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ABSTRACT

This paper examines political and government changes affecting higher education in Australia, particularly as they impact upon teacher education, and with specific emphasis upon practices in New South Wales (NSW). Structural features of the governance of education at the federal and state/territory levels are outlined, noting that teacher education is governed by the federal government, but teacher education graduates will ultimately be employed by state authorities. While school management has shifted from centralized authorities to the schools, there has been at the same time a more centralist policy in regard to curriculum and assessment. Actions which have been taken by teacher educators as a consequence of federal and state policies are discussed, such as formation of the New South Wales Teacher Education Conference and the Australian Directors of Teacher Education. Teacher educator participation in politics is supported as necessary given the current climate of educational reform and restructuring and the determinations by government for greater accountability of public institutions. The continuing challenge is to recognize the interdependence of all stakeholders while upholding the rights of faculties of education to remain independent within "autonomous" universities. An appendix contains "Terms of Reference for the NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on Teacher Education and the Quality of Teaching." (Contains 31 references.) (JDD)

POLITICS OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN NSW, AUSTRALIA

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Paper presented to Divisions J. and K., Structured Sessions
Political Dimensions in Teacher Education:
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This paper examines current political and government changes affecting higher education in Australia, particularly as they impact upon teacher education. The paper sets the socio-political context in which changes have occurred and the consequences and actions arising from the changes at both the national and local levels, with a specific emphasis upon practices in NSW. It develops the concerns held by teacher educators both in terms of the prevailing and often competing discourses regarding ownership of teacher education and the ways in which becoming increasingly politicised has affected the teacher educators themselves. The paper concludes with a set of desiderata, or principles, whereby stakeholders might progress to improve upon and consolidate gains in teacher education in Australia.

THE CONTEXT:[1]

Critical to an understanding of the politics of education in Australia is an explication of the structural features of the governance of education at the federal and state/territory levels[2]. The ministry responsible for the management of education nationally is the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET). Closely linked to the ministry is an advisory structure, The National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) with associated councils servicing higher education, research, schools and training (Marginson, 1993). While much of the governing policy is formulated at the federal level the practical concerns of delivery are the responsibilities of the states. Each has its own ministry of education which may be linked to other portfolios. For example, in New South Wales (NSW), the relevant ministry is Education, and Youth Affairs. Currently at federal level in Australia, the Labor Party is in power although in its 12 year rule it has become increasingly "conservative" in nature. In NSW, the Liberal/National Party Coalition is in power and just as the Labor Party has moved to the Right so too has the Liberal/National Coalition.

In the public school sector, the employment of teachers, the curriculum and assessment practices, and the allocation of resources are all matters for the state. However, at the state level, there are both government and non-government schools. Public schools receive about 90% of their funding from the state while nearly half of the funding for the non-government schools (private and Catholic systemic) comes from the federal government (Burke, 1992).

So it may be seen that teacher education sits in an interesting, some might even argue, ambiguous position. Teacher education occurs in the higher education sector and is therefore subject to the determinations of DEET. However, those taking teacher education courses will ultimately be employed by state authorities (both government and non-government) who clearly perceive that they have a stake in the teacher education curriculum. For this reason it is argued in this paper that we need to have an understanding of the political forces being exerted by both federal and state governments. (See also Groundwater-Smith, Walker, Annice, Deer, Meyenn & Parker, 1992.)

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1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Educational Society in Kingston, Jamaica, March, 1993.

2 In Australia there are six states: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, and two territories: The Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Throughout the remainder of this paper reference to 'states' should be taken to embody both states and territories.

To understand recent changes which have occurred in government thinking regarding education at the federal level, it is helpful to look at the naming of the ministry itself. It is not by chance that the 'mega' ministry, established in July, 1987, was called the Department of Employment, Education and Training. The ministry is a prototype of the ways in which notions of economics and human capital are brought together. The topic, employment, is brought into conjunction with the agencies, education and training, with the aim being the improvement of Australian competitiveness in international markets. Categorisation, that is 'what goes with what', is not something to be taken lightly. An understanding of how we categorise is central to an understanding of how we function (Lakoff, 1987).

