

2004

Attracting the bright and committed into teaching: political rhetoric or practical reality?

Anne Graham
Southern Cross University

Renata Phelps
Southern Cross University

Berenice Kerr
Catholic Education Office, Lismore Diocese

Lee MacMaster
Trinity College, Lismore

Publication details

Graham, A, Phelps, R, Kerr, B & MacMaster, L 2004, 'Attracting the bright and committed into teaching: political rhetoric or practical reality?', *Change: Transformations in Education*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 47-63.

The abstract and pdf of the published article reproduced in ePublications@SCU with the permission of Change: Transformations in Education

Attracting the Bright and Committed into Teaching:

Political Rhetoric or Practical Reality?

ANNE GRAHAM, SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY

RENATA PHELPS, SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY

BERENICE KERR, CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE, LISMORE

LEE MACMASTER, CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE, LISMORE

*Quality issues linked with teachers and teaching have been well documented in a series of politically and practically driven reports over the past two decades, reflecting an imperative to arrest the declining status of teaching and to attract talented students into the teaching profession. This paper reports on an initiative involving Higher School Certificate (HSC) students who completed two units of an undergraduate teaching degree as part of their final year school studies. The initiative, **Springboard into Teaching**, is a University developed course, offered in partnership with a school system. This course makes a practical response to discourses of opportunity, and crisis, concerning teaching identified by writers such as Fullan (1991). The paper discusses the educational context that gave rise to **Springboard into Teaching** as well as the broader role and function of University Developed Board Endorsed Courses (UDBECs). An overview is provided of **Springboard into Teaching**, including the significance of the approach to learning underpinning it. The paper summarises the findings of an independent evaluation of the course highlighting the value of the initiative as a practical response to recruitment and quality issues in teacher education.*

QUALITY CONCERNS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

'Teacher education is an opportunity and a crisis of enormous proportion'.
(Fullan, 1991, p. 290)

The role of the teacher has changed significantly in recent years along with the status of teaching as a profession and the demands and expectations the community places on

teachers and schools (Vick, 1998). The recent Report of the Review of Teacher Education in NSW (Ramsey, 2000) has highlighted a number of proposed policy directions for teacher education that will impact on the work of Universities, employers and schools and the kind of partnership they will be expected to provide in the future. The Ramsey report is unambiguous in conveying concerns that there has been no concerted support for teacher quality. It argues 'there has been a notable lack of genuine, sustained collaboration between employers of teachers and universities in the provision of initial teacher education and ongoing professional development' (McMorrow, 2001, p. 17). In so doing, Gonczi (2001) suggests the Ramsey review, unlike earlier reports, makes a serious challenge to teacher education across the board, including the way in which teachers are recruited, inducted, assessed and rewarded.

The approach proposed in the Ramsey report is imbued with particular utilitarian ideologies that merit detailed scrutiny beyond the scope of this paper. Notwithstanding the fact that the discourse of practicality that has pervaded teacher education for many years is reinforced in the report, it is nevertheless clear that a challenge is being posed for universities to work more closely with employers in addressing the complex quality issues facing the profession. These quality issues extend to the recruitment and retention of talented and committed teachers.

Whilst Ramsey concedes in his report that 'many of the issues which need to be addressed are long-standing and complex' (Ramsey, 2000, p. 25) he conveys his views with a tone of urgency and a hint of frustration at the structural impediments to much needed reform and revitalisation of teaching. In reflecting on the very limited impact of past reviews of teacher education he questions why those with responsibility to transform teacher education and the quality of teaching did not meet the challenges and why, when so many issues were highlighted, so few were addressed. Whilst Ramsey strongly cautions that such inaction should not be perpetuated subsequent to his own review one cannot resist wondering what proactive initiatives can emerge out of such deeply entrenched structural paralysis. But perhaps as Foucault (cited in Kritzman, 1988, p. 37) posits 'Since these things have been made, they can be unmade, as long as we know how it was that they were made'. Given that the current challenges for the teaching profession are complex and have been a long time being 'made' it would be unreasonable to expect they will be 'unmade' in the short term. Nevertheless, since change is often dependent on notions of partnership and collaboration, not to mention a radical rethinking of 'ownership' over teachers and teaching, it would seem that any initiative that attempts to push the boundaries of traditional ways of doing teacher education, are worthy of experiment and evaluation. The University Developed Board Endorsed Higher School Certificate Course that is the focus of this paper, *Springboard into Teaching*, is one such initiative.

