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## Student responses to teaching in teacher education, 1900-1950

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### **Abstract:**

Contemporary teacher education, like other aspects of tertiary education, involves regimes for assessing quality of teaching. These regimes include student assessment of and feedback on teaching. These are widely considered problematic, and yet there are few signs that teacher educators reject the notion that student responses have something of value to offer.

This paper examines some evidence of student responses to teaching in teacher education institutions in the first half of the twentieth century, in order to provide means to reflect on regimes for securing and using students' responses to teaching and curriculum in contemporary teacher education. Specifically, it examines evidence from a range of teacher education institutions in England and Australia. Evidence of student responses to teacher education programs in this period is, in fact sparse, but can be derived from student magazines, two systematic attempts to gather (already 'historical') information, and from some of the reports on teacher training institutions by His Majesty's Inspectors in the UK.

The evidence indicates that students were keenly and often critically aware of the differences between teaching styles, subject content and the effectiveness of different staff and components of their programs. It also reveals that they had a keen interest in the relationship between college curricula and school practice, and its implications for their own preparation as teachers. Their views differed widely among themselves; they also ranged unevenly from a good humoured and often deeply ironic sense of the absurdity of aspects of their programs (in particular the demonstration lesson) through a sense that they were poorly served by some staff and subjects, to a recognition of enduring and (they seem to imply) unresolvable tensions in the process of teacher education.

**Keywords:** students; history of teacher education; teaching; curriculum; practicum.

## **Student responses to teacher education, 1900-1950**

Contemporary teacher education involves regimes for assessing quality of teaching. These regimes include student assessment of and feedback on teaching. These are widely considered problematic (Coffey & Gibbs, 2001; Higgins, Hartley & Skelton, 2002; Kember, Leung & Kwan, 2002; Marsh, 1984), and yet there are few signs that teacher educators reject the notion that student responses have something of value to offer, and ample evidence for continued support for such regimes (Hazari & Schnorr, 1999; Leckey & Neill, 2001; Richardson, 2005), as there has been since the 1970s (Centra, 1973; Cohen, 1980; Klein, 1971; Menges, 1973; Overall & Marsh, 1979; Tacke & Hofer, 1979). This paper examines some evidence of student responses to teacher training programs in the first half of the twentieth century, in order to provide means to reflect on contemporary student response regimes in higher education (including teacher education). It does so by straddling national boundaries, drawing on data from both Australia and England.

Drawing on a line of analysis I have previously argued for (Vick 2006a) and demonstrated in specific aspects of teacher education (Vick 2006b, 2007a, 2007b), I begin from the view that teacher education across the twentieth century (and presently) can be understood as an internationally normalised and broadly similar set of discourses and practices, with specific systems and institutions seen as local, regional and national variants. This contrasts with the longer standing approach which focuses on the idiosyncratic characteristics of individual systems while noting a range of ‘influences’ from elsewhere (e.g., Hyams, 1979; c.f., Tropp, 1957; Mattingley, 1975) and re-embodied in the most recent wide ranging account of teaching education in the Anglophone world (O’Donoghue & Whitehead, 2008). That approach highlights the importance of borders as markers of difference; the approach here highlights ways in which teacher education was constituted in fundamental ways across national and regional borders.

This paper examines some evidence of student responses to teaching in teacher education institutions in the first half of the twentieth century, in order to provide means to reflect on regimes for securing and using students’ responses to teaching and curriculum in contemporary teacher education. Specifically, it examines evidence from a range of teacher education institutions in England and Australia. Evidence of student responses to teacher education programs in this period is, in fact sparse, but can be derived from student magazines, two systematic attempts to gather (already ‘historical’) information, and from some of the reports on teacher training institutions by His Majesty’s Inspectors in the UK. This methodological approach rests on this estimate of the relative unimportance of boundaries, and of the overwhelming similarity of teacher education in

different jurisdictions that underpins the use of data from two countries (and indeed, two institutions in different countries in the case of the two data sets on which the paper most heavily relies). This approach imposes serious limits on the strength of claims that can be made. However, data that illuminate the rich texture of teacher education historically are thin, highly dispersed, and extremely variable from one jurisdiction and institution to another (Vick, 2006a, 2007a). Consequently, any historian seeking to throw historical light on such aspects of teacher education has little choice but to draw on such patchy data.