It is helpful to consider each component: employment, education and training as a set, or domain, which intersects and interacts with the other two (see Figure 1). Thus when we examine the recent changes which have occurred in each domain we can see that they immediately affect and act upon the other two domains. Employment became the site for major initiatives in micro economic reform in Australia from the mid nineteen eighties. The Hawke Labor Government which came into power in 1983, undertook as a result of an accord between itself, unions and employers, to reform and restructure work practices and conditions of employment. Peak bodies such as the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA) were the key players in this process. There were consequences for education in a number of ways. Education itself was an industry which would be examined in terms of structural efficiency while at the same time it was also the means whereby the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the potential work force were to be improved.

Similarly, training was also perceived to be fundamental to the process of award restructuring, that is the conditions under which workers were to be classified and paid in the belief that improved skills would lead to higher productivity and greater international competitiveness. Major work was undertaken to review and revise work competencies in order that more systematic training and retraining could occur. A National Training Board was established to prepare competency standards in each industry. It is interesting to note that the metals industry, with its orientation to the production of goods, was to be the exemplary industry. Some have argued that the intended competency frameworks were not as appropriate to service 'industries', such as education and health, as they might have been (Ashenden, 1990).

It was via the competency debate that a closer nexus was forged between federal and state authorities with respect to the senior years of schooling. In 1990 the commonwealth and state Ministers of Education meeting as the Australian Education Council (normally a somewhat contentious and divisive forum) established a committee to make recommendations on the education and training needs of those engaged in the post-compulsory years of schooling. The committee chair was an executive of a large multinational corporation and members of the ACTU were highly influential in its deliberations (Marginson, 1993, pp. 156-157). A major outcome of the committee's work was the identification of key areas of competence essential for the employability of young people[3].

Just as the economic discourses were paramount at the federal level, so too, were they being played out at the state level. Changes to school education were designed to make the schools themselves more efficient, both in terms of the 'delivery' of education to the 'consumers' and in the ways in which they were managed such that they would be less costly to the state (Meyenn & Parker, 1991, 1992.). The most important stake holders were seen to be employers who would find the 'products' of the school assembly lines attractive and well able to meet their needs and demands. Spiritual, interpersonal, ethical, and aesthetic goals were no longer to have the primacy that many advocates for a democratic society believed they deserved (Collins, 1991).

Reforms and restructuring in school education in New South Wales follow a pattern which is closely mirrored in other Australian states and is reflective of international trends. While there was to be a major shift from the centre, with its historically top heavy bureaucracy, to the schools in terms of school management, there was at the same time a more centralist policy in regard to curriculum and assessment. A review of school management, undertaken by a leading business man and known as the Scott Report (1990), resulted in devolution to schools decisions regarding the ways in which they might manage their material and human resources (although a number of caveats still existed, particularly those related to class sizes). At the same time, a further wide ranging review of schooling processes, from early childhood to post-compulsory schooling was conducted by a former senior conservative politician, Sir John Carrick (1989). Following Carrick's recommendations, legislation was prepared which

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3 Marginson, 1993, goes on to discuss the detail of competency based standards and frameworks in the workplace. These are complex and the discussions are continuing. Suffice here is to indicate that the outcomes will have a powerful affect, particularly on the training agenda. This paper takes up the matter of competencies in relation to teacher education as opposed to teacher training at a later point.

established an independent Board of Studies charged with the development of syllabi in the designated key learning areas.

The twin tendencies of devolution and centralism are not as contradictory as first appears. On the other hand, schools can apparently become more efficient users of their discretionary funds (which are effectively quite small once the salaries' bill has been met) while on the other the state can regain control over the purposes of schooling which were becoming increasingly pluralistic when school based curriculum development was in the ascendancy.

The most recent debate in schooling in Australia is one which is as yet unresolved and that is the extent to which the states should cooperate in the formulation of a truly national curriculum. Increasingly, states are aligning their syllabi with national frameworks and benchmarks. There is an emphasis upon outcomes which have attached to them behavioural descriptors indicating levels of achievement. Behind these ongoing changes (which may or may not be reforms - a word which connotes improvement) is an agenda associated with teacher accountability. In NSW state wide testing has been introduced in an examination of aspects of literacy and numeracy. While at present there can be no league table reporting of results, there are increasing concerns that the mechanisms are now in place which would allow such procedures.

Accountability and structural efficiency go hand in hand. Both lie at the heart of policy changes, in relation to education, by federal and state governments. The emphasis on all levels is subject to what Yeatman (1991) has called 'metapolicy' status. In other words, the overarching discourses of economic rationalism with their emphases upon economic policies, human capital and commodity production are now driving debates about the conduct of education. As Marginson (1993, p. 56) puts it *Education is now seen as a branch of economic policy rather than a mix of social, economic and cultural policy.*

Whether we are concerned with the school sector, the training sector or the higher education sector, the features of policy formulation spelled out here have profound implications for teacher educators. In the section which follows, we shall look more closely at the consequences of government policies, both federal and state, and the actions which have been taken by teacher educators.

ACTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Organisation of Teacher Education Prior to 1987

As has been outlined, political forces from both the state and national level affect teacher education. Until 1989, higher education in Australia took place in three types of institutions: the Universities, the Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) and the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges. The first of these, the universities, were federally funded for both teaching and research at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The CAEs were also federally funded but not for research and on the whole did not have students studying for higher degrees. In addition, they had grown from teachers' colleges which were part of the State employing authority and thus were instrumental in training teachers to meet the specifications of the employer. In these institutions there was little in terms of a culture of critical discourse. The TAFE sector was funded by the States.

In regard to initial teacher education the preparation of secondary school teachers took place predominantly in universities whilst the preparation of early childhood (preschool) and primary (elementary) teachers largely took place in CAEs. Furthermore, the universities operated autonomously in course development while courses in the CAE sector were under the control of the Higher Education Board with new courses subjected to detailed scrutiny and other courses, regularly reviewed. The two types of institutions therefore had very different cultures.

Professional Organisation For Teacher Education Administrators

Against this backdrop, the New South Wales Teacher Education Conference (NSWTEC), an organisation consisting of senior administrators of teacher education from all institutions offering teacher education courses in NSW and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), was formed in the early 1980's with its membership coming from the 14 CAEs in NSW and the ACT. A number of these were the result of earlier amalgamations. It should be noted that senior staff in teacher education and college administrators were almost exclusively male, a pattern reflecting the school system. Although the teaching profession in Australia has become increasingly feminised women *are very much in the minority in positions of authority in the school* (Porter, Warry and Apelt, 1992, p. 46; and Turney and Wright, 1990). The aim of

the NSWTEC was to discuss matters of general interest such as the operation of the teacher education courses which satisfied technical knowledge interests.

In 1987, the six NSW universities offering teacher education courses were invited to join their colleagues from the CAE sector. A further change to the membership came in the interest of gender equity when it was agreed in 1988 that each institution should have two representatives on the NSWTEC, where possible, one of them being a woman. Thus a peak body, the NSWTEC whose membership included all institutions offering teacher education was formed in NSW. The consequence of this changed membership was a change in the prevailing discourse with a greater admission of dissent and critique and a recognition of the need for political intervention.

Unified National System and Teacher Education

Following the formation in July 1987 of the 'mega' ministry at the federal level came the re-organisation of higher education to what is now known as the Unified National System (UNS). By 1990 the former CAEs across Australia had amalgamated in various ways with existing universities or had formed new universities some with single campuses and others with multiple campuses. As a result there were 11 universities offering teacher education courses in NSW and the ACT. The tensions surrounding these amalgamations showed themselves vividly in 1993 as the University in New England (UNE) with four campuses in north-western and northern NSW began discussions to have a 'divorce' resulting in the formation of Southern Cross University from 1 January 1994.

The formation of the UNS had major consequences for teacher education as many universities found themselves with large numbers of staff and students involved in teacher education. Furthermore, many of these staff were tenured and, having been employed in teacher education for many years with some going back to the time of teachers colleges, were at the top of their salary scales. They were thus very costly to employ.

Within guidelines set out by DEET, each university is able to adjust its course offerings and not all wanted to have so many students in teacher education. The amalgamations also occurred at a time when the demand for teachers was falling in some states, including NSW, as a result of external forces such as Ministerial directives cutting the number of teachers and changing demography. Changes in school retention rates

meant more students stayed on to Year 12 than ever before in the hope of gaining better career prospects. Further the federal government cut social security payments to the under eighteen year olds and the increasing recession meant many unskilled jobs had disappeared. Additionally, the demand for teachers of some secondary school subjects such as Legal Studies and Business Studies reflected the great changes taking place in the schools themselves, necessitating revisions of the teacher education courses being offered.

In 1990, as a consequence of the amalgamations, the NSW Teacher Education Conference renamed itself the NSW Teacher Education Council in order to reflect its change from a professional organisation concerned with the exchange of ideas to an organisation involving itself in the political process. Hence with the change in name, the change in membership and the change in federal and state government activity in education, the Council became much more politically active. Regular meetings of the executive were held throughout the year and at least two full day seminars took place for all members. In addition, there was a three day annual conference. In conjunction with meetings of the executive, other meetings were held with personnel from the Board of Studies (responsible for curriculum development and examination for Kindergarten to Year 12, the NSW Department of School Education, the Minister of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, and the two teacher unions (namely, the NSW Teachers' Federation and the Independent Teachers' Association).

