



# **Teacher Preparation in Australia**

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# Teacher Preparation in Australia: History, Policy and Future Directions

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

For Dick Selleck and Roger Slee in appreciation of encouragement,  
collegiality and kindness when it was most needed

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Currently the Australian university sector almost has a monopoly in the provision of courses and programmes for the initial preparation of teachers across the nation. Furthermore, nearly all of the universities are involved in the enterprise, along with also being involved in offering professional development courses for practising teachers, and masters'-and doctorate-level courses in 'education studies'. The main emphasis within the courses for the initial preparation of teachers in each of the nation's States and Territories is on creating professionals for the early childhood, primary and secondary school sectors. Enrolled students can be prepared as 'generalist' teachers and can specialise in specific aspects of curriculum and pedagogy. As is illustrated in this book, however, the general pattern depicted above is a relatively recent one when considered over the wider course of the history of education in Australia.

The remainder of the present chapter sketches out the broad historical background within which the focus of this book on the history of teacher preparation in Australia is considered. It opens with a brief overview of arguments that led to engagement in the research project upon which it is based. Especially with the international reader in mind, the next part provides a very general account of the historical evolution of Australian society. An equally brief overview of the historical development of education in Australia and of the historical periods that give structure to the remaining chapters follows.

### The Case for Writing this Book

A major factor influencing the decision to engage in the research project upon which this book is based was an acute awareness of the extent to which teacher preparation is currently one of the most pressing and topical issues in the field of education internationally.<sup>1</sup> In particular, there is a strong interest in such matters

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<sup>1</sup>See R. Dale, "Globalization, higher education and teacher education: a sociological approach", in *Teacher Education in a Transnational World*, Eds R. Bruno-Jofre and J. Scott Johnston (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014): 33–53.

as how teachers should be prepared, what the content of their programmes of preparation should be, how their effectiveness should be assessed, and what the role of the ‘good’ teacher should be in society.<sup>2</sup> These and other questions are very much to the fore in policy agendas around the world, including in Australia. In general, also, Australia follows the pattern in certain other countries, where teacher preparation is seen as being a vital tool in the building of the nation economically. To some extent, this perspective is driven by international education ‘league tables’ developed from national results yielded through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)<sup>3</sup> and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science<sup>4</sup> studies. Cognisance of this alerts one to the need to generate an understanding of how the current situation regarding teacher preparation in many countries can be both understood and located in relation to international influences and agreements. Equally, it alerts one to the importance of considering national policies and processes of reception at the national and local levels. To this end, it is particularly important to consider a nation’s historical experiences as these can have as much of an influence on such policies and processes of reception, including in teacher preparation, as can transnational processes.<sup>5</sup>

Keeping the argument outlined so far uppermost in mind, attention was paid when writing the book to the views of those who see a move towards a supranational order in teacher preparation.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, cognisance was also taken of the view that countries and systems are, and have been, very much in competition with each other in education performance; a situation which currently places teacher preparation at the nation state level to the forefront in the global ‘battle’ in education. Also, it is important not to overestimate the current role of international organisations. Even the European Union, which has taken quite an interest in teacher preparation, has not been overly keen to be involved in the field of its

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<sup>2</sup>See M. Bottery, “Education and globalization: redefining the role of the educational professional”, *Educational Review*, 58, no. 1 (2006): 95–113.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, J.Y. Rochex, “Social, methodological and theoretical issues regarding assessment: lessons from a secondary analysis of PISA 2000 literacy tests”, in *Review of Research in Education, 30: Special Issues on ‘Rethinking Learning: What Counts As Learning And What Learning Counts’*, Eds G. Green and A. Luke (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 2004): 163–212.

<sup>4</sup>For an overview of testing internationally see W.C. Smith, Ed., *The Global Testing Culture: Shaping Education Policy, Perceptions, and Practice* (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2016).