The paper begins by outlining briefly evidence of the importance of student responses in across the first half of the twentieth century and the broad characteristics of Anglophone teacher education in that period. It then examines in more detail, in turn, evidence of the character of, student responses to the practicum, their subjects they studies, the teaching they received and those who taught them, as well as of their responses to the programs they experienced overall. It argues that students were keenly and often critically aware of the differences between teaching styles, subject content and the effectiveness of different staff and components of their programs. It also reveals that they had a keen interest in the relationship between college curricula and school practice, and its implications for their own preparation as teachers. Their views differed widely among themselves; they also ranged unevenly from a good humoured and often deeply ironic sense of the absurdity of aspects of their programs (in particular the demonstration lesson) through a sense that they were poorly served by some staff and subjects, to a recognition of enduring and (they seem to imply) unresolvable tensions in the process of teacher education.

At first sight it might appear that student responses to courses and teaching were of little importance in teacher training regimes of the first half of the twentieth century. Certainly there was nothing that corresponded to the early twenty first century commitment to the securing of ‘student feedback’ on teaching, subjects and courses. However, there is ample historical evidence that student responses to teaching, including their capacities to perform in classrooms on the basis of the programs they had completed, were taken into account in the improvement of the programs themselves and in the wider policy deliberations about teacher education (HMI, 1992; Chief Education Officer for the Tynemouth, 1947; Principal, Melbourne Kindergarten Training College, 1951; Principal, Sydney Teachers College, 1928).

## **Contexts**

In order to understand the data we might use as evidence of student responses to the programs they participated in, it is essential to have some sense of the contexts to which they were responding. Overwhelmingly, across the first half of the twentieth century, teacher training was conducted in

single-purpose teachers' colleges, although a small proportion of prospective teachers - mainly secondary teachers - undertook postgraduate courses in what were widely known as University Training Departments. In Australia, with the exception of the Kindergarten Teachers' Colleges (established and run as part of the state-based Kindergarten Unions), Teachers Colleges were provided and governed by their respective State Departments of Education, although Melbourne and Sydney Teachers' Colleges were also grafted onto their local universities through the appointment of their principals as Professors of Education. In the UK some training colleges were provided and governed by local education authorities (whose forms and powers also changed over the period) but many were provided and governed by churches or, in a relatively small number of important instances, by independent educational bodies such as the Froebel Association (a close parallel with the Kindergarten Teachers Colleges in Australia).

Training programs were generally short: two years was most common for direct entry undergraduates, although some undertook courses of three or four years; postgraduate courses were typically one year. Typically, students entered the (undergraduate) courses in their late teenage years, but there were notable exceptions, such as the post-war employment-rehabilitation of soldiers.

Courses varied widely in organisation, content, and (as assessed by HMIs in the UK, for instance) in quality. However, as I have shown elsewhere (author reference removed), they were almost universally constructed around a tripartite structure (itself grounded in a theory-practice binary) comprising Theory, Methods, and Practical Experience. While the 'theory' subjects and the 'practical' methods subjects were the province of the college staff, 'Prac' was largely in the hands of schools and their staff. Teaching in the theory and methods subjects was largely by lecture (HMI, 1913, 1922, 1923) with some reliance on texts for reinforcement of lecture materials (student annotations on many such texts indicate which chapters were to be read for which lectures) and for extension reading. There is considerable evidence that while texts were seen as important in principle, in practice the range of such texts was often quite small, they were used, by staff and students, in very limited ways and there were very limited resources for wider reading (Carthew, 1982; HMI, 1912, 1920, 1923, 1924). Occasionally, lecturers used excursions, (semi) independent research activities and what might now be called community placements outside the walls of the institution. Assessment commonly centred on exams, but also included essays and other written papers, practical tasks (especially in subjects such as domestic science) and teaching preparation notebooks and performance as part of teaching practice.

College programs generated supplementary industries targeting students not only with core requirements such as textbooks and stationery but a range of published notes on a specific subjects and topics. While many of these were commercial ventures, others were collaborative student ventures. Thus, for instance, the Melbourne Teachers College Students' Notes Society offered 'Notes of university lectures in Education A and B...; Current notes are typed and sent out weekly during each term' (Students' Notes Society, 1914). Student magazines also provided supplementary academic content, through publications of articles on matters of either general educational interest or specific topics related to aspects of the courses, including contributions by college staff (Editorial, 1914).