WHAT IS A UNIVERSITY DEVELOPED BOARD ENDORSED HSC COURSE?

The movement in NSW towards the development of a 'new HSC' (introduced in 2000) opened up considerable debate concerning ways in which curriculum could be conceived not only to be of the highest standard, fair and rigorous but also offering challenge and a breadth of course choices. The 1997 NSW Government White Paper, *Securing their Future*, set the scene for the emergence of a number of new and revised curriculum initiatives. One initiative deriving increased legitimacy in this context of change is University Developed Board Endorsed Courses (UDBECs). Such courses are developed for a myriad of reasons usually associated with meeting local educational needs and providing enrichment opportunities for high achieving students. These courses supplement the new HSC curriculum in the same way as other Board Endorsed Courses. In this way, University developed courses may be included in a student's pattern of study of the HSC but results are not considered for inclusion in the calculation of the Universities Admission Index (UAI).

In NSW the Board of Studies is the statutory body responsible for curriculum development of courses including Higher School Certificate courses. An advisory committee of the Board of Studies assesses applications for UDBECs and subsequently makes recommendations to the Board for endorsement of these courses. Consistent with the requirements of *Securing their Future*, the Board of Studies (2002, p. 4) requires that University developed courses will:

- Assist in providing for the needs of high ability students in Stage 6 of their secondary schooling;
- Extend the new HSC curriculum and not overlap significantly in content with other Board Developed Courses;
- Provide an opportunity for high ability students to undertake a university level course while still at school;
- Provide students with a study opportunity that they may not otherwise have through the Board's Stage 6 curriculum;
- Ensure that students experience tertiary study in a supportive environment;
- Add to the existing flexible pathways to the Higher School Certificate and university;
- Contribute to the articulation of the Stage 6 curriculum and first year courses at University;
- Encourage students' independent, reflective and ongoing learning through engagement with high level, challenging university level courses;

- Give the students a taste of university course content, university course delivery and university life in general;
- Be accredited for the HSC, satisfy part of the university's requirements for the first year of a university degree and attract advanced standing and credit as appropriate;
- Recognise the school (or school system) and university partnership in developing and delivering the courses.

The merging of HSC with University study through the provision of UDBECs is part of an agenda by the Board of Studies to ensure curriculum offerings meet a breadth of possible needs of high achieving students. Farmer (1999) notes that such courses should be available to students at no cost and should be courses designed for highly able students rather than simply as early access to standard undergraduate courses. Flood (1998) further underscores the importance of a diversity of curriculum offerings for high achieving students and cites the work of Feldhusen (1989) in making her case:

Gifted and talented youth need accelerated, challenging instruction in core subject areas...an opportunity to work with other gifted and talented youth. And they need...teachers who both understand the nature and needs of gifted youth and are deeply knowledgeable in the content they teach. (Feldhusen cited in Flood, p. 28)

Essentially, UDBECs contribute to the blurring of curriculum boundaries that has been characteristic of education policy solutions over the past decade in Australia. In the past, there has been a tendency to associate a particular type of learning with a particular institution or sector. According to such a view, universities are places of higher education offering degrees, schools provide general education, adult and community education centres offer special interest courses while TAFE colleges train people in vocational skills. Implied in such a conceptualisation is a hierarchy around knowledge, skills and understandings, and an assumed trajectory of choice for learners. UDBECs interrupt such a neat conceptualisation because they offer an opportunity for students in their final year at school to complete University studies. HSC 'knowledge' is now not only the domain of one institution but is shared across and between sectors.

Whilst the language of 'market efficiency' and 'competition' continues to prevail in education (Marginson, 1997) the emergence of UDBECs shifts the focus to notions of 'learning' and 'collaboration'. This is consistent with Seddon's (2001) view that the focus has shifted from a concern with enterprise to a focus on networks and further suggests that networks are emerging as a potential solution to education and training provision. Similarly, Kirby (2000) promotes networks as a way of refocusing provision more in the direction of young people's educational needs by moving beyond the 'vested interests' that maintain the status quo of educational institutions. UDBECs capitalise on the potential of such an approach, particularly that provided by collaborative partnerships

between a school system and University. From a different perspective, such collaboration has been touted as linchpin in improving the provision of teacher education (Ramsey, 2000; Esson, Johnson & Vinson, 2002).