The National Organisation of Faculties of Education in Australia

The advent of the UNS meant that faculties of education across Australia were facing similar difficulties particularly the decrease in their funding at a time when they had high fixed costs in terms of payments to tenured staff. As part of the micro-economic reform agenda, employer and employee organisations were encouraged to form peak bodies and in the belief that 'unity is strength' new life was infused into the national organisation of teacher educators called the Australian Directors of Teacher Education. This organisation of senior teacher education administrators held annual, early January conferences in the summer holidays which were largely a time for social interaction interspersed with some time on current teacher education issues. In January 1990, at the Brisbane Conference, an attempt was made to have gender balance in the membership of the organisation in the same way as had occurred in the NSWTEC. This change was met with a very hostile reaction but one member of the new executive was a woman.

In October 1990, members from across Australia met in Sydney with a view to reshaping the group so it could respond more appropriately to government education initiatives. This change was completed at the January 1991 conference and the organisation renamed the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE). Its seven member Board consisted of a representative of each of the state groups of deans of faculties of education. In future the annual conference would be held in Canberra, the nation's capital, and the time changed to October. This time and location gave easy access to federal ministers and to staff from DEET. At the national level, deans of education had become more politically active, gaining representation on various working parties that affect teacher education. They were also seen by government and the media as legitimate spokespersons on issues in education in general.

Specific Examples

At the national level, the federal government, which provides the majority of funding for Australian universities, continues to exert its influence. In an attempt to provide more university places for school leavers in 1994, it decreed that each university should not only have to meet specific quotas in undergraduate and postgraduate load and thus total load, but within the undergraduate entry there would be a specific quota for recent school leavers namely those who successfully completed the final year of secondary schooling in 1992 or 1993 and had not enrolled in any university course in the interim. However, to meet these quotas some universities had to drop their entry levels for teacher education courses to what some consider unacceptable standards. So on the one hand, the federal government is advocating career changes and the need for retraining to meet the changing demands of the economy and, on the other hand, it is blocking the entry of mature age students in order to increase the number of school leavers entering universities and thus mask the extent of youth unemployment. The President of the ACDE in a discussion with policy makers in Canberra, towards the end of 1993, gained an acknowledgment of this contradiction but no change was made.

At the State level in NSW, the formation of the NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on Teacher Education and the Quality of Teaching (MACTEQT - see Appendix 1 for terms of reference), a large Council of 36 members chaired by the Director-General of the NSW Department of School Education, is clear evidence of the Minister wanting to exert her political will on teacher education although the universities are federally funded. The State funds the schools. The Minister's agenda for this Council was set

out in an address given at the University of Western Sydney in November 1991 now known as the Macarthur Lecture (Chadwick, 1991). The consequences of teacher educators being involved in Ministerial Advisory Councils is discussed in the next section of this paper.

The membership of MACTEQT includes 12 teacher educators who are the nominees of the Vice-Chancellors of each of the NSW universities and the two Australian Capital Territory universities although the Australian National University has no teacher education courses. There is also a member nominated by the NSWTEC. Other members of the council are nominees of: the Director-General; the Deputy Director-General; the Ministry; the President of the NSW Board of Studies; the Catholic Education Commission; the Association of Independent Schools; the Managing Director of NSW TAFE; the two unions - the NSW Teachers Federation and the Independent Teachers Association; the Parents and Citizens Association; three teacher representatives from government and non-government schools; a nominee from the Joint Council of NSW Professional Teachers Associations and nine nominees of the Minister. It is notable that there is no representative of the Ethnic Communities Council or other similar organisation in spite of increasing numbers of students in our classrooms from a language background other than English.

EVOLVING CONCERNS

"Everything is dangerous, nothing is innocent" encapsulates the inevitable tensions as teacher educators become more involved in the political process, in the process of negotiating a role that is at once spectator and participant (Harding, 1937). The tension between the roles of spectator and participant is similar to engaging in explorations of dominant, oppositional and negotiated meanings of text (Parkin in Morley, 1980). Cherryholmes (1993) reminds us that we may read educational texts from a number of positions. What is critical is the examination of the consequences of privileging one reading over another. The reading position of this paper is a socio-political one; itself, of course, open to multiple interpretations.

