools as ‘professional practice’ schools. Other initiatives include:

- Pre-service Teacher Education scholarships in areas of shortfall - Secondary Maths, Science (Physics), Technology and Applied Studies and in English.
- Encouraging skilled workers from industry to obtain teacher qualifications through an 18 month accelerated Teacher Education program with intensive retraining programs that build on the competencies of existing graduate teachers. The scholarships and sponsorships pay for students’ fees up to the level of a Commonwealth supported place and provide a \$1,500 training allowance for each year of full-time study. Recipients agree to teach for at least three years in a Government school in Western or South-Western Sydney or in a non-coastal rural area. Each year 230 scholarships are awarded including 60 to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students.

### ***Northern Territory (‘NT’)***

The NT Government provides 20 teacher education bursaries worth \$12,000 per year. While awarded mostly on merit, if academic merit is equal, applicants who agree to teach in remote NT schools and who undertake teacher training in identified skill and shortage areas are favoured.

### ***Queensland***

In its Submission to the National Inquiry (2005), the Queensland Government indicates that it is experiencing some challenges in recruiting to fill vacancies in some specialist areas and geographic locations. The Queensland Government has a scholarship program for Teacher Education students in rural and remote areas valued at \$20,000 per student. The Government also provides rural internships/mentoring programs for trainee teachers who are paid.

### ***South Australia***

The South Australian Primary Principals Association in its Submission to the National Inquiry (2005) states that despite predictions of a nationwide teacher shortage there have been few direct recruiting strategies. South Australia offers scholarships of \$2,500 per annum up to a maximum of \$10,000 to teacher education students from country areas who agree to teach in country SA. Scholarships of \$2,500 pa up to a maximum of \$10,000 are also available to Aboriginal Teacher Education students who commit to teach in country SA.

### ***Victoria***

*The Teacher Supply and Demand Report*, produced in 2005 by the Teacher Supply and Demand Reference Group, projects a surplus of Primary-trained teachers and a shortage of Secondary-trained teachers resulting in the need to recruit an additional 450 Secondary teachers on average each year across all systems. Pressure on teacher numbers is already being felt in specific subject areas (eg Mathematics, Physical Education, LOTE – Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and German, Physics, IT and Technology) and in particular locations. Because of the recruitment difficulties, the Victorian Government has introduced a number of teacher supply initiatives, as

listed in the Victorian Department of Education and Training, Submission to the National Inquiry (May 2006):

- the Career Change Program enabling skilled non-teaching professionals to retrain as teachers in areas of high demand. Since 2005 this has enabled 61 skilled non-teaching professionals to retrain as teachers in areas of high demand. To suit these students, some universities are offering more flexible courses.
- Refresher Training for teachers who have been away from the classroom for more than three years or are new to the system.
- the Promotion of Teaching initiative which targets undergraduates in relevant degree courses other than Education to consider teaching.
- the Student Teacher Practicum Scheme which provides financial support for practicums in rural schools.
- the Rural Retraining Program which provides training in an area of curriculum need. More than 170 teachers have commenced retraining under this program since 2005, mainly in Special Education and LOTE.
- the Teaching Scholarship Scheme providing financial incentives to student teachers to take positions in hard-to-fill vacancies. Payments of between \$3,000 and \$5,000 are made to final-year Teacher Education students and graduates who agree to work for at least two years in curriculum or geographic areas with recruitment difficulties. A retention bond of up to \$4,000 is paid to scholarship holders in certain schools after a period of employment of three years two months.

## SCHOOL EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS

At the first meeting of the Working Party it was reported that 'it is becoming increasingly difficult to place students on practicums in schools, to the extent that in Victoria in 2005 some students could not graduate because of insufficient placements'. The Working Party expressed concern that this situation could occur in WA if the acute shortage of placements is not addressed. Availability of school experience placements is a critical issue in meeting a probable increased demand for teachers.

The Working Party sought to identify the nature and extent of the problems associated with obtaining appropriate school experience placements and to recommend strategies to address them. It was agreed that the following issues should be addressed to:

- determine the extent of the problem;
- identify government and non-government sector issues;
- determine norms for the system: What is expected?
- consider the roles of the various stakeholders;
- consider resource questions, nationally and within universities;
- investigate a range of strategies to increase student placements including rewards and incentives for individuals with specific attention to the benefits for the system as a whole.