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, R. Aldrich and D. Crook, “Education as a university subject in England: an historical interpretation”, *Pedagogica Historica*, 34, no. 4 (1996): 122–138 and W. Richardson, “Educational studies in the UK: 1940–2002”, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 50, no. 1 (2002): 8.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, J. Wang, E. Lin, E. Spalding, E.S.J. Odell and C.I. Klecka, “Understanding teacher education in an era of globalization”, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62, no. 2 (2011): 115–120 and Y. Zhao, “Preparing globally competent teachers: a new imperative for teacher education”, *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61, no. 5 (2010): 422–431.

member States have not reached consensus on what school education is about, on the priorities for curriculum and on the skills and qualities required to be a teacher.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, its constitutional position limits it to assisting member States in their attempts to improve quality in the area of education, rather than allowing it to engage in direct involvement.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, then, this book, based on the arguments offered above, provides a comprehensive overview on the history of teacher preparation in Australia as a counterbalance to those who embrace presentism, namely, the process that ignores continuities, discontinuities and ruptures with the past. It should allow educators in Australia to establish connections between the past and the present which could inform discussions about possible future directions. It is also a book that should be of interest not only to historians and policy makers within the nation, but also to their counterparts internationally, as well as to comparative educationists. Furthermore, it provides an exposition that can be drawn upon by those involved in teacher preparation in other parts of the world to assist in sharpening their perceptions of their own situations through comparison and contrast, to provoke ideas for critical discussion and to stimulate them to come to an understanding of the importance of considering contemporary developments within their wider historical contexts. The hope also is that it is a book that will act as a general introduction to the history of all sectors of the education system in Australia.

The arguments outlined so far are in harmony with those outlined by Placier et al.<sup>9</sup> on the utilitarian value in studying the history of all aspects of education in relation to individual nation States. Firstly, they state, such study can help to explain the current situation, ‘especially through illuminating how decisions in the past may have institutionalised patterns of belief and practice that impede change today’.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, they hold, ‘it may provide evidence of macro-micro linkages across time and sites that locate a phenomenon in broader structural, cultural, demographic and/or economic contexts’.<sup>11</sup> Specifically in relation to teacher preparation, this means that the historical study of the field may reveal how it has been, and continues to be, influenced by provincial, national and international trends. Thirdly, according to Placier et al., history may demonstrate that current reforms in teacher preparation may not be entirely new. At the same time, as they explain, revising an old policy or practice is rarely a process of rote repetition. Rather, ‘an

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<sup>7</sup>See R. Dale, “Globalization, higher education and teacher education: a sociological approach”, in *Teacher Education in a Transnational World*, Eds R. Bruno-Jofre and J. Scott Johnston (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014): 33–53.

<sup>8</sup>Dale, “Globalization, higher education and teacher education”, 33.

<sup>9</sup>P.L. Placier, M. Letseka, J. Seroto, J. Loh, C. Montecinos, N. Vasquez and K. Tirri, “The history of initial teacher preparation in international contexts”, in *International Handbook of Teacher Education*, Eds J. Loughran and M.L. Hamilton (Singapore: Springer, 2016): 23–68.

<sup>10</sup>Placier, Letseka, Seroto, et al., “The history of initial teacher preparation in international contexts”, 27.

<sup>11</sup>Placier, Letseka, Seroto, et al., “The history of initial teacher preparation in international contexts”.

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old idea may be transformed in a new social context, and what may sound like the “same” phenomenon may play out differently in different nations’.<sup>12</sup>

Before concluding this introduction, it is apposite to point out that related works on the history of education in Australia have been published and that these were drawn upon as valuable secondary source material when engaging in the project upon which this book is based.<sup>13</sup> In particular, a multitude of works on individual teacher educators<sup>14</sup> and on developments that took place in individual institutions<sup>15</sup> and during relatively narrow time periods are available.<sup>16</sup> Also, a valuable overview of the history of teacher preparation across the nation has been produced by Aspland.<sup>17</sup> Equally, works like that of Selleck<sup>18</sup> on the history of Melbourne University are insightful in relation to how the curriculum for teacher preparation in the academy was located in relation to other fields of study. Among a number of related monographs are Gardiner, O’Donoghue and O’Neill’s *Constructing Education as a Liberal Art and as Teacher Preparation at Five Western Australian Universities: An Historical Analysis*<sup>19</sup> and May et al.’s *Claiming a Voice: The First Thirty-five Years of the Australian Teacher Education Association*.<sup>20</sup> No synoptic exposition like that in this book, however, has been available since Hyams published his pioneering work, *Teacher Preparation in Australia: A History of its Development from 1850 to 1950* back in 1975.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Placier, Letseka, Seroto, et al., “The history of initial teacher preparation in international contexts”.