What follows is a specific example of teacher educators being involved in the political process with the attendant risk such involvement entails. The analysis of this example makes more explicit the multiple readings of an educational text.

A major achievement of MACTEQT has been the development of *Desirable Attributes for Beginning Teachers* (NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on Teacher Education and the Quality of Teaching, 1994). It is no small feat of negotiation that a disparate group of individuals with contesting personal, party-political and institutional agendas were able to arrive at a still point in the interests of describing the complexity of teachers' work and yet making explicit the kinds of knowledge, skills and attributes that are necessary to ensure quality teaching in schools. What could have been a simplistic, atomised statement of competences (see Walker, 1992) has been replaced by a document embedded in an acknowledgment of the pragmatics of government's right to expect accountability from its public institutions and the rights of other stakeholders, including teacher educators, to serve their constituencies' legitimate multiplicity of viewpoints.

The document was launched by the Minister responsible for the education portfolio, Virginia Chadwick, on Friday 4 March, 1994, at the first meeting of the year of MACTEQT, and in the presence of representatives of the media. She was at pains to explain that the document was not to be seen as a testing instrument, or a template for developing check lists which could be ceremoniously ticked as an indication of achievement. However, a Sydney paper, *The Daily Telegraph Mirror* (claiming a readership of 1.3 million readers a day) sported the following heading: **New Skill Test - Teachers on Trial.** Such a mischievous headline invites an oppositional reading of the text that reconstructs the teacher as technician and the authors as complicit participants in the government's determination to gain closer and more precise control over the processes of schooling.

The price of participation can easily be characterised as complicity in the government's transparent agenda of two years ago; that is, define teacher competences so that teachers, and teacher educators who 'train' them, can be held accountable in a very public way for the quality of teaching in New South Wales schools. That dominant position, sited as it was in the discourse of professional training, accountability and ultimately control of schools and their curriculum, was that of the Minister. And, to a considerable extent reflected her frustration over her lack of control of faculties of education located in autonomous universities. Her ideal text, and the one she made clear should emerge, was one that enshrined a check list of key competences that could be transformed unproblematically and administered to prospective teachers to determine their suitability for employment. Such a text was unacceptable to the Deans of Education (their Vice-Chancellors' representatives on the Committee) and through protracted and spirited contestation of these different positions, the present text

emerged. It was essentially a negotiated text: one of compromise that recognised and embraced the contesting positions. The oppositional reading of *The Telegraph Mirror* will give legitimacy to the claim of some of our academic colleagues, less intimately involved in the process, of surrendering significant positions of critique in the interests of participation in the political process.

Less the agenda of the Minister appear to have been entirely muted in the debate, it is instructive and salutary to consider her press statement of 4 March - the day of the document's release. She and the Leader of the Opposition, Labor Party had been engaged in unproductive sparring over teacher quality in the previous few weeks. In her press release she says:

> *...the report had been in the making for a year, making a mockery of ALP claims that the New South Wales government was not committed to quality teacher standards. It is essential that teachers, and those that follow them have the basic standards necessary to ensure that the New South Wales public education system continues to deliver the best education in Australia...*

The release was headed: *Basic Standards for Teachers!*

Whilst there are those who are uncomfortable with teacher educators entering the political fray, we argue that it has been imperative for such participation to occur. Not only because knowledge is power and power produces knowledge but because participation is a practice that constitutes a new discourse that effects significant change to the prevailing discourses surrounding teacher education and faculties of education (after Foucault in Ball, 1990: 173). These textual readings remind us of the value of siting our endeavours in process, to interrupt and interrogate the text and the discourses we are responsible for creating in order to prevent too rapid a closure. Such deconstruction, like participation in political process, is unlikely to be uniformly comfortable: it is more likely to remind us that states of ambiguity and ambivalence are more likely to foreground the lack of innocence in the discourses we create (Macdonald, 1988). As our famous Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, of the 70's once said: "There are none so pure as the impotent".

The current climate of educational reform and restructuring within schools and tertiary institutions, and the determinations by government for greater accountability of public institutions, have made forays into the political arena necessary. But these forays have

changed also to become genuine attempts to evolve productive partnerships with the other stakeholders in teacher education whose prime raison d'être is improving the quality of education in Australian schools. In other words, these productive partnerships have drawn together previously disparate groups who recognise that:

> *Collaboration is necessary where parties have a shared interest in solving a problem that none of them can resolve alone. Collaboration makes sense where stakeholders recognise the potential advantages of working together - they need each other to execute a vision they all share, and they need the others to advance their educational interests* (Watson and Fullan, 1991, p.215).