THE SPRINGBOARD INTO TEACHING UDBEC

Springboard into Teaching is the result of a collaborative regional initiative between the School of Education at Southern Cross University (SCU) and the Catholic Education Office (CEO), both located at Lismore on the North Coast of NSW. The initiative emerged from a shared concern about the declining status of teaching as a career option for school leavers and, consequently, the need to encourage talented and committed young people into the profession. The issues identified by the UDBEC partners are consistent with those referred to earlier in this paper and highlighted in the both the Ramsey report and, more recently, in the Vinson report (Esson et al 2002) albeit from the perspective of a crisis in public education.

Among the specific issues raised by Ramsey in relation to the recruitment of teachers that the UDBEC partners wished to pursue through the *Springboard into Teaching* initiative was the need to:

- Arrange funding in a way that supports a system of teacher preparation and development consistent with the expectations society has of teachers;
- Structure initial teacher education to attract and retain people who are most likely to develop into outstanding practitioners;
- Expand the diversity of pathways through which people can enter teaching;
- Improve the selection processes for people to enter teaching (Ramsey, 2000, p. 25).

In particular, the partners were keen to explore the concept of scholarships or funding support for students committed to pursuing teaching as a career. Socio-economic data on the North Coast of NSW (Herrington, 1999; Vinson, 1999; Birrell, Maher & Rapson, 1997) suggests there are significant pockets of disadvantage that may preclude some high school students from undertaking tertiary study away from home. The Catholic Education Office applied for funding from its Diocesan Education Board and was successful in securing adequate funding for 29 talented Higher School Certificate students to undertake two units of undergraduate study in teacher education through the University. This is consistent with the strategy proposed by Ramsey that:

We need to attract people from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds who will become teachers of the highest quality... Scholarships, traineeships and internships should be introduced to attract especially talented people into teaching (Ramsey, 2000, p. 11).

The targeted group for the Springboard into Teaching course was:

- high achieving students;
- students who were sufficiently motivated to 'carry' an extra HSC course which offered no UAI advantage;
- students with an interest in pursuing teaching as a career;
- students who intended applying to the local university for their tertiary studies.

The UDBEC partners consulted closely with high schools in the region and with the NSW Board of Studies in determining the interest and support for such a course. These stakeholders were further consulted in developing a proposal that would enable high achieving students from Catholic schools across the region to complete two units of undergraduate teacher education as part of their HSC study. The *Springboard into Teaching* course was approved as a UDBEC in 2001 and the first cohort of Year 11 students commenced studies during the 4th school term of that year following a rigorous application and selection process involving the UDBEC partners, principals, teachers and parents as well as prospective students. As part of the application process students were required to:

- attend an information session about the course;
- complete an extensive application form including a statement on why they wished to pursue teaching as a career;
- submit two recent school reports;
- provide a supporting reference from the principal; and
- attend an interview with personnel from the Catholic Education Office and (in 2002) the University.

The course commenced in 4th term (October) 2001, was completed in March 2002 and the students 'graduated' in May 2002. Of the 29 students who were selected for Springboard, 23 'graduated' at a ceremony presided over by the chancellor, vice-chancellor and other senior University staff. A second cohort of HSC students from both Catholic and government schools commenced study in October 2002.

The *Springboard into Teaching* course comprises two discrete units of study, each being approximately 13 weeks duration. Each unit in the course is delivered via two weekend workshops supported by extensive print materials and online components. The two units comprising the course are approved compulsory units in the Bachelor of Education (Primary) program and one is compulsory and the other an elective in the Graduate Diploma in Education and double degree (secondary) programs, both offered through Southern Cross University. As such both the content and assessment is subject to normal university quality assurance measures.

The first unit is called *Introduction to Teaching* and provides the students with an overview of the teaching profession whilst exploring the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they will require throughout their teaching careers. This unit involves the students spending time in classrooms in the capacity of a practicum teacher. The metacognitive approach used in this unit is consistent with that proposed by De la Harpe & Radloff (1999) who suggest that future teachers need to be effective learners and also effective teachers of learning. There are no elements of the unit that overlap in content with existing Board Developed Courses and the outcomes for the unit are considered sufficiently 'higher order' as to merit status as part of a UDBEC.

The outcomes identified for the *Introduction to Teaching* unit are as follows:
Students learn about:

- what does it mean to be a teacher?
- the role of the teacher as reflective practitioner
- the teacher as lifelong learner
- responding to social issues and imperatives
- understanding and working in a school system
- outcomes based education
- teaching across a broad curriculum
- creating a climate for learning
- negotiating theory and practice
- introductory teaching skills and strategies
- study skills - essay writing, referencing, time management, goal setting
- metacognitive learning approaches and their relevance for teaching
- basic computer skills including use of southern cross computer labs, word processing, web searching, e-mail, myscu
- library and database searching skills.