Teaching practice involved a variety of forms within most programs, but commonly included a mixture of single or half days on a weekly basis, extended blocks, and 'one-off' demonstration and criticism lessons. Detailed arrangements for the location and distribution of different forms of prac across programs, for supervision, and for integration of learning from the practicum into the on-campus subjects, varied widely, both within and between programs.

In addition to the formal training program, there was commonly both a formal regimen of college life and a range of formal and informal student activities (Ward, 1951), some officially sponsored by the college 'authorities' and others more independently organised although, typically, still 'accountable' to the college authorities in various ways (Adelaide Teachers College Staff Meetings, 1948, e.g., 6, 13, 27 Sep, 22 Nov). Official regimen included such things as uniforms and other dress requirements (Jacobs, 1976; Seidel, 1976), regulation of attendance including absences from campus. In many cases, British colleges were residential, with additional regulation of daily routine;<sup>1</sup> in Australian and non-residential British colleges, women were commonly required either to live at home or to board in approved boarding houses. Moreover, students as individuals entered an institution in which they were collectively pre-organised into cohorts on the basis of gender, year in the program, level of schooling they were preparing to teach (primary, secondary) (Lamshed, 1981) in ways that inevitably shaped their experience, their interactions with staff and fellow students, and their informal learning.

This level of regulation outside the explicit training program of lectures, assignments and practical placements created distinctive and relatively 'dense' hierarchical governmental relations which led some students to reflect that, as one put it, 'we were still treated very much like schoolkids' (Seidel,

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1 Note that Melbourne Teachers College also had residential halls, but could not have been described as a residential college.

1976) although others also considered that within the boundaries of that regulatory regime, ‘we were given a lot of freedom’ (Hartnett & Morey, 1976).

Within these contexts students responded, unsurprisingly, in a range of ways to all aspects of their college programs. Because there was no systematic attempt to collect ‘student feedback’ most expressions of responses to prac are student initiated, often in the form of parody in student magazines, although there are occasional ‘serious’ discussions in the same magazines.

## **Prac**

Both parodic and non-parodic accounts, and contemporaneous and later reflective recollections, reveal a sense that the various forms of prac were simultaneously centrally important to their learning and deeply problematic and tension ridden (c.f., Vick, 2006a).

Many of the later reflective accounts make it very clear that their authors saw ‘prac’ as crucial to their learning how to teach, and, indeed as the core of their training programs as a whole. As one of a group who had trained at Adelaide Teachers College in the 1920s put it, with affirmations from her companions, ‘Most of your work was out in the practical schools’ (X., Y., & Z., 1976). Many students and former students provided evidence that they considered that, at its best (and sometimes at far less than its best), prac was invaluable for learning how to carry out the daily practical work of classroom teaching, both from the example of their classroom supervising teachers and from their own experiences of success and failure in handling difficult situations. Thus, Mrs X., Mrs Y. and Mrs Z. recalled that after a trainee had taught a lesson, ‘the demonstration teacher would criticise... discuss with us, good points and our bad points which I think helped us quite a bit.’ Dorothy Hartnett saw the whole process as ‘under the tuition of a teacher’, and explained that

we’d see a dem lesson by the teacher then we’d discuss it... and then we’d have to prepare lessons, and come in with all our preparation and all our points of teaching, and give the lesson and then receive the criticism of the teacher, and perhaps the infant mistress... They were really experts – those demonstrators, and the schools gave a very comprehensive report on each student... criticism of any lesson you gave, was made in writing in your book... [and at the end you were] given a skillmark. (1976)

Equally, while recognising that her experience of prac was less ideal, one London student commented that the difficulties she faced on prac meant that later challenges handling difficult students in her own classroom were relatively easy (Anon. [1915-16], 1951). Implicit in many of their comments, there is also a sense that they learned self reliance and what we might now call resilience.

In some cases, as retired teachers reflecting on the college experience they also saw the practical component of their programs as informing and illuminating lectures and subjects. As one put it, *prac* ‘meant that I understood the lectures in theory and method’ (Jacobs, 1976). Such comments imply that it was they, as students, rather than the lecturers themselves, who made the connection (and, as I note below, for many, there were few such connections between the theory and practical components of their courses, although the Inspectors also noted cases where lecturing staff did explore those connections (HMI, 1913), and there is considerable evidence in college records of staff consistently seeking to make them (see Vick, 2006a).

