

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 849

SP 029 266

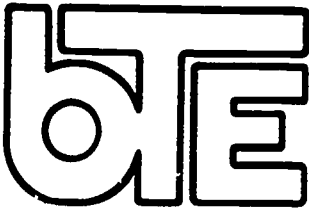
**AUTHOR** Duck, Greg; And Others  
**TITLE** The Bachelor of Education Degree in the Queensland Advanced Education System: Summary of the Evaluation.  
**INSTITUTION** Queensland Board of Teacher Education, Toowong (Australia).  
**REPORT NO** ISBN-0-7242-2436-X  
**PUB DATE** Feb 87  
**NOTE** 3lp.; For the complete evaluation, see SP 029 273.  
**PUB TYPE** Reports - Research/Technical (143)

**EDRS PRICE** MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
**DESCRIPTORS** \*Bachelors Degrees; Field Experience Programs; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; \*Program Attitudes; \*Teacher Attitudes; \*Teacher Characteristics; \*Teacher Education Programs; \*Teacher Motivation; Teaching Experience  
**IDENTIFIERS** \*Australia(Queensland)

**ABSTRACT**

This volume contains a summary of the results of the Queensland (Australia) Board of Teacher Education's investigation into the Bachelor of Education degree (B.Ed.) in the Queensland advanced education system. Data collection involved information obtained from interviews with teachers and teacher educators and their responses to a survey questionnaire. Study areas focused on teacher entry characteristics; motivation to participate; aims of B.Ed. programs; program structure; student experiences within the program; school contextual factors; and the effects of the program on teachers who completed it, on the schools, and on lecturers. Results indicate that students looked favorably upon the program. Other findings and recommendations for program improvement are discussed. (CB)

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Board of  
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Queensland

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**THE BACHELOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE IN  
THE QUEENSLAND ADVANCED EDUCATION SYSTEM:  
SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION**

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**THE BACHELOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE IN  
THE QUEENSLAND ADVANCED EDUCATION SYSTEM:  
SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION**

Board of Teacher Education,  
P.O. Box 389,  
TOOWONG. Q. 4066.

February 1987

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National Library of Australia card number and ISBN

ISBN 0 7242 2436 X

## PREFACE

This report presents a summary of the results of the Board of Teacher Education's investigation into the Bachelor of Education degree in the Queensland advanced education system. The main report of the study, as well as additional copies of this summary, is available on request from the Board of Teacher Education.

The results of the study are based largely on information gained in interviews with and a questionnaire survey of teachers and teacher educators. As it would have been impossible to conduct the study without the cooperation of the teachers and teacher educators who gave their time for interviews or to complete questionnaires, the Board wishes to thank them for their contribution to the project.

The study was undertaken by Greg Duck, Elizabeth Webb, and Debra Cunningham. It was carried under the aegis of the Board's Research Committee, the membership of which is shown in the appendix. Thanks are extended to Geoff Bull (Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education), Neil Dempster (Department of Education), Debra Hollywood (Macgregor State School), Glen Postle (Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education), John Schmidt (Brisbane College of Advanced Education) and Ian Whelan (Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education) for acting as consultants on the project.

The contribution of Jackie Sorensen, who typed the report and entered data on to computer files, is also gratefully acknowledged.

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## INTRODUCTION

### The Bachelor of Education degree

Bachelor of Education programs are offered in the advanced education sector in Queensland as in-service degrees for teachers with at least one year's teaching experience. Teachers who hold a diploma of teaching, or a non-education degree plus a graduate diploma in education, may complete a Bachelor of Education degree by undertaking the equivalent of a further year's full-time study. Teachers with fewer than three years' study prior to commencing a B.Ed. program may also be eligible to enrol, but normally must complete studies in addition to the one year's full-time equivalent.

In the 1978 Review of Teacher Education in Queensland (the Bassett report), the Bachelor of Education degree was conceptualised as the final phase of initial teacher preparation. Under this pattern, initial teacher preparation involves a pre-service phase (e.g. a Diploma of Teaching), an induction period of teaching in a school and the completion of a degree in education, usually by part-time study.

Although the 1978 Review Committee recommended that completion of a Bachelor of Education degree should be mandatory, the Board of Teacher Education, while endorsing the general pattern proposed by the Committee, decided that completion of the degree should be on a voluntary basis.

The offering of Bachelor of Education degrees in Queensland preceded the 1978 Review. These programs were first offered in 1977. Since then, total enrolment has grown from 233 to some 2,500 in 1986. Bachelor of Education programs are now offered by Brisbane College of Advanced Education, Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education, Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, the Institute of Advanced Education James Cook University of North Queensland and McAuley College.

### Purposes of the study

In 1984, the Board of Teacher Education began an evaluation of the Bachelor of Education degree. The project aims to provide information to the Board in its role of keeping teacher education in Queensland under review.

The project also aims to provide information which the teacher education community in general and individual tertiary institutions can use in ongoing reviews of Bachelor of Education programs.

### Information collected

A conceptual framework was developed to guide data collection. This framework was based on a review of the literature on in-service teacher education and adult education, and unstructured interviews with teachers and college Bachelor of Education coordinators.

An outline of the type of information collected is given below.

#### **Teacher entry characteristics**

- . Age
- . Sex
- . Teaching experience
- . Qualifications
- . Position

## **Motivation to participate**

- . Reasons why teachers enrol in a Bachelor of Education program including intrinsic and extrinsic reasons
- . Reasons why teachers do not enrol in a B.Ed.

## **Aims of B.Ed. programs**

- . Stated and desired aims

## **Structure of program**

- . The B.Ed. as an in-service or pre-service program
- . Content of B.Ed. programs
- . Organisation of offering of B.Ed. units

## **Student experiences within course**

- . Studying as an external student
- . Studying as a part-time internal student
- . Studying as a full-time student
- . Workload
- . Teaching-learning methods
- . Methods of assessment
- . Withdrawal from the program

## **School contextual factors**

- . Type
- . Sector
- . Level
- . Location
- . Attitude of school administrators
- . Attitude of colleagues
- . School conditions hindering or facilitating the influence of the B.Ed.

## **Outcomes**

- . Effects on teachers who completed or are enrolled in the B.Ed.
- . Effects on the school as a whole
- . Effects on lecturers

## **Methodology**

The methodology for the study involved using both interviews and questionnaires, as well as document analysis. The major activities of the project were:

1. Preliminary stage: September 1984 - April 1985
  - . Review of literature
  - . Analysis of B.Ed. submissions
  - . Preliminary interviews
  - . Development of conceptual framework
2. Interviews
  - . Development of interview schedules April - June 1985
  - . Conduct of interviews June - November 1985
  - . Analysis of interviews and writing of interim report January - April 1986
3. Questionnaires
  - . Development of questionnaires August - October 1985



- Identification of populations and selection of samples                      September    October 1985
- Distribution and return of questionnaires                                  October 1985 - April.1986
- Analysis of questionnaires                                  January - June 1986
- Preparation of main report and summary report                                  July 1986 - January 1987

The interviews for the second stage of the study were conducted with teachers at schools in Brisbane, Redcliffe, Logan City, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Townsville, and with lecturers in the Bachelor of Education programs offered by Brisbane College of Advanced Education, the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education, the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education and the Institute of Advanced Education, James Cook University of North Queensland. When the project commenced, the Bachelor of Education program at McAuley College was not operational and it was decided not to include in the study teachers and lecturers associated with the McAuley program.