Students learn to:

- reflect critically on their motivation for 'being a teacher'
- evaluate effective teaching and learning through structured observation
- reflect on their practice
- critique taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching and learning
- adopt critical approaches to information literacy

- set goals, manage their time
- use the university library and database searching skills
- write essays and reference at an approved university level.

This unit was considered critical for inclusion in the Springboard into Teaching course not only because it is a core 1st Year unit in the Bachelor of Education program but particularly because the content and processes are entirely based on developing knowledge, skills and understandings concerned with 'being a teacher'. The UDBEC partners considered this learning to be critical given a primary purpose of the course was to 'attract and retain people who are most likely to develop into outstanding practitioners' (Ramsey, 2000, p. 25). It was assumed that this unit would provide important contextual learning to enable the students to make a more informed decision about their suitability for teaching and potential contribution to the profession.

The second unit studied by the students as part of the *Springboard into Teaching* course is *Information Technology in the Classroom*. This unit seeks to develop knowledge of, and skills and confidence in, the use of computers and network technology for teaching and learning in primary or secondary school settings. It is focused on examining learning and teaching methods associated with ICT and is founded strongly in a metacognitive framework. Whilst some aspects of this unit, such as learning to develop a Website, may be broadly similar to the Board of Studies Stage 6 Computing Studies course, the focus in the unit is on pedagogical and instructional design approaches and the students' ability to design and sequence computer-based learning experiences.

The outcomes identified for the *Information Technology in the Classroom* unit are as follows:

Students learn about:

- the usefulness and the limitations of ICT as a pedagogical tool
- pedagogical approaches required to use ICT successfully in the classroom
- social and ethical issues surrounding the use of ICT.

Students learn to:

- use ICT in a variety of ways as a tool for teaching and learning
- evaluate commercial software and its appropriateness for the teaching and learning context
- use the Internet specifically in teaching and learning contexts
- produce learning and teaching resources using ICT.

Information Technology for the Classroom was considered important for inclusion in the *Springboard into Teaching* course because recent policies and reports have highlighted the critical importance of computer education for all pre-service and practising teachers. In

the Ramsey report (2000), for example, ICT was seen as 'one of the most significant challenges now confronting teacher education, teachers and schools' (p. 68). Teachers are now required to have a broad range of skills to use a wide range of software and adapt these skills to a diverse set of classroom situations. In addition, teachers are also expected to be able to model positive, self-efficacious attitudes to their students (Delcourt & Kinzie, 1993; Russell & Bradley, 1997). Completing such a unit early in their teaching careers would set *Springboard into Teaching* participants ahead of many beginning teachers in having a foundational understanding of sound pedagogical approaches to technology integration, knowledge perceived as highly valuable in a teaching profession where more than fifty percent of teachers may have little more than a basic standard of computer skills (Lundin, 2002). Inclusion of this unit was also considered appropriate because it would assist students to develop skills and knowledge transferable to a broad range of contexts and particularly in enhancing their use of ICT in their final year of school study.

WHAT LEARNING APPROACH UNDERPINNED SPRINGBOARD INTO TEACHING?

Common to both units of study comprising the *Springboard into Teaching* course is a metacognitive approach to learning which is significant both in terms of its relevance for teacher education generally and for the particular learning needs of the HSC students undertaking the UDBEC. Metacognition refers to knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes, and the active monitoring and consequent regulation of these processes in the pursuit of goals or objectives (Flavell, 1976; Flavell, Miller & Miller, 1993). Both *Introduction to Teaching* and *Information Technology for the Classroom* are informed by a number of theorists' work related to metacognition, including that of Biggs (1985) who adopts the term 'metalearning' to refer to students' awareness of their learning and control over their strategy selection and deployment. Both units take into account Biggs (1988) notion that students need to be aware of their motives, task demands and their own cognitive resources to exert control over learning (and teaching) strategies used. In particular, both units draw on Biggs (1988) research which indicates the value of a metacognitive approach in facilitating self-directed learning and his assertion that student learning may be enhanced in three ways - discouraging a surface approach, encouraging a deep approach and developing an achieving approach. The UDBEC partners considered that HSC students undertaking University level study would benefit more broadly if the learning they were engaged in fostered such an approach.