Equally, however, the historical records bear considerable evidence of the array of tensions, problems and difficulties students saw with the practicum. Thus, in the privileged space of student magazines, some wrote of the divergences between the college and its ‘progressivism’ and the more conservative approach of many of the schools, of the difficult position of staff, and of the complications and consequences for their own learning experience (V.Z. & J.M.D., 1937). Similarly, an unidentified London student recalled the visit of his preliminary teaching practice tutor: ‘The teacher with whom I was placed was hardly a pioneer and ‘Fairy’ [the tutor] was most displeased with the work I was set to do. He swept through the school like a refiner’s fire’ (Anon. [1911-1915], 1951). The perception that schools were lacking in important respects – behind the times – corresponded closely with what appears to have been a generalised shared view of college staff – that an important part of their role was to enable students to transform school practice rather than ‘merely’ fit in as what Mackie (1934) described as ‘hacks’. In this sense, it seems reasonable to interpret students’ comments as reflecting their own take up of the approaches articulated in their programs.

Such comments suggest that disjunction between *prac* and ‘theory’, and the tensions between schools and colleges were highly visible to the students. In this case, the disjunctions were understood in favour of the college. In other cases, however, they were seen in terms of the colleges’ failure to connect theory to practice, resulting in a failure to adequately prepare students for their profession: Such concerns ranged from the highly specific to the relatively general. At the ‘specific’ end of the spectrum, one commented that ‘I found, for instance, that I was not instructed what to do when big lads tried to liven things up by throwing pieces of turnip and carrot about!’ (Anon. [1915-16], 1951). At the more ‘general’ end, another commented that, ‘many of the lectures... served only to confirm the student in this view [that lectures were largely a waste of



time], for... when they were concerned with teaching [they] seemed largely unrelated to one's experience in schools' (Suggate, 1951):

It appears to me reasonable to infer other problematic aspects of prac in some of the comments about the pedagogical approaches taken to their learning on prac, even where the students themselves do not appear to see them as problems. Thus the comments by Mrs X., Mrs Y. and Mrs Z. (1976) appeared to indicate that learning on prac was essentially a-theoretical and unreflective; they recalled being offered dem lessons to watch 'then we were set to copy, more or less, their lessons... pattern[ing] ourselves on what we had seen in the previous lesson. We were given various notes to follow and we would base our lessons on those'. Here, the value of the student responses lies not in their own identification of problems, but the potential of their comments to reveal what the researcher's own approaches to education construct as problems. In other case, however, it is clear that the students themselves did identify some of these practices, such as the lack of 'follow up after lessons' (Carthew, 1982), as problematic. This approach was described, critically by one London student as the 'sink or swim' method (Anon. [1915-16], 1951) – a trial and error approach which ran counter to the teaching methods the students themselves were being taught and encouraged to apply in their own teaching (Anon. [1911-15], 1951; Kemp, 1951; Miller, 1951; Suggate, 1951).

In keeping with the importance they placed on it, and with due allowance for individual variation of response, former students reflecting at a distance from their immediate experience commonly saw prac in broadly positive terms. These range from comments which saw the whole experience as positive ('they were perfection... we gained immensely from them') (Hartnett & Morey, 1976) to those, such as the unidentified London student whose sense of the difficulties of prac I have already cited (Anon. [1915-16], 1951) suggested that while the immediate experience was difficult, it had important medium term benefits: 'How easy was normal teaching in a girls' school when we did go out as fully trained teachers after our practice days with boys.'

Such comments appear to address what we might see as quite fundamental pedagogical aspects of the practicum as a core component in the preparation of teachers. Others appear to address issues that were less fundamental to the value of the programs as a whole. Thus, for instance, Blanche Jacobs expressed her sense that college students were not really welcomed in the schools: 'the headmaster generally was thrilled when we went home' (1976; c.f., Anon. [1907-09], 1951). In so far as their perceptions may have been warranted, the problem here appears to lie in the individual

responses of teachers and school heads and, perhaps, in the logistics and pressures on teachers already burdened with large and challenging classes.