The number of interviewees in each group is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of interviewees in each group

| GROUP   | NO.        |
|---|------------|
| B.Ed. graduates   | 25         |
| B.Ed. students  | 23         |
| Teachers who have withdrawn from the B.Ed.                      | 11         |
| Teachers neither currently nor previously enrolled in the B.Ed. | 21         |
| School principals and administrators                            | 13         |
| Lecturers   | 27         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>120</b> |

The third stage of the study involved a questionnaire survey of larger and more representative samples of each of the groups interviewed.

Graduates were sampled from those who completed a Bachelor of Education degree at the end of 1983 or 1984; students were chosen from those who first enrolled in a Bachelor of Education degree in 1985; the withdrawals were sampled from those who withdrew from a B.Ed. degree in 1983, 1984 or 1985; and lecturers were chosen from those teaching a B.Ed. unit in 1985. For each of these groups, different sampling ratios were used for each institution and the responses were then weighted so that the final achieved samples were representative of the respective populations in terms of each tertiary institution. In practice, this meant that over 60 per cent of each group of respondents were associated with the program at the Brisbane College of Advanced Education.

School administrators and teachers not enrolled were selected from a sample of schools stratified by level (preschool, primary, secondary, special, TAFE) and educational sector (government or non-government).

Questionnaires to school administrators and teachers not enrolled were forwarded through the principal. In all other cases, questionnaires were sent directly to the person chosen in the sample. Table 2 shows the final response rate achieved after two follow-up letters.

**Table 2: Sample and response rates to questionnaires**

| GROUP                 | NO. IN<br>SAMPLE | NO.<br>RETURNED | RESPONSE<br>RATE<br>% |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Graduates             | 244              | 192             | 79                    |
| Students              | 244              | 188             | 77                    |
| Withdrawals           | 184              | 131             | 71                    |
| Teachers not enrolled | 322              | 191             | 59                    |
| School administrators | 194              | 112             | 58                    |
| Lecturers             | 68               | 60              | 88                    |

## RESULTS

### Background characteristics of questionnaire respondents

Over 60 per cent of graduates, students and withdrawals had seven or more years of teaching experience at the time the questionnaire data were collected. The majority held a Diploma of Teaching as a pre-service qualification, with about one-third listing a Certificate of Teaching as their pre-service qualification. Nearly one-fifth of the graduates had a non-education degree plus a graduate diploma. Only 3 per cent of students and withdrawals, however, held this latter pre-service qualification.

Twenty-four per cent of the graduates, 12 per cent of the students and 20 per cent of the withdrawals held a Diploma of Teaching as an in-service qualification. Small proportions of these groups of respondents held other in-service qualifications.

Sixty per cent of the teachers not enrolled had more than ten years' teaching experience. As their pre-service qualification, teachers in this group were as likely to hold a Certificate of Teaching as they were to hold a Diploma of Teaching. About one-quarter had completed an in-service qualification with the most common award being either a Diploma of Teaching (10 per cent) or a bachelor's degree in an area other than education (10 per cent).

Twenty-eight per cent of the school administrators were either enrolled in or had completed a Bachelor of Education degree.

### Motivation to participate in the Bachelor of Education program

#### Reasons for enrolling

Table 3 shows the proportion of graduates and students who indicated that each of a number of reasons was either very important or moderately important in influencing their decision to enrol in a Bachelor of Education degree.

Table 3: Proportion of graduates and students indicating each factor as a very important or moderately important influence on their decision to enrol in a B.Ed.

|  | GRADUATES<br>(N=192) | STUDENTS<br>(N=188) |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|
|  | %                    | %                   |
| To improve classification and salary   | 82                   | 78                  |
| To ensure security of employment   | 74                   | 59                  |
| To improve promotional prospects   | 57                   | 53                  |
| For intellectual stimulation   | 76                   | 73                  |
| The B.Ed. was a logical step after upgrading   | 47                   | 38                  |
| To improve professional competence   | 83                   | 83                  |
| To gain information about a specific topic   | 38                   | 40                  |
| A perception of the B.Ed. as an integral part<br>of a teacher's professional development | 61                   | 64                  |
| Information about the program from colleagues  | 16                   | 13                  |
| To gain a broader understanding of educational<br>issues                                 | 63                   | 65                  |
| To re-enter the teaching profession after an<br>absence                                  | 23                   | 23                  |
| Pressure from professional colleagues  | 8                    | 7                   |
| Personal growth  | 82                   | 87                  |

Teachers reported undertaking a Bachelor of Education degree for a variety of reasons. Extrinsic factors such as a desire to improve classification and salary and to ensure security of employment were rated by teachers as important reasons for enrolling, but no more so than factors such as a desire to improve professional competence, to gain a broader understanding of educational issues or personal growth.

### Reasons teachers do not enrol

The proportion of teachers not enrolled who indicated each of a number of reasons was important in influencing their decision not to enrol is shown below in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Proportion of teachers not enrolled indicating each factor as very important or moderately important in their decision not to enrol (N=191)

|  | %  |
|--|----|
| The perceived irrelevance of the course  | 48 |
| Lack of confidence in ability to complete the degree                                 | 23 |
| Lack of time to do further studies   | 80 |
| The particular subjects offered did not suit teacher's requirements                  | 50 |
| The program would not contribute to teacher's professional development               | 38 |
| Preference for alternative studies   | 40 |
| Lack of interest in further study  | 31 |
| Quality of the B.Ed.   | 25 |
| Administrative delays and problems   | 14 |
| Family commitments   | 70 |
| Geographical isolation   | 29 |
| Commitment to pupils and colleagues  | 70 |
| Restriction on places available in the program                                       | 8  |
| Unfavourable comments about the degree from teachers enrolled or previously enrolled | 33 |

The reasons for not enrolling might be conveniently grouped into three categories. Situational barriers such as lack of time to do further studies and commitments to family, pupils or colleagues were the most important inhibiting factors. Institutional factors such as the perceived irrelevance of the course or a perception that the subjects offered did not suit the teacher's requirements were next in order of importance. The group of reasons which were the least important influence on a teacher's decision not to enrol in the Bachelor of Education degree were dispositional factors such as the teacher's lack of confidence in his or her ability to complete the degree.

A comment from a teacher not enrolled illustrates why some teachers do not want to enrol in a Bachelor of Education program:

"I'm trying to put three kids through Uni, run a home and teach. I would not be able to cope with two nights per week at college. My teaching would suffer if I enrolled in a B.Ed. I already spend time at home preparing for teaching."

### Aims, structures and content of Bachelor of Education programs

#### Aims

An examination of course submissions reveals some common themes running through the four Bachelor of Education programs considered in this study.

Bachelor of Education programs aim to foster teachers' ability in curriculum development, to develop teachers' ability to evaluate their teaching and learning programs and to enhance teachers' understanding of the assumptions underlying and the influences on schooling and teaching.