### Government Sector Issues with School Experience Placements

The public universities all report increasing difficulty in arranging placements and say that the difficulties have come about in the last few years.

- Over a number of years there has been an increase in Teacher Education students and programs without due regard to practice requirements. Rural practicums are no longer provided because students now are more likely to have rent and work or family commitments and are unable to go to the country. Also the costs for accommodation for country practicums have become prohibitive. Overall costs to a student on a country placement quoted by Halsey from a recent survey are between \$2,500 and \$3,000 (Halsey, 2006, p.20).
- Metropolitan teachers with increasingly heavy workloads are beginning to question whether there is any reward for them in providing supervision, especially in terms of the funding they receive.
- All Deans reported as schools' reasons for reluctance, particularly Secondary schools, the workload and stress associated with the current curriculum changes. In Primary, some teachers involved in the Years 5, 7 and 9 Australia-wide testing might choose not to take on practising students, either because of the extra work or because of a fear they might affect the class's performance.
- The collaborative arrangements by which the public universities previously operated have been replaced with a more competitive situation related to the mode of operation adopted by the University of Notre Dame Australia.

Specific issues raised by the universities included the following:

- **Curtin** has major concerns about placements for specialist areas, particularly ESL as the numbers of ESL teachers are small. Similar problems occur for Asian languages and Maths/Science teachers appear unwilling to take practice students. Secondary has a major issue across the board in trying to find placements.

- **ECU** advises that while the University has its list of schools, there are problems when there are administration or staff changes. Joondalup schools might have 25 First Years one day a week and the students get to know the schools but a new Principal might decline to participate because he/she doesn't know the teachers or because there is too much change occurring. In some specialist learning areas, in which there are large numbers of students, it is difficult to find enough placements. In others there are only a handful of teachers (LOTE, Media, Drama, Design and Technology) insufficient to cope with the numbers of practice students. English is becoming a problem because teachers are still becoming familiar with the new courses of study and many are declining to take on additional load. There is also a difficulty in some schools because of large numbers of traumatised refugees and previously supplied Commonwealth resources are not available. Teachers with these children prefer not to take practice supervision while they are trying to create a perception of a safe environment for the children. The scale of the problems can be appreciated when ECU needs to arrange practice for 4,000 trainees. An administration staff of 11 is required to manage the placements.
- **Murdoch** advises that it is always a struggle to find places for students. Murdoch tries to do PR and gives small gifts and Certificates but it is stressful having to go to the same teachers time and again and fewer want to be involved. Currently places are always found eventually but in Secondary, particularly for some languages, Murdoch has to ask other universities if it can approach their schools. Asian languages (Japanese and Mandarin) and French are all difficult to place.

In the past, placements at government schools were allocated to each of the public universities. They could then negotiate with each other if necessary and this worked well. The universities' professional practice staff collaborated as members of a committee, the **Western Australian School Experience Committee (WASEC)**, which has been in operation for over two decades. The Committee functions in an advisory capacity to the Deans of Education and provides 'a forum to share concerns and issues arising from field experience across Western Australian universities' (WASEC Terms of Reference, 2003). The Committee meets at least once a semester, its purposes being *to:*

1. *Facilitate the placement of students from member universities in schools for the purpose of school experience; and*
2. *Minimise pressures on host schools arising from uncoordinated requests from the universities.*

The WASEC continues to operate, with the four public universities and DET deciding which university should have first call on particular schools. The Practice staff schedule times to fit in with the other public universities so that practices using the same schools do not overlap. The logistics are complex given the numbers of students involved and the different programs even within one university. The long-standing agreement concerning which schools each university should use is updated when necessary. Schools near university campuses are usually given preference and the agreement does not cover non-government schools or country schools. Universities can liaise when they need to use each other's schools (eg because of subject specialisations which cause the greatest difficulty). Any problems are given to the Deans to address and the Committee sets out the boundaries and rules and limits competition. WASEC appears to work well.

The University of Notre Dame Australia has chosen not to be a member of WASEC because it reserves the right to choose its own partner schools unrelated to any geographical division agreed to by WASEC. However, the Deans of Education might consider inviting AISWA and CEO to join WASEC so as to facilitate non-government schools' involvement in practice.