In a similar vein, the units were further considered appropriate for the *Springboard into Teaching* course because both units incorporate content and processes that have an emphasis on developing *self-regulated learners*. Such an approach is consistent with the work on metacognition proposed by Zimmerman et al. (1986; 1994a; 1994b; 1996). Self-regulation is the process whereby 'students activate and sustain cognitions, behaviours and affects, which are systematically oriented toward attainment of their goals' (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994, p. 309). Zimmerman proposes a model of self-regulated learning

involving three interrelated components: metacognition, motivation and behaviour. Each of these processes is considered critical in the development of competent and effective teachers (de la Harpe & Radloff, 1999). Metacognitively, self-regulated learners are people who plan, organise, self-instruct, self-monitor and self-evaluate at various stages of the learning process. Motivationally, self-regulated learners perceive themselves as competent, self-efficacious, and autonomous. Behaviourally, self-regulated learners select, structure and create environments that optimise learning. Self-regulation also involves students' deliberate use of higher level strategies to direct and control their concentration on academic tasks (Corno, 1994). Both units therefore incorporate an emphasis on elements such as time management, practice, mastery of learning methods, goal-directedness, help seeking and a sense of self-efficacy. Zimmerman (1996) speaks of the potential empowerment of metacognitive processes, enabling individuals to become controllers of the learning process rather than victims of it. Recent research by Phelps (2001; 2002a; 2002b) on undergraduate students utilising such an approach highlights its effectiveness in the context of ICT learning.

The elaboration of these points concerning the learning approach underpinning the units in the *Springboard into Teaching* course is quite necessary in terms of their significance for this particular course. It seemed to the UDBEC partners that exposing this particular cohort of students, with their anxieties and concerns about performing in a University environment, to learning based on such foundations, would position them best for success and assist them to clarify their decision regarding their career choice in teaching. In addition, the NSW Board of Studies required a course that would meet the criteria outlined in an earlier section of this paper. Key among these, from the UDBEC partners point of view, was the importance of encouraging students' 'independent, reflective and ongoing learning through engagement with high level, challenging university level courses' (BOS, 2001). The units comprising *Springboard into Teaching* clearly meet this criterion.

WAS THE SPRINGBOARD INTO TEACHING COURSE SUCCESSFUL?

The NSW Board of Studies, as a condition of ongoing UDBEC status, required that a formal evaluation of *Springboard into Teaching* be undertaken. Associate Professor Geoff Riordan, Director of Teacher Education at the University of Technology Sydney, and Ms Rosalie Nott, Coordinator of Equity Policy and Programs for the NSW Catholic Education Commission conducted the evaluation between April and June 2002. The evaluation was planned in terms of the criteria that were identified in the correspondence between the CEO Lismore, Southern Cross University and the NSW Board of Studies regarding the *Springboard into Teaching* course. This correspondence made specific reference to relevant documents including *Securing Their Future* (1997) and the *Guidelines and Application Form for Board Endorsed Courses* (2001). The criteria were then grouped into categories and for each category, appropriate data sources were identified. The data sources comprised surveys, documents and interviews with key personnel involved in the development and delivery of the *Springboard into Teaching* course.

A survey was developed for school principals from participating schools, the students and their parents. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders from CEO Lismore and the School of Education at Southern Cross University, including the academics delivering the course. Documents that were consulted during the evaluation included:

- the application to the NSW Board of Studies;
- student applications to participate (including recommendations from their schools and reports on academic progress and achievements);
- course unit outlines;
- reading materials;
- ICT resources;
- student evaluations from the four weekend workshops;
- student results; and
- evaluative comments from the academics involved on completion of their teaching.

The data from these sources were analysed by the program evaluators and a comprehensive report of the findings was submitted to the Board of Studies. The report was structured around the four categories of evaluation, namely collaboration between the University, CEO and schools; delivery, structure and organisation of the course; the students; the content of the course. Whilst a full discussion of the findings is beyond the scope of the paper, the following summary is offered in respect to these categories. This summary is supported by comments drawn from various evaluation data sources that provide further insight into the perceived benefits of the *Springboard into Teaching* course.