Others focused on the terror aspects of the practical components of programs had for them as student teachers. For Mrs Carthew (1982), at Adelaide Teachers College, it was the generalised sense of ‘someone watching’ which, presumably, reflects a combination of insecurity in her ability, the fact that the watcher was also the judge, and that the consequences of failure were serious. For others, it was the children themselves: ‘I can assure you it was a terrible initiation for a raw untrained recruit to be faced with 40 boys all highly pleased at the prospect of putting a young lady in her place! But we carried on’ (Pink, 1951). For many, however, as evidenced by contemporary writing and later recollections, it was the crit lessons, the held most terror, and the “Demonstration” lesson given by me before men and women students and supervisor in College to a class from Red Lion Square. That sick feeling watching the class mount the winding stair-case to the top of the building’ (Anon. [1912-15], 1951). *The Londinian* also carried a humorous piece about a lecturer’s visit to observe a student’s teaching on prac. The story captures the sense of anxiety on the part of the trainee (‘Visitor is a mild and gentle term... Possibly there is a euphemism for everything’), and of the class itself (‘It froze in horrid silence’) (J.V.S., 1926). Despite, or perhaps because of, this sense of anxiety that surrounded the crit lesson, there is some evidence that, on the one hand, fellow students, and possibly staff, were ‘gentle’ in their criticisms, and on the other, that the softening of criticism might turn the exercise into something of a farce. Notably, the student magazine article, ‘Notes of a “Dem” lesson’ (Araby, 1937) (where the explicit attention to the abbreviation ‘Dem’ might be taken to imply, also, a Damn! lesson), highlights the supervising lecturer’s ‘vicious notebook’, the ‘mournful’ class, the state of the student (‘nervous wreck’) who was to take the dem lesson, the utter disarray of the lesson, and the successful efforts of the demonstrating student’s peers to protect him from the inevitable damnation, resulting in the concluding consensus that ‘they have heard a really good lesson.’

While it is difficult to demonstrate, I suggest that the emphasis many of the former students placed on prac, and the frequency of articles dealing with prac in student magazines indicate that students themselves recognised – in both the short and long terms – that prac was central to the programs that prepared them to be teachers. Their responses to prac appear to have been critical in the sense that they interrogated their experience rather than merely reacting to it. One of the two major bases of criticism was the pedagogical quality and value of specific practicums in preparing them to be ‘work ready’, although in a few cases they also judged it according to its capacity to prepare them to adopt more progressive practices than those they found in schools. The other major basis for critique was the subjective quality of aspects of the experience, in particular of the crit lesson.

## **The Program: Subjects, teaching and lecturers**

The contemporary data in student magazines, the occasional ‘official’ records and later recollections provide some evidence of student response to the specific subjects that comprised their training program. Some commented on pedagogy. For the most part their comments are at first glance, at least, ‘merely’ descriptive. Mrs Carthew (1982), for instance, recalled that lectures were the main form of teaching. Elsewhere, descriptive comments about the centrality of lectures carry an implicit or explicit critique of the limitations of either the mode of teaching itself, or the particular enactment of that mode of teaching. Some such comments were blunt: some lectures were incoherent, pointless, and students took little from them (Seidel, 1976; Jeffrey, 1951). Some also comment on the level of indiscipline in lectures in some subjects – on the ‘pranks’ (Anon. [1912-15], 1951) or the ‘giggling’ (Seidel, 1976) of the male students (or ‘big boys’ as Seidel described them). Thus, for instance, Brenda Seidel (1976) reflected on lectures in one unidentified subject at Adelaide Teachers College that ‘we all laughed’ but of little real value ‘we learned very little’. Such comments, it appears to me, are important for the way they discriminate between the superficially engaging aspects of lectures and their enduring or intellectual or professional value.

In other cases the comments provide a more subtle basis for critique, even where the students’ own comments appear uncritical. Thus, for instance, (in a comment that is not at all atypical of the recollections of former London students), Olive Kemp (1951) vividly recalled John Adams’ lectures: ‘Prof Adams's actual lectures at the beginning of each term, to the crowded theatre, were mind-openers.’ Yet her actual description, like others’, focuses on the *style* of lecturing presentation rather than on its ‘mind opening’ content: ‘the phrasing, and choice of words, and delivery. [I] can recapture the intonation on re-reading his books.’ Others, however, appear to have a more or less explicitly critical edge, implying that the reliance on transmission mode was pedagogically problematic. Thus, for instance, one former London student commented that in many respects students could skip lectures and pick up the content simply by reading the textbook, and that when they did attend lectures their record of the lecture comprise more doodling than notes (Suggate, 1951). Such an approach to studying assumes an approach to teaching which did not depend on close, uncritical and untransformed re-presentation of the content of lectures. Yet Inspectors commonly commented that students characteristically responded to subject precisely by noting and regurgitating, in rote learning style, what appeared to them (the inspectors) to be largely dictated lecture notes (HMI, 1913, 1920, 1922).