## **Funding Issues associated with Professional Practice**

A major issue in regard to professional practice is the cost. Besides the cost to the students already mentioned there is the cost to the universities. This cost is in the context of the chronic under funding which has afflicted Teacher Education for many years (eg while students at ECU went up by 10 per cent, academic staff numbers fell and student:staff ratios increased from 15:1 to 22:1). With the introduction of the cluster funding system, Education has been most affected because of teaching practice. Under the band system, 15 or 20 years ago, Education used to be 1.4 times the base load and the universities added 0.2 to make it up to 1.6. There has been a general reduction since and the current cluster funding is insufficient to run the program appropriately. The teaching program is student centred and requires interaction, group work and building of collaborative skills which can't be done in a large lecture theatre. This type of program is more expensive but is needed if the universities are to produce the qualities in graduates that society requires - this applies to the teachers produced for non-government as well as government schools.

A related issue is that the GradDip program is funded at the same rate as the undergraduate program. The Commonwealth Government funds it as equivalent to the third and fourth year of the undergraduate program as it is claimed that it is not really postgraduate. However, the GradDip is more intensive, having to cover half as much again as in an undergraduate unit. A typical unit of study requires ten hours with three hours of face-to-face contact, whereas for the half units in a GradDip there are two hours. This funding imbalance needs to be taken up with the Commonwealth.

These broader issues of Teacher Education funding will be addressed in the National Inquiry and also in the Commonwealth review of the cluster funding mechanism.

Besides paying for their own faculty staff to undertake practice supervision and other costs associated with arranging practicums, the universities have to pay an allowance to the supervising teachers. The amount that is paid is perceived by many teachers as insufficient reward for their work. The allowance is set by a Federal Industrial Award and has not been increased since 1990. The Award (the *Australian Higher Education Practice Teaching Supervision Award 1990*) sets the rate of pay for supervising teachers at \$12.45 per day for Secondary in one method and \$21.20 per day for Secondary in two methods and Primary Teachers supervising practices longer than six weeks such as ATP (Assistant Teachers Program) do not get paid. The argument behind this is that the practising students can free up some of the teacher's time.

There is currently some pressure from the Unions for the Award rates to be increased. However, there is a danger that any increase could impact adversely on the Education Faculties. Ideally DEST could increase and quarantine the moneys so that they are received in full by the Faculties. However, DEST has previously claimed that how they are distributed is an internal matter for the universities and it seems unlikely that this view will change.

## **Strategies currently employed by the Universities to address the Practicum Issues**

The public universities are attempting to find ways to address the issues.

- ECU has 4,000 students to place each year, sometimes more than once a term, and a total of 480 schools on the WASEC list used by ECU. The School has an electronic placement system and allocates university staff for supervision as well as sending out material to the students and schools. ECU is also looking for ways to develop partnerships to mutual advantage, ie appealing to the professionalism of the teachers. The ECU Partnership Program

was introduced in the Joondalup area and is now in Swan Districts as well as West Coast. It grew out of a need to build up relationships with schools and also has strong links with the District Offices. There is a full-time university staff member attached to the schools and the Program attempts to find ways in which ECU can help the schools as well as gaining access to them. ECU lecturers visit schools (eg in the *Mr Maths* and *Earth Day* program) and students visit the campus. ECU also encourages supervising teachers to take more of a mentoring role and ECU students undertake small group work (eg in Maths and Literacy) at the schools. This assists both the schools and the University. ECU has a subject coordinator (the Principal or other senior teacher) and is moving towards providing professional development. Mentor teachers come to campus throughout the year to do PD and ECU is aiming to increase this program.

- **UWA** has an additional coordinator and is reducing the number of schools it deals with to increase the yield and lock them into a relationship with UWA.
- For **Curtin** all faculty staff are involved in school visits. In addition there is part of an academic salary for coordination of field placements and there are three general staff (for ECE, Primary and Secondary) liaising with schools. A review of the practicum is currently underway and different models are being examined. Curtin has previously tried alternative models such as classroom supervision which involved inducting teachers and paying them. However, the faculty is not able to pay much without major financial stress. Curtin still has complementary visits but has cut back the frequency and put more emphasis on teachers assessing the students, especially early on in the formative stages. The University has to ensure it takes responsibility in view of the possibility of legal challenges (which have occurred) and two members of staff are usually involved. At Curtin practice is usually 20 weeks for an undergraduate course and 45 days for a Diploma.