All groups of respondents most strongly endorsed as an aim of the Bachelor of Education the improvement of teachers' professional competencies. The aim of improving teachers' understanding of curriculum development and implementation was also endorsed by all groups, and all groups but the withdrawals gave strong support to developing a broader outlook in teachers. The aim of improving teachers' ability to interact professionally with colleagues and community members was given reasonably strong support, while the aim of providing teachers with a deeper theoretical understanding of education was strongly supported by lecturers, somewhat less strongly supported by school administrators and endorsed least of all by the teacher groups. Less than one-fifth of the students, graduates or withdrawals considered that great emphasis should be placed on this aim of the Bachelor of Education.

### Content of Bachelor of Education programs

In each of the programs, the final year of the Bachelor of Education requires the completion of eight units. There is a considerable difference among the programs in the balance between compulsory and elective units and in the degree of choice available in the elective units. Brisbane College of Advanced Education has the most flexible program with only two compulsory units and a large number of elective units from which students can choose. Darling Downs is the most highly structured program with six of the eight units being compulsory, and thirteen subjects available from which to choose two electives. Four units are compulsory at James Cook and three at Capricornia. At least two "curriculum studies" units are compulsory in all of the programs. Both Capricornia and Darling Downs require study of philosophy of education, sociology of education and educational psychology as separate subjects; Brisbane College of Advanced Education requires students to study an integrated foundations subject and to choose at least one other education foundations subject from any of the three areas; James Cook University requires that two subjects oriented towards educational psychology be studied. In none of the programs are students required to select a general studies subject; in fact, only in the Brisbane and Capricornia programs do students have the option of studying a liberal or general studies unit.

The programs differ in the extent to which opportunities for specialisation are provided. The Bachelor of Education program at Brisbane College of Advanced Education, which has a much larger enrolment than the other programs, offers the greatest opportunity for specialisation in a range of curriculum and other areas (e.g. educational administration, educational psychology). Opportunities for specialisation at Darling Downs and James Cook are limited.

Teachers sought to study a wide range of topics in Bachelor of Education programs and the results indicate that many teachers would prefer a greater choice of subjects to be available. More than four-fifths of all groups of questionnaire respondents agreed that colleges should develop strands within Bachelor of Education programs which would allow students to specialise in particular areas.

Generally, the content of B.Ed. units was seen to be relevant to classroom practices. The following factors were identified as contributing to the relevance of Bachelor of Education programs: the subjects offered, the choice of content within units, breadth of subject choice to meet the diverse needs of teachers, linking of content to the classroom situation, involvement of college staff in schools, receptiveness of lecturers to feedback from teachers, involvement of teachers in planning and review of programs.

## Offering of Bachelor of Education units

Table 5 shows the proportion of questionnaire respondents indicating the extent of their support for a number of changes to the way in which B.Ed. units are offered.

**Table 5:** Proportion of each group agreeing with various options concerning the offering of Bachelor of Education units

|   | GRADU-<br>ATES<br>(N=192) | STUDENTS<br>(N=188) | WITH-<br>DRAWALS<br>(N=131) | SCHOOL<br>ADMINIS-<br>TRATORS<br>(N=112) | TEACHERS<br>NOT<br>ENROLLED<br>(N=191) | LEC-<br>TURERS<br>(N=60) |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
|   | %                         | %                   | %                           | %  | %                                      | %                        |
| Offering of full-year subjects                    | 52                        | 42                  | 39                          | 57                                       | 49                                     | 44                       |
| Completing one-semester subjects over a full year | 52                        | 46                  | 75                          | 70                                       | 76                                     | 61                       |
| Full-time study during vacations                  | 46                        | 44                  | 66                          | 60                                       | 60                                     | 78                       |

There was strong support among withdrawals, school administrators and teachers not enrolled for students to have the option of completing single-semester subjects over a full year. A slight majority of lecturers endorsed this possibility, while about half of the graduates and students agreed that this option should be available. The notion that full-year subjects should be available was supported by a majority only in the graduate and school administrator groups, and in each case, by a slight majority.

The notion of vacation schools was strongly supported by lecturers, but a little less than a majority of students and graduates agreed that vacation schools should be available.

### Student experiences in the B.Ed.

#### Experiences as an external student

Teachers recognised the freedom which external study gave them to control their own study arrangements, for example, in organising the times at which they study. Teachers also considered the provision of comprehensive materials as a positive feature of external study, and many teachers realised that, because they were teaching in a school remote from a tertiary institution, they would not have been able to undertake a Bachelor of Education degree had the program not been available externally.

Teachers also identified a number of problematic aspects of external study. Chief among these was the lack of contact with other students and lecturing staff and concomitant feelings of isolation. Students studying externally considered that it was disadvantageous not to be able to seek clarification of ambiguous or complex concepts or of course requirements from lecturers. External students reported a number of difficulties related to assessment, in particular, understanding the expectation of lecturers, not receiving feedback on previous assignments before the submission dates for subsequent work and coping with the workload created by heavy assessment requirements. The pressures of combining family and teaching commitments with part-time study was listed as a major problem by students studying externally.

The willingness of lecturers to be available by telephone or in person and to respond

quickly to requests for assistance were reported as helping to alleviate feelings of isolation. A number of teachers also expressed approval of the choice of teaching methods which allowed interaction with other students and the lecturer (for example, vacation schools, telephone tutorials, teleconferences) and the supplementing of written notes with a variety of other media. One student, for example, commented that:

"It was good to meet lecturers at vacation school as it was easier to contact them once you knew them. They were very helpful and sympathetic to external students' problems."

From their comments, it was, however, clear that some teachers sought greater communication with lecturers and felt that lecturers should be able to be contacted more easily. The questionnaire results similarly indicate that teachers would prefer lecturers to visit regional centres more frequently.

Ways in which teachers reported that lecturers helped to alleviate their concerns regarding assessment were by provision of clear guidelines concerning expectations for assessment, granting extensions to due dates and providing prompt feedback.

A few teachers considered that lecturers should recognise the difficulties external students face with respect to resources and should select texts and recommend readings that are more easily obtainable.

Questionnaire responses from lecturers indicate the methods which they used to cater for the needs of external students are very much in tune with teachers' expectations. Initiating personal contact with students and being open to telephone or personal contact from the students were frequently mentioned by lecturers as ways in which they attempted to be sensitive to the needs of external students.

Lecturers also noted the importance of comprehensive, well-planned external materials and assessment requirements which take account of the difficulties of external study and for which detailed, informative and timely feedback is provided.

#### Experiences as a part-time internal student

Those factors identified as problematic for external students were described, not surprisingly, as positive features of internal study. The opportunity to contribute to and gain from interactions with peers and lecturers was the most frequently cited advantage of internal study given by teachers. Teachers generally felt that there was adequate opportunity to share experiences with other teachers.

For some teachers this interaction with colleagues was the most memorable aspect of the program. One graduate, for example, commented:

"The thing that sticks in my mind is it brought teachers close together and got us thinking about what we are doing. It was very supportive and I still see a lot of them. The best experience was just the feeling of community. We all had different views. It was so diverse a group, but the B.Ed. was able to get people like that together, to discuss things, to disagree, etc."