<sup>13</sup>The best scholarly work dealing with the history of schooling in Australia is C. Campbell and H. Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2014). Regarding the history of the universities in Australia see H. Forsythe, *A History of the Australian University* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2014).

<sup>14</sup>For an early work in this regard see C. Turney, *Pioneers of Australian Education* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1969).

<sup>15</sup>One such work is N. Kyle, C. Manathunga and J. Scott, *A Class of Its Own: A History of Queensland University of Technology* (Sydney: Hale and Irenmonger, 1999).

<sup>16</sup>See D. Mayer, “Forty years of teacher education in Australia: 1974–2014”, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 40, no. 5 (2014): 461–473.

<sup>17</sup>T. Aspland, “Australia”, in *Teacher Education in the English-Speaking World Past, Present and Future*, Eds T. O’Donoghue and C. Whitehead (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2008): 173–189.

<sup>18</sup>R. Selleck, *The New Education* (Melbourne, Pitman, 1968).

<sup>19</sup>D. Gardiner, T.A. O’Donoghue and M. O’Neill, *Constructing Education as a Liberal Art and as Teacher Preparation at Five Western Australian Universities: An Historical Analysis* (New York, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011).

<sup>20</sup>J. May, A. Holbrook, A. Brown, G. Preston and B. Bessant, *Claiming a Voice: The First Thirty-five Years of the Australian Teacher Education Association* (Newcastle: The Australian Teacher Education Association, 2009).

<sup>21</sup>B.K. Hyams, *Teacher Preparation in Australia: A History of its Development from 1850 to 1950* (Victoria, ACER, 1975). An earlier work was I.S. Turner, *The Training of Teachers in Australia: A Comparative and Critical Survey* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press for ACER, 1943).

Finally, this is not a study of what is sometimes termed ‘the interactive curriculum’, namely the interactions that place in classrooms, lecture theatres and other learning sites, and how the curriculum for teacher preparation was mediated by lecturers and students. Such a focus, it is held, is equally important work. From the outset, however, it was deemed that it could only be addressed in a very general way in this book and that it is an area regarding which a separate project should be undertaken at another time.

## The Historical Evolution of Australian Society

It is not certain when people first occupied Australia, but the indications are that it was at least 50,000 years ago. By the time of European settlement, the Aboriginal population had formed different communities spread across the continent, some of whom had developed trade and cultural links with Asian communities.<sup>22</sup> While the Dutch were the first Europeans to encounter the Australian coast (in 1606), the earliest permanent European settlers were the British, motivated by the presence of other European powers in the area and by a desire for new colonies to substitute for those lost in North America.<sup>23</sup> The colonists considered that the entire continent was *terra nullius* (uninhabited by humans) and they used this stance to acquire whatever they wanted.

By the late 1700s, Britain needed a penal colony to which it could transport the growing proportion of its population deemed undesirable. Australia was seen to provide a good solution. The first of the penal colonies, that of New South Wales, was established in 1788, when Captain Arthur Phillip and his party of soldiers, sailors and convicts, landed where Sydney is today.<sup>24</sup> Six colonies developed in total, namely, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.<sup>25</sup> While the population in each case was strongly British and Protestant both socially and culturally, a significant Irish Catholic minority also developed.<sup>26</sup> Government and administration in the colonies were centralised in their respective capital cities. Also, governors to administer each of them were progressively appointed by Britain.

The migration of free settlers also began.<sup>27</sup> At first, the Crown granted land, but later it introduced a system whereby the proceeds of land sales partly financed the passage by sea of migrants. The new settlers introduced sheep and wheat growing. Soon, squatters began to occupy grazing land and, by 1836, the government

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<sup>22</sup>One of the best introductory accounts to the field, even if now rather dated, is that of R. Broome. *Aboriginal Australians – The Australian Experience* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1982).

<sup>23</sup>See J. Hirst, *Australian History in 7 Questions* (Collingwood: Black Inc., 2014).