In regard to issues of collaboration, evidence from course documentation and evaluation surveys indicated that CEO staff appreciated the high levels of commitment and professionalism of the University team, while the University staff reported similar views with regard to their partners in this project. The effectiveness of the collaboration was also evident in the development of the course and the evaluation concluded that 'Clearly, both parties value the collaboration and judge it to be mutually beneficial' (Riordan & Nott, 2002, p. 2). School principals also commented on the effectiveness of the collaboration and communication between the University and the CEO, and also between the CEO and the individual schools. Parents' comments further suggested that the partnership arrangement was important as they noted excellent organisation and communication were characteristics of the delivery of the course that assisted their children to succeed.

The above findings would suggest that a key to the success of the *Springboard into Teaching* course was the nature and degree of collaboration between the University and the school system that identifies the need for the course. A strong partnership is critical not only because of the detailed planning required for the development and delivery of

a UDBEC, but because the response made by the partners in targeting high achieving HSC students for teaching involved an element of risk. In this way, the approach taken with the Springboard into Teaching initiative could be considered consistent with the view that collegial sharing and support leads to greater readiness to experiment and take risks in improving teachers and teaching (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 186).

Decisions concerning recruitment, selection, in-school mentoring and support, ongoing evaluation and pastoral care of the students require negotiation and monitoring of both partners. In determining the suitability of applicants for a potential career in teaching it seems critical that engagement by each stakeholder (University, CEO, participating schools, parents and students) will significantly increase the chances that only the most suitable candidates will proceed to further study in teacher education.

In relation to delivery, structure and organisation of the course, the evaluation found that demand for the course was high. Principals reported that students were very interested in the initiative and keen to participate. One principal noted that demand would increase for future courses. A key focus of the evaluation was on the timing of the course and its impact on the students' other HSC commitments. Whilst some responses indicated the additional workload was a challenge in terms of time management there was overall consensus from principals, students and parents that the challenges were not insurmountable. Further, there was a general view that the additional challenges would 'test' the students' motivation and their resolve regarding their career choice of teaching.

In terms of the quality of the teaching and the subject content provided by the University the evaluation concluded that key stakeholders indicated a 'very high' degree of satisfaction (Riordan & Nott, 2002, p. 4). Course evaluations and responses to the student survey administered by the evaluators reported that they were well supported by the SCU staff and that this was a key to their success in engaging in University study whilst still completing the HSC. Students also commented favourably regarding the general value of the learning experiences. They noted that the staff were 'well-organised', 'good lecturers', 'committed', 'professional', 'provided help and information' and 'understood HSC studies and demands' (Riordan & Nott, 2002, p. 4). Parents noted the well-organised workshops and materials and the high standard of the teaching as enabling factors for their children's achievement in the course. The principals observed that the SCU staff's support for students was 'excellent', 'supportive' and 'enthusiastic' (Riordan & Nott, 2002, p. 4).

It would appear from the data presented in the evaluation that little explicit mention was made of the learning approach used with the students in drawing such strongly positive comments as those exemplified above. The evaluation did note that SCU staff concluded on the basis of their close assessment of student learning journals and students' overall performance in the program that students had learned a great deal about themselves as life-long learners. In addition, there was specific reference by two of the principals that there was a high degree of 'transferability' of knowledge and skills, noting particularly the development of journaling, essay writing and research skills.

Another principal commented that the course 'provided high-achieving students with the pedagogical knowledge and skills that can be transferred to other learning contexts' (Riordan & Nott, 2002, p. 25). Parents commented on the breadth of learning the course offered the students, including comments concerning the ways in which the course resulted in a 'substantial improvement in attitude and results' (Riordan & Nott, 2002, p. 26). Since improving students study skills and learning strategies is a critical component of any teacher's professional role (De la Harpe & Radloff, 1999) it would seem paramount that the structure and organisation of the Springboard into Teaching course incorporate such an approach.

The evaluation drew attention to the fact students noted in their progressive end-of-unit evaluations that knowledge, skills and understandings developed during the course contributed significant value to their learning and gave them greater confidence in approaching their other HSC studies. The following comments are drawn from data in these evaluations completed by the students and are a strong indication of the value of the approach to learning used in the Springboard into Teaching course:

- it has helped me realise my strengths and weaknesses . . . and now I know where I need to improve to succeed. I also have acquired new skills and believe these will be very beneficial later on (even throughout this year)
- my essay writing skills have improved and I have stopped my time wasting activities
- it improved my self confidence in English writing
- this course has both helped me with my organisation skills plus my writing
- this course has challenged the way I study and monitor my learning
- [the best things were] learning about reflective learning and how self-evaluation can sometimes be the hardest thing to do as you have to acknowledge your faults.