That 'shared interest' is in the name of the learners in schools the *'consequential stakeholders whose life chances will be significantly affected by the provision of a well-structured, purposeful curriculum taught with care in a humane and socially just environment'* (Groundwater-Smith, 1993).

Most significantly, the partnerships that are evolving between schools, teacher educators, employers and unions are ones that are moving beyond consultation and advice towards genuine reciprocity where there is:

- *a recognition of interdependence and the unique contribution the various parties bring to the relationship;*
- *constructive and imaginative problem solving;*
- *a will to work not only to change but to improve;*
- *a working relationship which permits risk taking;*
- *tolerance for ambiguity, uncertainty and dilemmas;*
- *joint responsibility for the planning, implementation and evaluation of outcomes;*
- *joint benefits of a commensurable kind;*
- *organisational structures which facilitate the enactment of decisions;*
- *well managed communication;*
- *appropriate resourcing and*
- *intercultural understanding.*

(Groundwater-Smith, Parker & Arthur, 1993)

For teacher educators, the negotiating of such partnerships has accrued many benefits for their institutions. There is increased relevant and up-to-date knowledge of

stakeholders' agendas in relation to education, knowledge which can be translated into appropriate responses and actions in teacher education programs. Such knowledge encourages and allows us to locate our own endeavours and concerns within the broad socio-political context and to acknowledge the complexity of current educational agendas. Perhaps we have begun to move beyond the naming of the parts to an appreciation of the japonica glistening in neighbouring gardens. (After Henry Reed's poem *Naming of the Parts*).

The sites of conflict between institutions and other stakeholders have been transcended by a sense of collegiality that is beyond boys' club back-slapping and superficial bonhomie. What is needing of affirmation is the visionary, and sometimes iconoclastic, role of the Teacher Education Council's executive especially in the early years of its formation. It stood for the value and power of inclusivity above exclusivity, of genuine democratic procedures over hierarchical and status conscious divisions, and inter and intra institutional productive partnerships over jealously guarded individual advantage.

Not all of our colleagues have relished these opportunities for engagement in the wider educational community. And this is understandable. They have not felt empowered by the commitment to a shared interest partly because they have not been incorporated into, and hence supported by, the collegiality many of us have experienced. At a time of intensification of teacher educators' work and the uncertainty brought about by changes in their role in the new unified national system, many have felt their career prospects have been diminished and their previous contributions undervalued. Whilst working with other stakeholders has raised the profile of teacher education and created the conditions necessary to influence political agendas, it has been time consuming and demanding of fundamental shifts in the way we have considered our own institutional histories and culture. But for some *institutional autonomy [has remained] a powerful agent in keeping elements apart...* But in the end it is necessary for us *to yield and listen as well as assert and tell* (Groundwater-Smith, 1993, p. 5).

It is no longer possible, if it ever were, to remain complacently isolated and aloof from real politik. The social practice of education is unequivocally a political practice and intrusions of government policy are in fact legitimate rights of intervention within the context of a democratic society. The last few years have seen governments of all persuasions assert those rights. Our continuing challenge is to recognise the interdependence of all stakeholders whilst at the same time upholding the rights of faculties of education to remain independent within 'autonomous' universities, albeit

operating under DEET guidelines. This evolving concern requires delicate negotiation towards partnerships based upon genuine reciprocity.

The dilemma is the pull of competing discourses and hence the need to balance the legitimate demands of the constituencies the discourses encode. Federally, there is the DEET with, as we say in the introduction to the paper, its view that education is an industry which could be examined in terms of structural efficiency as part of its micro economic reforms. For teacher education there were moves towards uniformity (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1990 & 1992) of programs similar to moves to develop national curriculum frameworks. At the level of the state, particularly in NSW, there is still, although more muted, the discourse of intervention and control, especially of school curriculum and teacher education programs. At both levels of government there is an emphasis on change, efficiency and accountability.