<sup>24</sup>Hirst, *Australian History in 7 Questions*.

<sup>25</sup>See T. O’Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith. The Process of Education in Catholic Schools in Australia* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2001).

<sup>26</sup>See Hirst, *Australian History in 7 Questions*.

<sup>27</sup>Hirst, *Australian History in 7 Questions*.

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recognised this as a legitimate practice.<sup>28</sup> Also, within another 20 years, the policy of transporting convicts to Australia was being gradually abandoned.

In 1850, the colonies gained considerable autonomy with the passing of the Australian Colonies Government Act.<sup>29</sup> By now, the populations of New South Wales and Victoria were beginning to increase dramatically owing to the discovery of gold.<sup>30</sup> Concurrently, the trade union movement developed. From this emerged, in 1891, the Australian Labour Party (ALP) (the spelling ‘Labor’ was adopted after 1912),<sup>31</sup> the oldest political party in Australia and one of the oldest labour parties in the world. Nine years later, in 1900, the Australian Constitution was passed as an Act of the British government, and in 1901 the colonies formed the federation of the Commonwealth of Australia.<sup>32</sup> The new head of state was the Governor General, appointed by the Crown, and Parliament was established consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

From the outset, the Federal government became responsible for such matters of national concern as defence, foreign affairs and the environment.<sup>33</sup> A great deal of social legislation was soon enacted, including the granting of votes to women and the introduction of industrial arbitration and a national pension system. At the same time, Australia maintained strong ties with Britain, which was often called ‘the mother country’. Following the outbreak of World War I, 330,000 men were sent to fight ‘for King and country’.<sup>34</sup> After the War, the economy of Australia boomed because of the high price of wool and meat, even if some of the booms were only half-hearted; Crowley has recorded that unemployment ranged from 5 per cent to 9 percent even in good years’ in the 1920s,<sup>35</sup> and there was a recession in 1921–1922. Also, while the Great Depression of the 1930s affected the country badly, these commodities facilitated a fast recovery.

Australia’s armed forces fought on the side of the Allied Forces in World War II, and the country was the main Allied base in the Pacific.<sup>36</sup> In 1944, the Liberal Party of Australia was formed.<sup>37</sup> Following bitter labour unrest and the Labor

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<sup>28</sup>Hirst, *Australian History in 7 Questions*.

<sup>29</sup>See J.M. Bennett, *Sir William a’Beckett: First Chief Justice of Victoria 1852–1857* (Leichhardt: The Federation Press, 2001).

<sup>30</sup>See I.W. McLean, *Why Australia Prospered* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

<sup>31</sup>See J. Faulkner and S. Macintyre, *True Believers – The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2001).

<sup>32</sup>See J.A. La Nauze, *The Making of the Australian Constitution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University, 1972).

<sup>33</sup>La Nauze, *The Making of the Australian Constitution*.

<sup>34</sup>See J. Beaumont, Ed., *Australia’s War, 1914–1918* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1995).

<sup>35</sup>F. Crowley, *A New History of Australia* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1974): 388.

<sup>36</sup>See M. McKernan, *The Strength of a Nation. Six Years of Australians Fighting for the Nation and Defending the Homeland during WWII* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2006).

<sup>37</sup>See D. Jaensch, *The Liberals* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994).

Government's failed attempt to nationalise banks, the Liberals joined with the Country Party to form a coalition government, which remained in power for the next 23 years. Under this administration, Australia adopted a strong anti-communist stance and aligned itself with the USA and non-communist Asian nations.

In 1952, the Australian government joined the USA and New Zealand in signing the ANZUS Treaty.<sup>38</sup> It also took a controversial decision to send troops to Vietnam to support the armed forces of the USA. In 1972, the ALP was returned to power and it withdrew the troops. Three years later, the Liberal Party was back in power. Then in 1983, the ALP was returned yet again and remained in government until 1996, when the Liberal Party formed a coalition government. By now, the Australia Act of 1986 had given the nation full legal independence from Britain, but with the British monarch retaining sovereign status.<sup>39</sup> A strong movement for an independent republic also emerged.<sup>40</sup> Concurrently, Australia increasingly internationalised its foreign policy, with a focus on the Asia Pacific region. The nation also continued to be enriched by the various waves of migrants who had been coming decade after decade from locations other than Britain and Ireland, and who contributed to the development of a multicultural society.<sup>41</sup> The nature of that society and associated societal developments over the last 20 years are central to the exposition in Chapter 7 of this book on teacher preparation in Australia from 1989 to the present.