DID THE SPRINGBOARD INTO TEACHING COURSE ASSIST STUDENTS WITH THEIR CAREER CHOICE?

Assessment of the extent to which the course assisted students to make a more informed decision about choosing teaching as a career was included in all elements of evaluations conducted by the University, Catholic Education Office personnel and by the reviewers. The university conducted a combination of continuous and end-of-unit evaluations, the CEO conducted an evaluation at the end of each of the four workshops and the reviewers drew data from a variety of sources as noted in earlier discussion. All respondents to the survey administered by the evaluators indicated that they were more inclined to consider teaching as a career and that it had confirmed their interest in teaching. Comments included:

- Definitely – completing prac biggest impact on confirming decision to do teaching
- Yes, demonstrated teachers' responsibilities
- Yes, extended interest to teaching IT and Maths as well as Music
- Yes, course removed doubt about doing teaching
- Yes, now more enthusiastic about teaching
- Yes, widened interest in teaching – an option not previously considered.

Comments on end-of-unit evaluations included:

- [I liked] having a hands-on experience at teaching, seeing the other side and it helped us to decide if this is what I want to do
- The best aspect would have to be learning exactly what the role of a teacher is
- I received a great insight into the world of teaching
- It has given me an insight into university life
- I liked being treated as a university student and not as a school student
- I am now confident to commence university studies because of the experience of university lectures and essays
- [The course] opened my mind to a different understanding of teaching.

It should be noted that the students who withdrew from the course did not complete the final survey. However, earlier data received from these students suggests that the course was successful in clarifying their career direction, even if this were not in teaching:

- I was highly impressed with the learning environment but the work load was difficult to balance
- I decided teaching was not for me.

The majority of school principals agreed that the course provided students with an understanding of the key influences on the profession of teaching and 'enabled them to make a more informed career choice' (Riordan & Nott, 2002, p. 21). In relation to whether the course would bring 'high-quality teachers into the teaching profession at a faster rate' responses included:

- too early to tell
- great bonus with teacher shortages
- very positive, practical initiative
- yes
- great initiative which definitely promotes teaching and gives initial insights

One parent remarked:

- the course was a great challenge as they (the students) had to stop thinking as students and think as teachers.

It is far too early to project the longer-term outcomes of the Springboard into Teaching course in terms of its contribution to enhanced quality within the profession. There is a need to ensure further research takes place into the specific medium-to-longer-term outcomes of such a course, and ways of measuring these outcomes. Such outcomes may include initial transition to University, future study choices, effects of acceleration on study patterns, personal development in terms of increased self-confidence, as well as longer-term career outcomes particularly regarding quality teaching.

CONCLUSION

There has been no shortage of rhetoric in recent discussions and debates about teacher education and, in particular, the need to recruit talented and committed teachers into the profession. Whilst broad directions have been suggested and some limited strategies are already underway in NSW to address the growing concerns, it is imperative that such initiatives are monitored closely to determine whether and how they prepare teachers for the demands and expectations of their career choice. An initiative such as that outlined in this paper, the Springboard into Teaching course, isn't in itself a panacea that can be applied across the board. Nevertheless, initiatives like this merit further consideration in terms of their objective of immersing students into the culture and expectations of teaching prior to the time in which they make their choice of a University degree and career direction. Perhaps Fullan's (1991) view was correct when he asserted that 'It is not just a matter of imagining better solutions, or even finding them in existence, but of engaging in sophisticated strategies and persistent processes of change to accomplish them' (p. 336).

REFERENCES

- Birrell, B., Maher, C., & Rapson, V. (1997). Welfare Dependence in Australia. *People and Place*, 5(2), 68-77.
- Biggs, J. (1985). The role of metalearning in study processes. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 55, 185-212.
- Biggs, J. (1988). The role of metacognition in enhancing learning. *Australian Journal of Education*, 32(2), 127-138.
- Board of Studies NSW (2002). University Developed Board Endorsed Courses in the New HSC. Guidelines and Application Form. Sydney: NSWBOS.
- Corno, L. (1994). Student volition and education: Outcomes, influences and practices. In D. Schunk & B. J. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Self-regulation of Learning and Performance: Issues and Educational Applications* (pp. 229-251). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- De la Harpe, B. & Radloff, A. (1999). Helping future teachers to be effective learners: providing in-context learning support for first year Teacher Education students. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 24(2), 27-41.