As might be expected, the teaching and learning methods most preferred by teachers were those in which teachers were able to be active participants. The methods used encouraged teacher participation: lecturers reported that the most frequently used teaching methods were group discussions and workshops.

A small minority of teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the over-use of seminars and preferred other teaching methods, for example, lectures. Yet the majority view-

point was that the least useful teaching methods were lectures or those which involved irrelevant or excessive assessment.

Lecturers were perceived by teachers who studied internally as at least moderately sensitive to their needs. Those behaviours most frequently perceived by teachers as indicative of lecturers' sensitivity were a willingness to be approached should problems arise, understanding of the pressures of a dual workload and a sympathetic and supportive attitude.

A small number of teachers pointed to some ways in which they felt lecturers could be more sensitive to the needs of internal students. Their responses generally focused on the need for improvements to teaching and assessment procedures. In particular, ensuring the relevance of content and the use of teaching methods which require greater involvement by students and which take more account of their experience and maturity and the diverse situations in which they teach were advocated by these teachers.

### Workload of Bachelor of Education programs

A major concern of teachers studying part-time, whether internally or externally, is the demands which study makes on their time. To illustrate, one part-time internal student reported:

"The disadvantages are that study clashes with family commitments and involvement in other things. You often have a tiring day and then have to go to lectures that night. You have to study evenings or weekends."

Respondents' perceptions of the workload of Bachelor of Education programs lend support to the finding that the pressure of study and other commitments can be a problem for many students. Nearly half of the teachers and 28 per cent of the lecturers considered that the Bachelor of Education required a heavy workload. Only a handful of respondents considered the program's workload to be light.

Perhaps the principal who made the following comment came closest to identifying why work and study commitments cause conflict for some teachers:

"Some time demands are unrealistic. Designers of the course should consider that teachers have varying demands at various times. They have demands at the end of the semester at the college of advance,<sup>1</sup> education and at the school, for example, parent-teacher interviews, exams, assignments. Lecturers should take this into consideration when they set assignments."

All groups of respondents were asked to rate the extent of their agreement with three items concerning the amount of support in terms of reduced teaching load or study leave which teachers might be given. There was divided opinion concerning whether teachers should be given a reduced teaching load while studying for the B.Ed., with school administrators being the least enthusiastic about this possibility. Similarly, there was also divided opinion concerning whether students should study for the B.Ed. in their own time. This latter proposition was supported least strongly by teachers who had withdrawn from the B.Ed. and most strongly by school administrators and lecturers. There was, however, very strong support among all groups for the view that teachers should be given extended release from the classroom every few years to enable them to undertake in-service activities.

### Assessment of students

Teachers interviewed, almost without exception, preferred assignments to examina-



tions or student presentations. Given the heavy workload of the degree, assignments were viewed as placing less pressure on teachers. Assignments were also perceived as allowing for the application of knowledge and as more closely resembling the actual teaching situation where resources are available to the teacher. They were seen as providing an opportunity to investigate an issue and present an argument for and against a particular position.

Lecturers' responses indicate that they used a variety of assessment methods, with nearly all making use of assignments, about half, student presentations and practical projects, and about a third, examinations.

A majority of lecturers indicated that the potential exists for classroom-based projects or independent studies which make use of teachers' activities in the school. Although lecturers were not generally opposed to the idea, and a number would like to see greater use made of teachers' activities, some considered that it was not always appropriate for activities which teachers had undertaken in schools to be credited directly towards the Bachelor of Education degree. One explained:

"I strongly believe that the B.Ed. should be under the control of the college and academics (not schools and the Education Department). Thus assignments can (and ought) to relate to school experiences and problems but this has to be at the direction of the lecturer concerned."

Teachers generally reported that there was a reasonable degree of choice in the topics for assessment.

Flexible assignment deadlines were seen as a way of helping students studying for the Bachelor of Education to cope better with various demands which they face. Teachers were appreciative of lecturers' flexibility with respect to assignment topics and submission dates and their willingness to clarify assignment requirements. One student, for example, reported:

"One area of great assistance was a particular lecturer's flexibility in allowing assignments to be submitted at a reasonable date after the formal submission date. Such flexibility is essential when one considers the demands that occur in the teaching profession."

Responses to the questionnaire show that a minority of teachers reported that lecturers were unwilling to grant extensions: about one-third of the students and one-fifth of the graduates said that lecturers were not flexible with assignment deadlines.

The results of the study also indicate the value which students place on prompt and informative feedback on items which have been submitted for assessment. Some teachers, particularly those studying externally, felt that feedback was not given soon enough and that too few comments were provided.

#### Withdrawing from the Bachelor of Education program

The questionnaire results indicate that those teachers who withdraw from the Bachelor of Education do so early in the program. Of the questionnaire respondents, nearly half withdrew within the first few weeks of the program, and a further third withdrew later in the first semester of their studies. Only about 20 per cent of questionnaire respondents had completed a unit when they decided to discontinue with the program.

Table 6 shows the reasons given by teachers for withdrawing from a Bachelor of Education degree.

**Table 6:** Proportion of withdrawals indicating each reason as a great or moderate influence on their decision to withdraw from a B.Ed. program (N=131)

|  | %  |
|--|----|
| The stress of combining teaching, study and family commitments | 86 |
| The theoretical bias of the program                            | 55 |
| Ill health   | 11 |
| Other personal commitments                                     | 51 |
| A change in career ambitions                                   | 14 |
| A change in class(es) taught                                   | 21 |
| Transfer to another school                                     | 7  |
| Poor quality of lectures                                       | 18 |
| Poor quality of external notes                                 | 17 |
| Insufficient choice of subjects                                | 41 |
| Examination failure  | 9  |
| Inability to complete assignments on time                      | 39 |

The dominant reason given by teachers for withdrawing from a Bachelor of Education program was the stress of combining teaching, study and family commitments.

The comments of one teacher illustrate the problems which can arise:

"I withdrew because of heavy commitments with the Army Reserve. The Army Reserve and the B.Ed. meant working weekends and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday nights. I also liked to take sporting teams in the afternoon. The stuff we were doing wasn't helping me to be a better teacher, so when it came to a choice between the Army Reserve and the B.Ed. I chose the Army. If the course was really relevant to my teaching I would probably have kept on."

A few teachers mentioned the associated difficulty of completing assessment on time. For instance:

"I believe that, had there been no completion date for assignments, I would still be in the program. For external students deadlines cause stress and studying to pass rather than studying to acquire knowledge."

Aspects of the B.Ed. program were important factors contributing to the decision of a significant number of teachers to withdraw. Thirty-three per cent of teachers reported that the theoretical bias of the program was a very important reason for their withdrawal and 29 per cent reported that insufficient choice of subjects in the degree was a very important reason for their discontinuing.

The following comments from questionnaire respondents and interviewees illustrate how dissatisfaction with the program can contribute to the decision to discontinue study:

"The real problem was doing it externally. I really felt isolated and there were problems getting in touch with the lecturer. If I could do it internally part-time I would. You need someone easily accessible. I gave up on the first assignment; the deadline was approaching and I didn't want a low grade."