## **An Overview on the Development of Education in Australia Since 1800**

Unlike the situation in Britain, government involvement in schooling in Australia commenced at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since 1800, customs duties had been imposed to raise money to operate orphan schools.<sup>42</sup> In 1826, the Church of England, through the *Church and School Act*, was given a grant of land to support its activities, including in relation to the provision of schooling.<sup>43</sup> Seven years later, however, in 1833, the act was withdrawn. Then, in 1848, the Board of National Education was established to control schools open to all denominations, with decisions on instruction being left to ministers of various religions.

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<sup>38</sup>See J.G. Starke, *The ANZUS Treaty Alliance* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965).

<sup>39</sup>See A. Twomey, *The Australia Acts 1986: Australia's Statutes of Independence* (Annandale: Federation Press, 2010).

<sup>40</sup>See S. Vizard, *Two Weeks in Lilliput: Bear Baiting and Backbiting at the Constitutional Convention* (London: Penguin, 1998).

<sup>41</sup>See A.C. Theophanus, *Understanding Multiculturalism and Australian Identity* (Carlton South: Elikia Books, 1995).

<sup>42</sup>See Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 14.

<sup>43</sup>Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 16–17.

State funding of church schools led to much bitterness. A solution was attempted in New South Wales when it instituted a dual system in the 1848.<sup>44</sup> A Board of Denominational Education provided government aid for schools of the various religious denominations. Concurrently, the Board of National Education was given responsibility to establish a system of State-controlled, non-denominational schools. Other colonies followed this pattern. Nevertheless, between 1872 and 1893, all colonies passed legislation leading to education acts that resulted in the establishment of government-controlled school systems and the withdrawal of State aid to church schools.<sup>45</sup>

State schools were characterised as being ‘free, compulsory and secular’. The Protestant churches largely accepted the development, while continuing to run their elite fee-paying grammar schools. The acts were, however, fiercely opposed by the Catholic Church, whose bishops, having discovered that a large number of Catholic families were not sending their children to Catholic schools, issued a Joint Pastoral Letter in 1879, dictating that they had to do so.<sup>46</sup> This also meant that the Catholic Church had to maintain and develop its own school sector without State aid, which it did up until the 1960s.<sup>47</sup>

While the various Christian churches had instituted secondary school education from the middle of the nineteenth century, it was not until the end of that century that public sector provision in the area was developed.<sup>48</sup> Legislation provided for day schooling to be offered in what were termed ‘high schools’. These schools provided the foundation for the secondary school system that developed within each State. After Federation in 1901, the various States maintained their control of education. Compulsory attendance, however, was difficult to enforce, especially in relation to children in remote areas.<sup>49</sup> Also, the contributions of the Federal government to education were minimal for many decades.<sup>50</sup>

The basic primary school curriculum at the time of Federation consisted of the teaching of reading and writing in English, and basic numeracy, with the addition of ‘Christian doctrine’ in religious-run schools. Soon, it was being argued that more subjects should be added to prepare students for life. This led to the teaching of needlework and domestic science to girls, agriculture and manual instruction to boys and nature study to both sexes. It was also held that instruction in these subjects would lead to economic development nationally.

In order to provide primary school education for children in remote areas, travelling teachers’ schemes were introduced.<sup>51</sup> These proved to be moderately

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<sup>44</sup>Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 36–45.

<sup>45</sup>Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 82–84.

<sup>46</sup>See O’Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith*.

<sup>47</sup>O’Donoghue, *Upholding the Faith*.

<sup>48</sup>See Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*, 106–121.

<sup>49</sup>Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*.

<sup>50</sup>Campbell and Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling*.

<sup>51</sup>See E. Lopes, T. A. O’Donoghue and M. O’Neill, *The Education of Children in Geographically Remote Regions through Distance Education: Perspectives and Lessons from Australia* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2011).