A particularly distinctive feature of Australian education in the last few years, has been the reorientation of the teacher unions to an involvement in policy formation. It has been less one of industrial adversary and more one of advocacy of the profession. The teacher unions have constructed their agenda of participation in micro economic reform through enterprise agreements based upon the professional development of teachers. They have been, above all, genuine participants in the development of productive partnerships with teacher educators. Perhaps one of the connecting threads through these discourses has been the increased awareness, and hence demand of parents, to assert their claim to be involved in schools in ways that acknowledge their right to influence the nature of their children's education. This can sometimes be characterised as a reactionary emphasis on simplistic notions of literacy and numeracy but such a characterisation fails to properly acknowledge parental rights to demand quality education for their children. As well there are faculties of education and their claims for recognition of the specialist knowledge and skills they have acquired in designing and delivering diverse and appropriate programs of teacher preparation.

And why these competing and complex discourses? As Connors points out in her graduation address at the University of Canberra in 1992,

> *...teachers are common folk. One in every 70 Australians is a teacher. Teachers make up 3% of the total work force - well over 200,000 school teachers at the last census - double the number we had 20 years ago.*

It is in that very fact that teaching is a mass profession that part of its distinctiveness as a professional lies.

Teachers are commonplace because of our commitment to universal primary and secondary schooling as a necessary basis for maintaining the informed citizenship that underpins our democracy, the quality of the workforce that earns our living and, most important of all, our capacity as individuals to live examined lives. Thus, for every one and a half lawyers, for every two doctors and every eight nurses, we need around fourteen teachers.

The irony is that teaching is too important to pay properly for it, or even to pay for the appropriate length of education and training. Even within the most elevated of national advisory bodies, to ask of one's most august and learned colleagues why it is that the veterinary surgeon who attends to your cat's ailments receives so much more training than the teacher who attends to your child's education, will force the admission that the major reason is that there are far more teachers whose training must be paid for than there are vets.

Of all the professions, teaching is the one concerned with all our children and young people. As the bible of contemporary statistics tell us, wherever around seventeen of our children are gathered, there we need a teacher.

Whilst teaching is common place it is not simple. Yet at both federal and state levels in Australia, governments of all political persuasions continue to seek simple and unproblematic solutions to improving the quality of teacher education and teaching in schools. However, in spite of this government agenda, teacher educators in NSW continue to engage in debates which affirm and even celebrate complexity. This process is without a doubt a political one with political consequences. We propose that the agenda for the future is to move beyond the instrumental towards a more emancipatory set of discourses regarding what is desirable in the formation of teachers in our schools.

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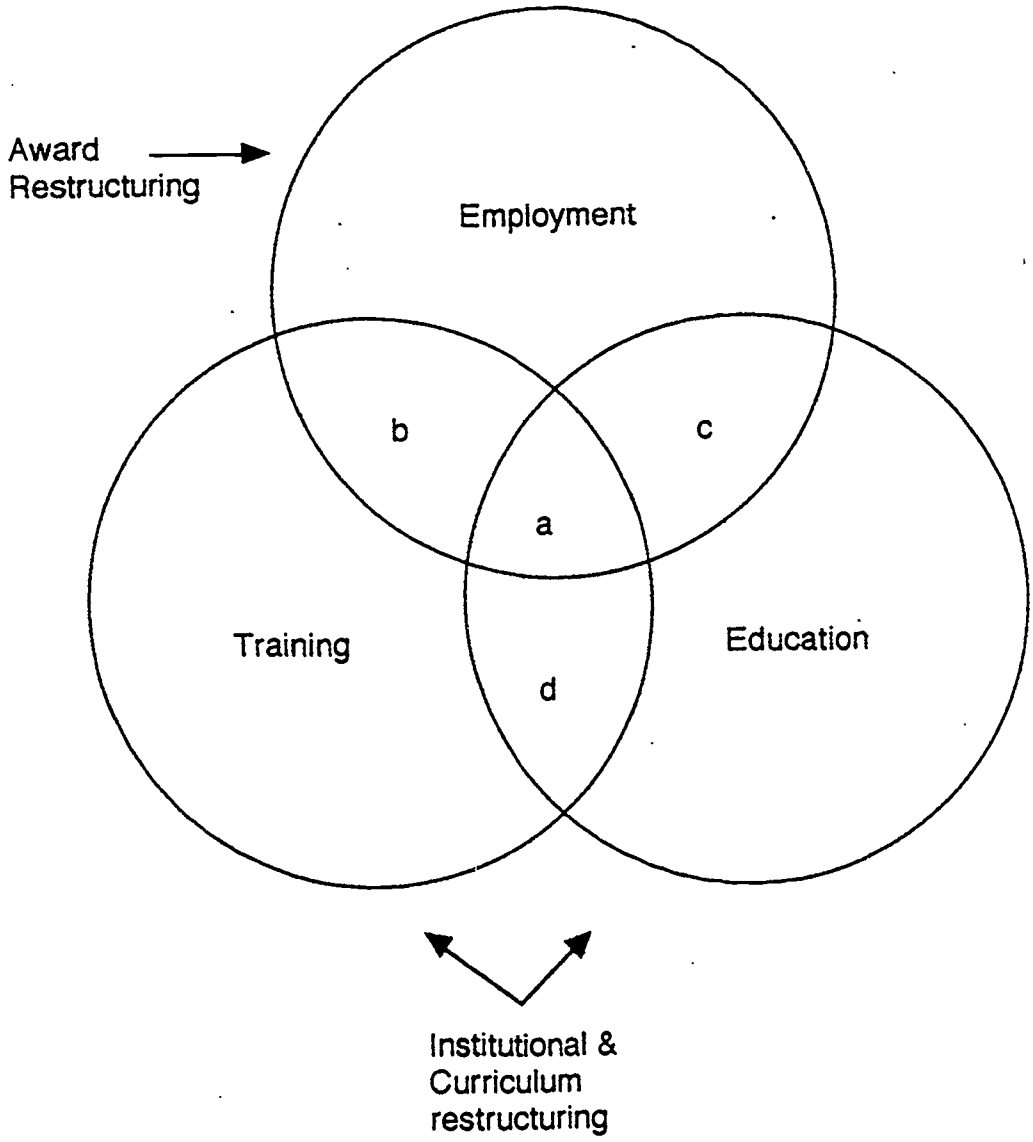
Figure 1: The Restructuring Environment