"For the first assignment I got 12½ out of 25 and I think they only gave me the half mark so I wouldn't fail. I had put a lot of work into it and I felt totally inadequate when I got it back. I've been teaching for fifteen years. The initial amount of reading is a problem, but I felt I was over that when the initial assignment was due. The jargon of academics is a problem for both internal and external students. They [lecturers] drop research names, quote from them and then don't enlighten you about them. It adds to your feeling of inadequacy."

## Influence of the Bachelor of Education degree

### Influence of the degree on teachers and schools

To gain an indication of the influence of the Bachelor of Education degree on school and teacher development, a series of questions was put to interviewees in which they were asked to describe the effects of the Bachelor of Education degree. These answers were then categorised so that twenty-two discrete influences were identified. On the questionnaire, Bachelor of Education students, graduates and school administrators were asked to indicate the extent of influence which they believed the B.Ed. degree had had on each of the twenty-two areas. In addition, students, graduates and administrators were invited to provide further comments on the questionnaire concerning the effects of the B.Ed. Teachers not enrolled and teachers who withdrew from the program were also invited to provide comments on the influence of the degree. It is acknowledged that the knowledge, practices, attitudes and beliefs of teachers are influenced by a great many factors and that to isolate the influences of any one factor (such as the B.Ed. degree) as a cause of change is problematic.

The results indicate that a reasonably high proportion of students, graduates and school administrators believe the Bachelor of Education degree has had an influence on most of the areas of a teacher's work. Indeed, more than half of the graduates reported that the degree had a positive influence on all but four of the twenty-two areas listed, while more than half of the students reported that the degree had a positive influence on all but two of the areas listed. The areas where students and graduates believed the B.Ed. had the greatest influence were concerned with awareness of educational issues, understanding the educational needs of their pupils, skill in evaluating their teaching, awareness of alternative teaching strategies and developing teachers' own educational theories.

More than half of the principals considered that the degree had a positive influence on fifteen of the twenty-two areas. School administrators considered that the major influence of the degree was in increasing teachers' awareness of educational issues and of alternative teaching strategies, in improving teachers' understanding of the educational needs of their pupils, and in improving teachers' promotional prospects.

A small proportion (about 20 per cent) of the graduates and students added further comments on the effects of the Bachelor of Education degree. Nearly all of the comments made were of a positive nature.

While a diverse group of comments was made by the teachers, the responses to the open-ended question indicate that teachers believe the Bachelor of Education degree has helped them to broaden their understanding of educational issues, provided them with a conceptual base on which to evaluate teaching or education, helped them to adopt a more critical approach to their own teaching, made them more aware of a range of teaching strategies, and helped them to understand contexts of teaching and education. The results of the interviews support the questionnaire results.

The flavour of the perceived influences is best expressed in the words of the teachers themselves:

"Overall, I feel the most positive effect was that it provided the opportunity to increase the teacher's awareness of vital aspects of education. What ultimately happens with that education is up to the teacher."

"Studying forced me to think about issues I otherwise may not have dwelt on for too long."

"A greater personal understanding of your profession leads to increased usage of skills, confidence in your own teaching ability, a greater awareness."

"I began to analyse many of the practices I followed in the classroom on the basis of educational outcomes and justification much more than previously."

"It has given me a greater awareness of individual differences in the classroom."

"Greater understanding of macro-educational influences - broadening of social and political perspective of education."

The most frequent response of those school administrators who commented on the effect of the degree on individual teachers was that the Bachelor of Education degree had a positive influence on a teacher's professional development including the development of insights into teaching and learning and the improvement of teaching competence. The main themes running through the comments of the school administrators who commented on effects of the Bachelor of Education degree on the school as a whole were that Bachelor of Education graduates were able to contribute to the school by sharing ideas which they gained from the degree and that graduates raised the teaching standard or the tone of the school generally. While the above were the most frequent comments made by school administrators, the total number making each type of comment was relatively small, ranging between ten and twenty.

Some 150 comments were made by teachers not enrolled concerning the effects of the B.Ed. on individual teachers. These comments could be categorised into three groups of approximately equal size. About one-third of the teachers not enrolled reported that they could observe no effects of the degree on individual teachers. A similar proportion commented on the undesirable impact of the degree: most frequently mentioned was the increased pressure which teachers are under while studying. About one-third of the comments of the teachers not enrolled were concerned with positive effects of the degree. The three most frequent of these responses were that the degree would increase a teacher's salary or chances of educational improve, improve his or her competence or broaden his or her awareness of educational issues.

A majority of the teachers not enrolled who commented on the effects of the Bachelor of Education degree on the school as a whole considered that it had no effect. About 20 per cent of the comments suggested that the school suffered while teachers were doing a B.Ed. It was claimed, for example, that teachers doing a B.Ed. had less time to spend in extra-curricular activities. Twenty per cent of the comments of teachers not enrolled referred to a range of benefits which had occurred to the school as a result of teachers' doing a B.Ed. degree, including, for instance, a general sharing of ideas, adding to the school "tone".

#### School contextual factors

The extent to which teachers are able to use, in the school, the learnings and understandings which they gain from a B.Ed. degree are dependent to a certain extent on factors within the school.

From the viewpoint of Bachelor of Education graduates, students and school administrators, the attitudes of other school staff, including the principal, were important influences on the extent to which new ideas gained from study could be introduced into the school. Comments of teachers who found other staff helpful and supportive included:

"I have a supportive staff who respect my trialling of innovations and enjoy debating points of interest which I encounter in my studies."

"A supportive principal who gave me every opportunity to run new programs for teachers, take on administration and finally be acting principal."

On the other hand, it was agreed that lack of interest by staff in new ideas and resistance to change were major factors preventing the use in the school of work done in the B.Ed. For example:

"The unwillingness of some staff to participate in activities which they did not initiate or saw as different to their method."

"Having senior teaching staff in TAFE with no formal training makes it hard to convince these people of the need to change old ideas."

The freedom which teachers have to implement or change the teaching strategies they use with their own class was given relatively frequently as a factor which facilitated the use of work undertaken in the B.Ed.

A major impediment identified by teachers and administrators to the implementation of ideas gained in the B.Ed. was the lack of time to try out alternative teaching strategies or to discuss ideas with colleagues. Some teachers and administrators reported that the need to "cover" the existing programs limited the opportunity to try new ideas or introduce new content.

Some teachers and administrators reported, on the other hand, that knowledge and skills gained by teachers in the B.Ed. were able to be utilised in existing school programs. In particular, schools which were developing school-based curricula were able to make use of B.Ed. graduates and students in the development of these programs.

Other facilitating factors mentioned, but infrequently, were the physical environment of the school or classroom (e.g. open-area schools and classrooms were seen as facilitating the introduction of new ideas) and the position in the school held by the graduate or student (e.g. graduates who were principals claimed this gave them the freedom to try things out). Inhibiting factors mentioned, but again relatively infrequently, were the physical environment of the school, the lack of resources in the school, the status of B.Ed. graduates (inexperienced graduates were reported as having little influence on their colleagues), parental resistance to change and, by a few administrators, the attitude of some B.Ed. graduates.