### **Non-Government Issues**

The Catholic Education Office agrees with the other employers and the Deans that many teachers are not taking practising students. Those in Years 11 and 12 are currently overwhelmed by the changes occurring and those in Years 8-10 are also having difficulties as Outcome Based Education has not been implemented fully. Many teachers do not feel that they can take on student teachers. They also feel that there is very little reward. The Catholic schools are autonomous so make their own decisions. However, some schools have recently entered into partnerships through the *Raising Achievement in Schools* (RAISE) Program. This is a Literacy Program for Catholic Schools in which university students work one-on-one with students who have a literacy problem. This helps build relationships with schools and with ECU which is also involved. However, some RAISE schools are already taking 10 students and there are almost not enough schools.

The Dean of **UNDA** does not believe the university has the problems the other universities are experiencing in regard to student placements when UNDA has only 200 students a year across ECE, Primary and Secondary. He states that UNDA would cap the numbers if there was a problem, but, in any event, the University wants to keep its Faculties in balance so would probably not increase beyond 250 places.

UNDA does some things differently from the other universities. It provides for longer practicums of 10 weeks rather than six weeks in years 2, 3 and 4 and also for the DipEd. Class time is said to be much the same as UNDA lectures start earlier and finish later in the year. UNDA views the ten weeks as good practice.

## Country Practice

The issue of country practicums is another aspect of the problems associated with pre-service placements. A recent publication *Pre-Service Country Teaching in Australia: What is happening – what needs to happen?* (Halsey, 2005), reports the findings from the Pre-service Country Teaching Mapping Project. DEST and the Rural Education Forum Australia (REFA) supported this Project which surveyed Australian university Education faculties and officers in government and non-government school systems and sectors associated with pre-service teaching placements, to establish what are the issues in relation to country teaching placements. Previous reports have emphasised that preparing teachers for country schools is a major factor in attracting and retaining teachers in other-than-metropolitan locations. However, the Project found that, while the universities encourage country placements, less than a quarter go there. There are a number of significant issues which affect their ready availability: in particular, as noted in the previous section, the cost pressures for pre-service teachers and for the providing institutions.

In regard to country placements, **UWA** indicated in the above Survey that DET supplies a list of schools which have indicated a willingness to host a student. With all universities accessing this list there are insufficient places to meet demand. The University makes individual approaches to schools based on where students would like to go (Halsey, 2006, p 135). The students negotiate with the school to find a teacher or a community member willing to provide accommodation. Most are expected to pay at least \$80 of their \$100 a week subsidy for accommodation. Over the last five years UWA has been able to organise places for all students who were keen to participate except for three in 2004 who could not be accommodated. This was mainly because they were LOTE students and it was difficult to find schools willing to accommodate them and which had the appropriate language in the curriculum (Halsey, 2006, p 147). In regard to support for the practicums, the University appoints a person in the location to act as supervisor on behalf of the University which is in contact with the students, and provide weekly mentoring or more often if there are problems. The supervisor makes two formal visits to the student to watch lessons, provide feedback and make a formal assessment.

For **ECU** in any one year 75 students (out of 4,000) go out on country practice. Students want to do this but it is increasingly difficult to accommodate them. In the past they were often billeted but students now expect better accommodation. Some Shires help with country accommodation and ECU uses TAFE colleges and residential colleges which provide board and lodgings in return for students taking on some responsibilities in the Hostel. ECU is exploring ways to send more people to the country but generally there is either no accommodation or it is too expensive.

The **UNDA** Professional Practice Office has established partnerships with country schools that include a Head of Professional Practice who mentors and supervises student teachers on practice; a Student Support Officer (in country cluster locations) who manages student accommodation, organises social and sporting activities and maintains contact with students out of school; and a Learning Area Specialist (in country cluster locations) who conducts a lecture/tutorial once a week after school and acts as the first point of call if students are experiencing difficulties. UNDA has some regional placements in the Kimberley but more often in Geraldton and Kalgoorlie. Students receive sponsorship from the Catholic Education Office and houses are rented, eg in Muresk and Geraldton. Students go to State schools as well as Catholic and there are opportunities to practise in Aboriginal schools such as Lombardina and Beagle Bay but students are more likely to go to mixed schools such as in Broome and Derby.