Zone a: The economic imperative governed by the Structural Efficiency Principle, underpinned by micro-economic reform.

Zone b: Workplace training determined by competency based standards.

Zone c: Preparation for work encompassing the post compulsory years of schooling and higher education.

Zone d: Skills education and training devoted to competency based standards.

Appendix 1

Terms of Reference for the NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on Teacher Education and the Quality of Teaching

1. The Council's terms of reference will be to advise the Minister on matters relating to the pre-service teacher education, induction and ongoing professional development of teachers; matters relating to the quality of teaching in NSW schools; matters relating to the advancement of teaching as a profession; ways of co-ordinating advice from all relevant sectors with an interest and involvement in Teacher Education in New South Wales.

Within these guidelines, the Council will provide advice on matters referred to it by the Minister and on other issues considered to be of importance.

The Council will provide a forum through which the profession and the broader community can influence directions and initiatives relating to:

2. The Minister's first reference to the Council is for it to provide advice to her on:

   (i) the definition of the essential teaching competencies for beginning teachers the extent to which these essential competencies will equip students to meet the educational needs of the full range of students in NSW schools, i.e., students with disabilities; students from non-English speaking backgrounds; Aboriginal students; poor students; isolated students both boys and girls.

   Ways in which Teacher Education institutions could report on individual trainee teachers' performance in these competencies.

   (ii) Guidelines to assist teacher education institutions meet the requirement that for programs to be acceptable for the preparation of teachers in the NSW Teaching Service, teacher educators have significant recent experience in schools. These guidelines should give practical substance to the requirements outlined in her Macarthur Address in November, 1991.

   (iii) Alternative pathways into the NSW Teaching Service; to allow mobility of teachers between sectors (including TAFE) and States; to allow appropriate

recruitment of overseas teachers; to promote entry into the teaching profession of people with experience in other industries/professions.

(iv) The extent to which existing teacher education programs are preparing teachers adequately to teach the NSW school curriculum K-12.

(v) Strategies to encourage a wide and ongoing commitment within the profession to the improvements of standards in teaching competencies.

The Council will provide advice on (i) and (ii) by the end of June 1992, to allow the broad implementation timetable set out in the Macarthur address to be met. Advice on (iii), (iv) and (v) should be ongoing and regular over the first year.

3. Given the importance of these referred matters, the Council will be set up initially as a large body to allow wide representation. After twelve months the composition of the Council will be reviewed in the light of its effectiveness and its future tasks.

4. The Chairperson of the Council will be Dr. Ken Boston, the Director-General of the NSW Department of School Education.

Secretarial support to the Council will be provided by the Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs.

The Council will meet six times a year and will report regularly to the Minister. (MACTEQT, May 1992)