#### Effects on lecturers of their involvement in the B.Ed.

Lecturers reported that they had developed a deeper or broader understanding of schooling and education in general or of their own area of specialisation as a result of their teaching units in a Bachelor of Education program. Lecturers' contacts with experienced teachers helped to keep them up to date with developments in schools. Several lecturers commented that teaching units in the B.Ed. had forced them to become informed about recent literature or research in their area.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

This study of the Bachelor of Education degree in the Queensland advanced education system has attempted to gain a broad perspective on the degree from the viewpoints of various groups of respondents.

The study provides findings which can be used as a basis for discussion and consideration of particular issues, or as a framework for organisations and individuals to examine their policies and practices.

While the results for individual institutions have been forwarded to the institutions concerned for their own use, the study has mainly been concerned with a general overview of the B.Ed. A more detailed examination of particular issues or particular B.Ed. programs is for colleges, lecturers and others to take up in future discussion and research. At least one such study, supported by Board of Teacher Education funds, is already underway.

### The concept of the B.Ed. as the final stage of initial teacher preparation

In the 1978 Review of Teacher Education in Queensland, it was argued that the initial phase of teacher preparation should consist of a pre-service component (typically a three-year Diploma of Teaching), an induction phase of at least one year's teaching in a school and an in-service phase, namely the completion of a Bachelor of Education degree. This has become widely known as the 3+x+1 or "Bassett" pattern of initial teacher preparation. The main argument used in the 1978 Review for the Bachelor of Education to be completed in-service was that some aspects of educational theory are best understood by teachers when they are illuminated by practical experience. Thus, the study of these aspects of educational theory is delayed until the in-service Bachelor of Education year. Similar arguments were used in the minority statement of the National Inquiry into Teacher Education.

The proposals put forward in the 1978 Review were subsequently adopted in Queensland. The proposals have been incorporated into Guidelines for the Development of Teacher Education courses in Queensland issued by the Board of Advanced Education. Guideline 10 states:

"The content of pre-service teacher education courses (both three-year diploma courses and one-year graduate diploma courses) should be planned in the expectation that most students will subsequently complete further studies in education as a part of their continuing in-service professional development. Pre-service courses should therefore concentrate on work appropriate to the teacher at the beginning of his career, with particular emphasis on personal and professional development, including teaching skills and curriculum studies."

The evidence produced in this study provides grounds for questioning the continued acceptance of the 3+x+1 pattern as the sole or even the main method for the initial preparation of teachers.

If the B.Ed. degree is designed to be part of an initial package of teacher education, then it would be reasonable to assume that teachers should enrol in the B.Ed. within a few years of completing their pre-service qualification and after a small number of years of teaching experience. While the 1978 Review does not specify the length of teaching experience teachers should have before enrolling in a B.Ed. (referring only to teaching experience of at least one year), the Board of Advanced Education guidelines state that the Bachelor of Education degree "should allow all teachers to form a clearer understanding of their early teaching experience".

The results of this study show that, of students who enrolled in a B.Ed. for the first

time in 1985, 63 per cent had at least six years of teaching experience at the time of their enrolment, and only 12 per cent had less than three years' experience. With such a long gap between the completion of pre-service teacher education and the commencement of the Bachelor of Education degree, it is hard to conceive of the B.Ed. degree as being part of an initial package of teacher preparation which all teachers must complete before they can be regarded as fully-qualified members of the profession. The reported backlog of applicants waiting to gain entry to the B.Ed. will inevitably increase the average length of teaching experience of teachers commencing the degree in future years.

Certainly, a majority of all groups of respondents and a substantial majority of withdrawals, teachers not enrolled and school administrators favoured a four-year pre-service B.Ed. degree to be available as an option. The reason most often advanced for this was that combining teaching and family commitments with part-time study made it difficult to complete the degree as an in-service qualification. Other reasons advanced for an optional pre-service B.Ed. were that it is difficult to return to study after a break of one or more years, it would provide a better preparation for teaching, and that the completion of the initial qualification in-service placed teachers at a disadvantage compared with other professions.

Similar arguments were put forward in some of the inquiries into teacher education in the 1980s to support four years' pre-service. Both the National Inquiry into Teacher Education and the New South Wales inquiry (Teachers for Tomorrow, 1980) considered, for example, that the increasingly demanding and complex roles of teachers made four years' pre-service preparation a necessity, while the New South Wales inquiry warned that teachers would not be able to devote their full attention to the demands of professional preparation if the final stage of initial preparation was undertaken while the teacher was also teaching.

On the other hand, there is evidence from this study to support the 3+x+1 pattern. The finding that teachers generally saw the B.Ed. as enhancing their professional development indicates that the pattern is successful, at least for a majority of teachers who enrol and complete the degree.

Those respondents who were opposed to the B.Ed. being available as a pre-service qualification, even as an option, considered that after teaching experience, teachers have a more realistic and accurate picture of the nature of teaching, are able to relate theoretical concepts to their own practical experience and are able to contribute to the program from their own experience. Another advantage of an in-service degree suggested by respondents was that it discourages teachers from concluding that their education is complete once they have finished their pre-service preparation. It was also suggested that an in-service B.Ed. provides an opportunity for teachers to rethink their approach to education and may rejuvenate teachers whose teaching has become stale.

The results show that there were opportunities for teachers to base assignments on classroom activities or to use classroom activities as the basis for their assignments. Teachers generally reported that the B.Ed. provided them with adequate opportunity to share their experiences with other teachers, to receive feedback from fellow students and to use their teaching experiences as a basis for class discussion at least some of the time. Indeed, the opportunity to contribute to discussion and interact with teachers from a range of curriculum areas and educational sectors was perceived as a very valuable part of the program. All of those opportunities would be lost if the B.Ed. was to be available only as a pre-service qualification.

A further disadvantage of a solely pre-service B.Ed. is that it would deprive lecturers of opportunities to interact with experienced practising teachers. In this study, lecturers reported a range of positive influences arising from their interaction with teachers. For example, lecturers reported interaction with experienced teachers gave them a deeper or broader understanding of schooling.

On balance, the results do not provide evidence which would lead one to conclude that either the 3+x+1 pattern or a four-year pre-service B.Ed. was a panacea for initial teacher preparation. Even if the educational arguments for the 3+x+1 pattern are accepted, there are a number of practical constraints which stand in the way of full implementation of this pattern of initial teacher preparation.

The results most probably lead to the conclusion that different patterns of initial teacher preparation are most appropriate for different individuals, depending on their commitments and learning preferences. The provision of an optional four-year pre-service Bachelor of Education degree may therefore have merit. Such an option is now available at James Cook University where students can choose to complete a Bachelor of Education degree either as a pre-service qualification or as an in-service qualification after teaching experience. The course structure at James Cook University provides a unique opportunity to evaluate the relative merits of both forms of initial professional preparation.