In some cases, student critique of lectures was implied in what were implicitly or explicitly constructed as the ('good') exceptions. Thus, for instance, 'Nunn was always provocative' (Anon. [1911-15], 1951), while H.H. Penny, at Adelaide, 'encouraged the students to hold conversations with him, he'd have question and answer' (Hartnett & Morey, 1976). In a more extended account, A.R. Moon (1951) recalled that the geography methods lecturer, Fairgrieve,

exposed easily assimilated but hopeless untrue geographical concepts. One would-be expert had informed him that the east coast of England was dry because it lay in the shelter of the Welsh mountains. Mr Fairgrieve gravely pondered this information. Then ensued a Socratic dialogue at the end of which matters were reduced to sheer common sense. 'How wide is it from Abertswyth to Yarmouth?' This was given in miles, translated into feet, and paced out across the room, one pace being equal to a hundred thousand feet.

Perhaps the most penetratingly discriminating comment on pedagogy in these contexts was that made by a former LDTC student, recollecting in 1951 on the differences between Nunn and Adams in the early 1910s:

My memories of [Nunn's] lectures are not so vivid or so detailed as those of Sir John [Adams]'s but his influence on me was greater. His lectures were not carefully prepared [but]... Nunn was a great teacher – we never saw Adams *teach*. (Anon. [1911-15], 1951)

Some comments focus on the level of interest or stimulation they generated. (e.g., Hartnett & Morey, 1976). Others focus on the 'relevance' of the content of individual subjects and in some instances, of the program as a whole. Thus, for instance, Seidel (1976) commented approvingly, that Penny, in the general methods subject taught students 'how to handle naughty children... he was practical, not just an up in the air fellow.' Similarly, Suggate (1951), who was sharply critical of some subjects, commented positively on von Wyss, for her 'practical suggestions' and Nunn for his application of pedagogical principles:

His generalisations were always illustrated with apt concrete examples... He inspired an intelligent approach to the problems of education and the classroom and developed an alert and experimental attitude. He enveloped the business of teaching with a 'worth-while' atmosphere and *gave significance to ordinary and routine class-work*.

And, similarly, Dorothy May (1951), explained that what Susan Isaacs had given her was 'a sound knowledge of the scientific foundations of modern practice in the education and nurture of young children.'

While many other reflections also suggest a positive response to the curriculum and teaching, they were couched in highly general, almost vague, terms, rather than in relation to any specific content, teaching practice or application:

I don't remember using psych deliberately. But I imagine that knowing it... commonsense came into our teaching a lot... but it doesn't hurt to have the

knowledge, the theory, behind you because I think it help you to use your commonsense in a better way. History of education and theory of education... History of education has cultural value for a person who's going to teach... It improves general knowledge so you can make a better decision... knowledge helps you to make a wiser decision. (X., Y., & Z., 1976).

This sense of 'learned commonsense' also appears to be reflected in some of the other comments that students made about their own key learnings from their course: Thus, Olive Kemp (1951) identified that the key insight she learned from Adams was 'that if you want to teach Jonathon Latin, you must know John as well as Latin,' while Brian Stanley (1951) learned from Cyril Burt that 'to understand all is to pardon all.'

Finally, in appreciating the value of student responses to the programs within which they undertook teacher training, including their critiques of it, it is important to note that a number of students commented critically, both at the time (in student magazines) and later as they reflected on their experience, about the quality of their own engagement and learning. Thus Hartnett (Hartnett & Morey, 1976), for instance, admitted that she 'should have applied [her]self better,' rather than spending so much time playing sports, an unidentified London student recalled having maintained his active allegiance to his previous College resulting in relatively little engagement with the Institute (Anon. [1915-16], 1951), while another commented that the LTDC was an opportunity to get a degree, and that study for that took priority over preparation for teaching (Sinclair, 1951).