- Delcourt, M. A., & Kinzie, M. B. (1993). Computer technologies in teacher education: The measurement of attitudes and self-efficacy. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 27 (1), 35-41.
- Esson, K., Johnson, K., & Vinson, T. (2002). *Inquiry into the provision of Public Education in NSW*. Sydney: NSW Teachers Federation and Federation of P&C Associations of NSW.
- Farmer, D. (1999). The New HSC. *Gifted*. September, 11-12.
- Flavell, J. H. (1976). Metacognitive aspects of problem solving. In L. B. Resnick (Ed.), *The Nature of Intelligence* (231-235). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Flavell, J. H., Miller, P. H., & Miller, S. A. (1993). *Cognitive Development* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Flood, A. (1998). The high (HSC) achiever: telling the story. *Gifted*. September, 28-31.
- Fullan, M. (1991). *The New Meaning Of Educational Change*. London: Cassell.
- Goncz, A. (2001). Revitalising teaching: Critical times, critical choices. *Training Agenda*, 9(1), 25-27.
- Herrington, J. (1999). Distribution of Social Disadvantage: Far North Coast Area of NSW. Unpublished paper, Department of Community Services.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing Teachers, Changing Times. Teachers Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. London: Cassell.
- Kirby, B. (2000). *Ministerial review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria*. DEET: Melbourne.
- Kritzman, L. (1988). (Ed). *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Lundin, R. (2002). The state of technology in education: A reality check. *The Practising Administrator*, (1), 10-13.
- Marginson, S. (1997). *Educating Australia. Government, Economy and Citizenship since 1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McMorrow, J. (2002). Who's driving the school bus? *Education Review*, 2(6), 16-20.
- NSW Government (1997). *Securing their future: The New South Wales Government's reforms for the Higher School Certificate*. Sydney: NSW Government Printer.
- Phelps, R., & Ellis, A. (2002a). *A metacognitive approach to computer education for teachers: Combining theory and practice for computer capability*. Paper presented at the Linking Learners: Australian Computers in Education Conference (ACEC2002), Hobart, Tasmania. Can be assessed at <http://www.pa.ash.org.au/acec2002/confpapers/>
- Phelps, R. (2002b). *Mapping the Complexity of Computer Learning: Journeying Beyond Teaching for Computer Competence to Facilitating Computer Capability*. Unpublished PhD, Southern Cross University, Lismore.
- Phelps, R. (2001, July). *Capability versus competency in information technology education: Challenging the learning context for lifelong technological literacy*. Paper presented at the Eighth International Literacy & Education Research Network Conference on Learning, Spetses, Greece.
- Ramsey, G. (2000). *Quality Matters: Revitalising Teaching: Critical Times, Critical Choices*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education and Training.
- Riordan, G., & Nott, R. (2002). Evaluation report: Springboard into Teaching (unpublished report).
- Russell, G., & Bradley, G. (1997). Teachers' computer anxiety: Implications for professional

- development. *Education and Information Technology*, 2, 17-29.
- Seddon, T. (2001, December). *Knowledge management for learning: between silos and flows*. paper presented at the 9th Annual International Conference on Post-compulsory Education and Training. Gold Coast, Australia (Conference proceedings, Vol 2, 183-191).
- Vick, M. (1998). Quills, pens and keyboards: teachers and teachers work in a changing society. In J. Allen (Ed.), *Sociology of education*. Katoomba: Social Science Press. (pp. 62-82).
- Vinson, T. (1999). *Unequal in Life*. Richmond Victoria: Jesuit Social Services.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (1986). Becoming a self-regulated learner: Which are the key subprocesses? *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 11, 307-313.
- Zimmerman, B. J., Bonner, S., & Kovach, R. (1996). *Developing Self-regulated Learners: Beyond Achievement to Self-efficacy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (1994a). Dimensions of academic self-regulation: A conceptual framework for education. In D. Schunk & B. J. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Self-regulation of Learning and Performance: Issues and Educational Applications* (pp. 3-21). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Weinstein, C. E. (1994b). Self-regulating academic study time: A strategic approach. In D. Schunk & B. J. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Self-regulation of Learning and Performance: Issues and Educational Applications* (pp. 181-199). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Schunk, D., & Zimmerman, B. J. (1994). Self-regulation in education: Retrospect and prospect. In D. Schunk & B. J. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Self-regulation of Learning and Performance: Issues and Educational Applications* (pp. 305-314). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.