### Reconciling conflicting demands on teachers

A major theme running through the study is concerned with the pressure which part-time B.Ed. students face in trying to reconcile their various commitments. B.Ed. students are not unique in this regard. The research literature on part-time students shows that, because of their many responsibilities, these students are subject to considerable pressures while studying (e.g. Brown, 1979; Isaacs, 1979).

In this study, a number of possibilities for reducing the demands on part-time students were considered.

The suggestion that teachers should be given a reduced teaching load while studying for the B.Ed. did not receive enthusiastic support from any group surveyed. The possibility of teachers' being given extended release every few years to enable them to undertake in-service activities was, however, strongly supported by all groups. The implementation of this latter suggestion could provide an opportunity for teachers to have some time studying for the B.Ed. when they are free of teaching commitments. The cost implications of both of these suggestions would need to be carefully considered. For example, there were approximately 2,000 teachers enrolled in the B.Ed. in 1985. If each of these had a 20 per cent reduction in teaching load, a cost of around \$10 million in replacement salaries would be incurred by employing authorities. An alternative proposal, although not canvassed in the study, is that teachers studying for the B.Ed. degree could have the option of permanent part-time employment. Permanent part-time employment is, however, not at present policy of the Department of Education. It is also difficult to predict how many teachers would take advantage of this option should it become available.

Other ways in which the pressures on teachers studying part-time might be reduced are related to changes in the organisation of the B.Ed. itself. These appear to hold promise as ways of lessening the pressures on teachers.

One of the factors contributing to increased pressures on some teachers is that peak workload times at school coincide with peak workload times at the college. Thus, for example, teachers may be involved in preparing examinations for their pupils or marking examinations or assignments, while at the same time studying for their own examinations at the college or completing their final assignments. Lecturers might therefore consider this when setting assignment dates. Flexible deadlines for assignments would provide teachers with more opportunities to fit their study commitments in with their teaching responsibilities. Colleges could also consider developing policies which would allow for such flexibility, rather than leaving it solely to the discretion of individual lecturers.

Pressures on teachers may be reduced too, if the opportunity were available for teachers to take full-time courses during the summer holidays. These courses could



then be used as credit towards units in the Bachelor of Education degree. While some problems with summer schools were recognised, the questionnaire results show that the degree of support for such a development, if translated into enrolments in summer schools, would make such courses viable propositions. Tertiary institutions are currently holding discussions with a view to developing joint units which may be offered in a summer school format. These might be seen as pilot programs which institutions, either jointly or in cooperation with other institutions, could use as a basis, following trialling and evaluation, for a more extensive summer school program.

The workload of the program would be lessened if institutions offered whole-year units or allowed students to spread the work for a single semester unit over a full year. It is interesting to note that a substantial majority of lecturers agreed with this latter proposition, so it is an option which institutions might seriously consider.

The counselling of students about the heavy workload involved in completing a B.Ed. degree might also be considered by institutions. While data were not collected on the number of units per semester which students take it does appear that most take two units per semester. Institutions might consider encouraging more students to take single units to cope with the workload. The possibility of introducing a liberal policy on late cancellation of a second unit without incurring academic penalty might also be examined by tertiary institutions.

### Content of B.Ed. programs

Teachers enrol in a Bachelor of Education degree for a variety of reasons and seek to have a range of needs fulfilled by completion of the degree. Ideally, the B.Ed. degree should contain sufficient breadth of content to satisfy these diverse teacher needs and should be relevant to teachers' roles, a finding supported by the adult education literature which suggests that adult education courses should be oriented towards learners' particular problems (e.g. Skertchly, 1981).

The evidence from this study shows that while teachers generally see the Bachelor of Education as relevant to their needs, there are many additional topics which they would like to see included in the program. There was also a high degree of consensus among questionnaire respondents that teachers should have the opportunity to specialise in a B.Ed. program.

The degree of subject choice and the opportunity to specialise in a range of areas is, for all programs except that offered by Brisbane College of Advanced Education, limited. Institutions with relatively small enrolments face difficulties in substantially increasing the number of subjects offered while at the same time maintaining a viable number of students in each subject. The following four possibilities are suggested to allow teachers to have a wider choice of subjects and to provide greater opportunities for specialisation.

First, institutions might examine their policies on the inclusion of units from B.Ed. degrees offered by other institutions to determine if these are not too restrictive, both in terms of the number and nature of units from other institutions which can be included.

Second, colleges might also examine whether more units from post-experience graduate diploma programs could be made available for inclusion in Bachelor of Education degrees. The availability of units from other colleges and from graduate diploma programs would need to be well-publicised to students.

Third, more use could be made of independent studies to allow students to take studies in areas of interest which are not available in the regular schedule of subjects offered. Again, students might be made more aware of the possibility of using independent studies to specialise in particular areas.

Fourth, the cooperative development of units by two or more tertiary institutions could be more vigorously pursued by the colleges. Cooperatively developed units would provide opportunities for students to study subjects which otherwise would be unavailable because low demand does not make them viable propositions for any single institution.

If, on the other hand, the Bachelor of Education is seen as the final stage of initial teacher preparation, rather than as a general in-service degree for teachers, it might be argued that the B.Ed. should contain a core of studies which all teachers would be required to master before becoming fully-qualified members of the profession. In this case, the degree of specialisation in the B.Ed. might be more limited. Detailed study of particular areas would then occur in graduate diplomas or masters degrees.

### Teaching/learning methods used in B.Ed. programs

Previous research has found that adults in general and teachers in particular prefer discussion as a teaching/learning method rather than formal lectures (e.g. Batten, 1975; Neville, 1979). The teachers involved in this study were no exception. It was found that extensive use was made of discussion by lecturers and consequently most teachers expressed satisfaction with the teaching and learning methods used.

The adult education literature shows, nonetheless, that individuals' preferences for learning methods vary (Smith and Haverkamp, 1977). In this study, some teachers expressed a preference for ways of learning other than through discussion. Some teachers, for example, reported that they preferred lectures. How lecturers can provide experiences which are consistent with the preferred learning styles of a small minority of students is problematic.

A distinguishing feature of adult education is that the teacher/learner relationship should be characterised by collegiality, with the teacher more a facilitator than a director of learning (Arends, Hersch and Turner, 1978). The results for this study indicate that these types of relationship appear to be characteristic of B.Ed. programs.

Teachers studying for a B.Ed. do not appear to exert much influence on coursework decisions, such as the aims of particular units, the content of units or the methods of assessment. Adult education writers argue that adult learners should have extensive input into what and how they learn (Buxton and Keating, 1982). If these arguments are accepted, then lecturers might consider ways in which they could increase the extent to which teachers can contribute to decisions about the course. For instance, the first lecture could involve a discussion of students' expectations of the unit and their current teaching situation: these could be taken into account when specific details of the topics covered in the unit are being planned. A flexible policy with regard to assessment topics and methods of assessment would allow students the opportunity to tailor assessment so that it was relevant to their particular professional needs.

### Studying for the B.Ed. externally

The major problem faced by external students is a feeling of isolation due to lack of contact with fellow students and lecturers. It is not surprising therefore that students were appreciative of the ready availability of lecturers by telephone or in person, lecturers' willingness to respond quickly to requests for information and the opportunity to interact with other students through vacation schools or teleconferences.