Unsurprisingly, student responses to lecturers varied widely, where the variations reflected both differences between lecturers, and differences between students. Differences between students are sharply illustrated by comments by two former Adelaide Teachers' College students about Schultz, the principal, as a lecturer: one recalled him as a brilliant lecturer who brought his subject matter to life (Hartnett & Morey, 1976), the other as utterly boring (Seidel, 1976). A few elicited a unanimously positive response, for (variously) their passion for their subject, their capacity to inspire students with a love for it, the clarity of their explanations and, in some cases, their personal characteristics – generosity of spirit, care, compassion, considerateness (e.g., Seidel, 1976); and personal idiosyncracies (e.g., Pink, 1951). In many cases, those recalling their student experiences, suggested an intimate connection between the quality of the subjects, and the qualities of those who taught them. (e.g., Seidel, 1976), although occasionally, they distinguish sharply between the 'engagingness' of the lecturer, and the value of the content of lectures (e.g., Seidel, 1976). Equally, a former LDTC student could comment that Nunn 'exercised a most profound influence on all the students of my time', even though 'quite a number were unable to accept his philosophy'(Anon.

[1911-15], 1951). In these instances, I suggest, the responses point to the complex ways in which the teaching is inflected in significant ways by, or through, the person of the teacher (c.f., Conway, 1992; Jones & McWilliam, 1996).

## Overall

Students responded to their college programs, in the broad sense I outlined earlier, including both the formal program and the informal learning from the life of the institution as a whole, in a variety of ways. Explicitly, some of those reflecting on their experience saw it in broadly negative terms. Thus, Mrs Carthew (1982) stated quite simply that her training had failed to equip her to teach. Equally, a former student of the London Day Training College reflected that ‘I still think it [the system he trained under] was a mistaken system from the first’ (Anon. [1915-16], 1951). Others were more positive. Thus Mrs X. (X., Y., & Z., 1976) commented that even though ‘I wasn’t aware of it [the ‘theory’ she was taught] affecting my teaching... any knowledge you have, you can apply. The knowledge does help, always.’ More specifically, Olive Kemp (1951), considered that the ideas she gained from Adams’s lectures had stood the test of time. What stands out in a number of the comments by former students is the impact of the program on their general attitudes (‘even those of us who lacked the ability to profit fully [from their teaching] know how strongly our whole attitude to life was influenced by these outstanding personalities’ (Sinclair, 1951)) and approaches to their profession (‘the strong impression they gave us, that our job was to see that children got the best deal possible and a far better one than we had had’ (Kemp. 1951).

In addition to explicit comments about the programs they entered many of the articles in student magazines, in particular, their parodies of aspects of college programs, *demonstrate* both a high level of competence in using the discourses into which their programs had inducted them and a playful pleasure in their mastery of their knowledge which evidences a highly positive response to their learning experiences. Further many of their writings demonstrate a positive engagement with and take up of many of the discourses that constituted their programs. Thus, for instance, one author offered a series of short moral essays that clearly reflect and synthesise (if somewhat simplistically, perhaps) philosophical, psychological and sociological arguments on and understandings of human behaviour that were canvassed in college subjects: ‘Bill Smith, the low thief and liar, didn’t want to be born in the slums and grow up to be a public nuisance; he couldn’t help it’ (Anon., 1914; c.f., J.V.S., 1926; Some Crits, 1914; V.Z., & J.M.D., 1937; Editor, 1929). These writings, I suggest, manifest a serious critical engagement with the agenda for transformative professional development (in the first instance) and transformative social engagement (in the second) that they saw as crucial

to their institutions' programs. Such performative responses, I suggest, constitute powerful evidence of a positive student responses to their respective colleges' programs.

## **Conclusions**

The evidence I have adduced of student responses to the programs I which they undertook teacher training indicates that students were keenly aware of the differences between teaching styles, subject content and what we might (but they did not) term teacher effectiveness of different staff and components of their programs and responded critically to their programs at a range of levels, from 'interest', pedagogy and relevance. They also reveal that they had a keen and critical interest in the relationship between college curricula and school practice, and its implications for their own preparation as teachers, often in ways that discriminated between different elements of their program. Their views differed widely among themselves; they also ranged unevenly from a good humoured and often deeply ironic sense of the absurdity of aspects of their programs (in particular the demonstration lesson) through a sense that they were poorly served by some staff and subjects, to a recognition of enduring and (they seem to imply) unresolvable tensions in the process of teacher education.

I argue that their perception of and responses to their own teacher preparation offers us insights into different ways of appreciating and capitalising on the value of student responses to our own programs, the limits of our present modes of 'capturing' those responses, and for reflecting on, understanding better, and responding more effectively to enduring complex issues in pre-service teacher education and to claims about our collective failure to address them. In particular, I suggest, the two collections of recollections point to the value of reflective comments 'at a distance' in offering broad holistic evaluations as well as comments on specifics tested in the light of extensive subsequent experience and professional maturity.

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