## STRATEGIES IN OTHER STATES

### Queensland

For Queensland student placements are a huge problem. To address the issue the Queensland College of Teachers worked with the Department (Education Queensland) to look at which schools were taking students and which were not. Data was made public to government schools and it is intended to expand the program to non-government schools. The approach is a positive one looking to encourage and facilitate schools to take more student practice. This approach could be used in WA.

In Queensland universities have tended to act separately in terms of obtaining student placements and have tended to align with schools in geographical catchment areas. In other words, there used to be competition but necessity is making the universities consider a more cooperative approach. They are looking at an education summit of all parties to look at a practical approach.

In his 2006 paper, 'Yes you can afford it! – Supporting pre-service teachers in their desire to complete a teaching experience in rural or remote Queensland', King describes approaches used by the Faculty of Education, University of Southern Queensland, to encourage and support students who take up the opportunity to complete a teaching experience in rural or remote locations (In Boylan (Ed), *Community, Diversity and Innovation in Rural and Remote Education and Training*, pp 167-169). Approaches include:

- a requirement that all Primary, Middle and Early Childhood students complete at least one professional experience in a small, rural, multi-age setting;
- an elective, Teaching in Small Rural Communities, available to students across various programs;
- the Isolated Children's Project, which provides an opportunity for pre-service teachers to stay on a property for three weeks and work with children from various Schools of Distance Education; and
- an on-campus program, the Priority Country Area Program (PCAP) Enrolment Camp in which secondary students from all schools across SW Queensland visit the campus for one week. Pre-service teachers organise the program and have the opportunity to work with students from rural and remote schools.

A recent innovative strategy described by King involves a partnership with rural and remote Shire councils whereby councils sponsor a pre-service teacher by awarding a \$500 scholarship towards the cost of relocating for the experience (King, 2006, p 168). The councils were asked to commit to three years of support and placements are made in schools within the Shire. Other support opportunities can be provided such as transport from local PCAP groups and free and low cost accommodation through the school community. The scheme is now in its third year and is proving popular with pre-service teachers and the Shires. The Queensland Government acknowledges the critical role of teachers in regenerating the profession and supports a recommendation of the Review of the Board of Teacher Registration that re-registration should be defined as including mentoring of student teachers and interns (Queensland Government, Submission to the National Inquiry, April 2005, p 6). This is a strategy which could be considered to address the practice issue in this State.

## **Victoria**

As described in the Victorian Department of Education and Training Submission to the National Inquiry (May 2006), the Department has a Student Teacher Practicum Scheme which provides financial incentives to student teachers to undertake practicums in rural schools which serves to take pressure off over-loaded metropolitan schools (p 8). The Department, the universities and other stakeholders have identified a number of possible measures to alleviate problems with teacher placements. These include:

- the establishment of a central database to coordinate placements;
- better marketing of the benefits of practicums for schools and school communities;
- enhanced relationships between universities and schools; and
- the possibility of giving recognition to supervising teachers as part of the teacher registration process.

## INTERVIEWS AND REFERENCES

### INTERVIEWS

The following people were interviewed in relation to this project:

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BOARD, Anne	Murdoch University
BOYD, Don	Department of Education Services
BRAY, Glenis	Department of Education and Training
BRENNAN, Marie	University of South Australia
BRIGGS, Sue	Edith Cowan University
DELLAR, Graham	Curtin University of Technology
GRZENDA, Desiree	Catholic Education Office
HEWITT, David	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
KISSANE, Barry	Murdoch University
KUZICH, Sonja	Western Australian College of Teaching
LEE, Patrick	NSW Institute of Teachers
LINCOLN, Rosa	Department of Education Services
LOUDEN, Bill	The University of Western Australia
MALONEY, Carmel	Edith Cowan University
O'NEILL, Michael	The University of Notre Dame Australia
RODGERS, Janet	Western Australian College of Teaching
RYAN, John	Queensland College of Teachers
TANGUS, Jim	Victoria Department of Education and Training

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