Not all students, however, found that lecturers were easy to contact. One suggestion put forward by a number of teachers in the study was that lecturers should specify the times at which they are available to be contacted by phone by external students. Teachers, too, considered that lecturers should make more visits to country areas. As

such visits are likely to be rather costly, it is difficult to know if institutions would have the resources or lecturers the time to increase their number of visits to country areas. Perhaps resources would be better utilised if more vacation schools and telephone tutorials, both of which teachers generally rated highly, were organised. Use of developing communication technologies also holds potential for improving the delivery of external courses and the extent and quality of interaction between lecturers and students.

The use of self-managed learning groups, whereby a number of students living in a geographical area and studying the same unit meet regularly, seems a promising way of breaking down feelings of isolation. An evaluation of one self-managed learning group established in Queensland has shown that teachers can benefit personally and socially from their involvement in such a group (Chiple, 1985; Haines, 1986).

One particular area of concern for external students was related to assessment. Some teachers found difficulty in understanding the expectations of lecturers, while the timing of feedback an assessment items was also seen as crucial by students studying externally. In particular, external students appreciated clear, detailed and timely feedback on their assignments. They considered it was imperative to receive comments on one assignment well before a subsequent assignment was due, so that these comments could be taken into account when writing the second assignment.

The way in which one lecturer reportedly dealt with the assignments of external students seems particularly apt:

"I write copious notes in response to their assignments and I get them back quickly. I interact with their ideas, redirect their thinking - that's my teaching role in the course. It's a continuing process - students then respond in their next assignment."

#### Improving the efficacy of B.Ed. programs

As reported by B.Ed. graduates and students and school administrators, the B.Ed. degree appears to influence many areas of a teacher's work. The results indicate a tendency for the degree to have a greater influence on areas such as teachers' awareness of educational issues or alternative teaching strategies, rather than the teacher's ability to use a range of teaching strategies, effectiveness in the classroom or initiating new programs in the school. The results also suggest that the B.Ed. has helped many teachers develop a more critical and questioning approach to education and their own teaching. Thus, there was a tendency for the effects of the B.Ed. to be seen at the level of awareness and understanding, rather than at the level of implementation. This finding is similar to those reported by Evans (1981) in the evaluation of the British in-service B.Ed. degree.

Some teachers were, nonetheless, able to describe ways in which the learnings and understandings which they gained in the Bachelor of Education degree were used to change their own teaching practices, or were of direct benefit to the school as a whole.

The research literature identifies a number of school contextual factors which can contribute to or inhibit changes. Walberg and Genava (1982), for instance, found that the use teachers made of professional knowledge gained in in-service workshops was associated with school climate; Bergman and McLaughlin (1977) reported that the attitude of school principals was crucial in determining if teachers implemented changes following participation in in-service activities; Campbell (1982) and Evans (1981) comment that low status or experienced teachers may be ineffective change agents; while Henderson (1979) reports that schools are rarely organised to take advantage of the in-service experiences of staff. The importance of a supportive school environment for change is also implied in a number of other studies (e.g. Arends, Hersch and Turner, 1978; Lawrence et al., 1974).

The findings from this study highlight the influence of school climate on the degree to which B.Ed. graduates are able to introduce new ideas and practices into the school. Teachers were more easily able to act as agents of change in schools when the principal was supportive of innovation and gave teachers freedom to experiment with new approaches. Having a staff which was prepared to listen and discuss new ideas with teachers was also reported as being conducive to teachers' acting as change agents in the school. On the other hand, school administrators who did not allow teachers to experiment with approaches to teaching and lack of interest by other staff in new ideas or approaches inhibited teachers acting as agents of change.

The extent to which the attitudes of other staff were significant in inhibiting teachers from introducing change into the school can be inferred from answers to two other questions. First, less than half of the graduates, teachers and school administrators agreed that other teachers were receptive to new ideas which B.Ed. graduates and students wished to introduce into the school. Second, of the teachers not enrolled who commented on the effects of the B.Ed., half reported that it had had no influence, 20 per cent of these teachers said the school suffered while teachers were studying for the B.Ed. and only about 20 per cent said teachers completing the degree had a positive influence on the school. From these results, it might be inferred there is a great deal of apathy, if not resistance, to the B.Ed. among teachers not enrolled.

It is not the purpose of this report to provide prescriptions for how ideas and practices gained through teachers' involvement in B.Ed. programs can permeate schools. The following initial list of possibilities is given for consideration:

- there could be improved communication between colleges and schools about the aims and intended outcomes of B.Ed. programs;
- principals could arrange school meetings and seminars at which B.Ed. graduates are given the opportunity to raise issues and suggest ideas which could lead to improved practice;
- lecturers could provide support for teachers by working with them in schools while they are studying for the B.Ed. and provide continuing support after their graduation;
- B. Ed. students could be encouraged to discuss the program with teachers not enrolled or involve these teachers in activities undertaken in the school as part of the assessment requirements for B.Ed. units;
  - the Department of Education could encourage inspectors to make regular inquiries of principals about the ways in which the school had made use of B.Ed. graduates.

## Conclusion

The general orientation of participants in this study towards the Bachelor of Education degree was a positive one. Teachers reported that the B.Ed. had influenced their professional development and school administrators also considered the B.Ed. to generally be a positive influence on teachers and schools. The teaching and learning methods used by lecturers were generally seen to be appropriate by teachers, and lecturers were seen by teachers, by and large, as being sensitive to their needs as part-time or external students. Even teachers who had withdrawn from the program, and teachers who had not enrolled gave as their main reason for withdrawing or not enrolling of all the pressure of other commitments, rather than, for example, the quality or relevance of B.Ed. programs.

Notwithstanding this generally optimistic view of the Bachelor of Education degree, the study has provided a number of suggestions for improving the quality and efficacy of B.Ed. programs. These included proposals for reconciling the conflicting demands on teachers as they study for the Bachelor of Education degree, for broadening the range of content which teachers can study in the degree, and for providing for the

particular needs and circumstances of external students and part-time internal students.

It is now largely for others, particularly tertiary institutions and lecturers in those institutions, to use the findings of the study in order to enhance the quality of Bachelor of Education programs.

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## APPENDIX

### RESEARCH COMMITTEE, BOARD OF TEACHER EDUCATION

- Dr G.A.G. Jones** (Chair to April 1986)  
Director, Gold Coast College of Advanced Education
- Mr J.A. Tainton** (Chair from May 1986)  
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- Mr M.T.A. Byrne**  
Senior Education Officer, Research Services Branch, Department of Education, Queensland
- Professor J. Elkins**  
Professor of Special Education and Head, Schanell Educational Research Centre, University of Queensland
- Mr N.H. Fry**  
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Principal, Rangeville State School, Toowoomba
- Rev. Sister Patricia M. Nolan**  
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- Dr D.A. Price**  
Senior Lecturer in Education and Campus Coordinator of Practice Teaching, Mount Gravatt Campus, Brisbane College of Advanced Education
- Mrs M. Rosser**  
Teacher, Kallangur State School