The Past and Future of Literacy Training for Teachers

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Published
2002

Conference Title
AARE 2002 CONFERENCE PAPERS

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The Past And Future Of Literacy Training For Teachers:
How Well Prepared Are Australian Teachers To Meet The Challenge Of Raising Standards Of English Literacy?

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Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education
Brisbane, 1-5 December 2002

Please note: This paper was published in July, 2002 by the Australian College of Educators as a Unicorn On-Line Refereed Article: ORA No.22
**Introduction**

Three propositions underpin this paper. First, that literacy capabilities in a nation's population are significant for community, cultural and economic development; second, that teachers' pedagogical work is foundational in effective literacy education programs; and third, that education policy at state and federal levels is calling for teachers' work in educating for literacy to be enhanced. Taken together, these propositions point directly to how literacy is taken to be fundamental to learning, both in and out of school, and also to civic and cultural participation, and economic competitiveness in global contexts. Further, the propositions highlight the need for all teachers to have the knowledge and capabilities necessary to enable students to meet the literacy demands they will encounter as they progress through the years of schooling. However, while there is much support for the explicit teaching and learning of literacy in schooling, and while there is a clear warrant in both educational policy and research for such teaching and learning, little is currently known about the extent, nature and quality of teacher education provision in the field of literacy. In what follows, we examine this issue and ask: how well prepared are Australian teachers to deliver quality literacy programs and to secure improved literacy outcomes for all students? To this end, we draw on the most recent national, census style study of *Teachers in Australian Schools* (Dempster, Sim, Beere and Logan, 2000) to investigate the explicit provision of training opportunities designed specifically to develop the teaching profession in literacy education. Our interest in training extends to both preservice and inservice opportunities, the latter including both award-based and non-award inservice.

In the first section below, we begin with a background sketch of relevant contemporary education policy and initiatives and provide some information about the Teachers in Australian Schools Study (2000), the former serving to contextualise the Study. The data analyses are then presented, bringing to light marked variability in the provision of professional development in literacy. Of special interest is how the analyses provide an opening for considering the critical discontinuities that exist between current literacy education policy, research and practice; discontinuities that are potentially disabling for teachers charged with the responsibility to provide quality literacy programs. Throughout the discussion, we ask readers to consider the extent to which the findings about professional development in literacy education resonate with their individual experiences at system and local levels.

**A background sketch of literacy policy initiatives**

In the last decade, several countries including Britain, the United States, Canada, Japan and Scotland have introduced educational reform in which defined standards have played a key role. Broadly speaking, this reform has been motivated by a core set of concerns, including: the achievement of the country's students relative to those in other countries; differences sometimes wide, among the academic standards and performance of school students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and in different parts of the county; respective governments seeking explicit school attainment standards; public accountability demonstrated in measurable outcomes; local school management; and parental school choice.
In Australia also this set of concerns has been exerting a powerful influence in shaping literacy and language policy and educational directions, bringing to prominence in the 1990s renewed interest in and commitment at both federal and state government levels to literacy and language education and to mapping literacy achievement in schooling. Specifically, the resurgence in national literacy education policy and programming commenced in 1990 with the Federal government's Green Paper, *The Language of Australia: Discussion Paper on an Australian Literacy and Language Policy for the 1990s*, and then its foundational 1991 White Paper, *Australia's Language: The Language and Literacy Policy* (Dawkins, 1991). This highly significant national policy and programme formulation put literacy education into the national spotlight, supported federally by substantial funding. The attention on literacy in schooling was further heightened with the publication of the findings of the National School English Literacy Survey (NSELS) which was established under the Keating Labour Government in late 1994. Given the focus of this paper, it is not appropriate to examine in detail the NSELS Survey instrument itself and the historical and political factors that shaped the treatment and publication of the Survey results. (Readers are advised to see Brock (1998) for a discussion of these factors).

Two points are however helpful in situating the study of *Teachers in Australian Schools* (Dempster, Sim, Beere and Logan, 2000) in relation to literacy policy directions and to teachers' work as literacy educators more generally. When the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) reported the results of the 1996 National School English Literacy Survey, it claimed to present 'for the first time a national map of the broad range of literacy achievements among Year 3 and Year 5 students in Australian schools' (p.iv). Specifically, the report states its most significant finding to be the wide range of literacy achievement among Australian school children at both Years 3 and 5 and elaborates as follows:

> Data from the Main Sample in the Survey indicates that the top 10 per cent of students at both Year 3 and Year 5 are working above five year levels ahead of the bottom 10 per cent of students. This suggests that in most classrooms there is a wide range of achievement among students. (DEETYA, 1997, p.v)

The reported gap between the top and bottom 10 per cent of students is the springboard in the report for drawing attention to the 'complexity of the teacher's task in providing appropriate [literacy] learning opportunities for all students in a class', the advice to schools being 'to reflect on the implications of this finding for their teaching and learning practices' (DEETYA, 1997, p.v). This leads to the second observation namely that while teachers and schools were advised to 'reflect' on pedagogy in terms of the reported gap between the 'top' and 'bottom' literacy achievers in their classrooms, the federal government had already moved to develop benchmarks or minimum standards for judging and reporting literacy and numeracy outcomes at Years 3 and 5.

In a relatively short time frame, literacy had become a priority in the federal government education agenda, with the then Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, Dr David Kemp, advocating what he described as 'an intensive national effort to bring literacy to young Australians' (Masters, 1997, preface). In introducing the report, *Literacy Standards in Australia*, Kemp pointed to the motivation for this effort as follows:
Literacy is vital for every Australian's personal, social and cultural development. Good literacy skills are essential for each individual to participate confidently in a modern democratic society... A school's first mission is to provide each child with sound literacy skills in the early years... [And] ensure that when students end their schooling, they are properly prepared for work (Masters, 1997, Preface).

The policy effort to promote literacy as a priority area intensified with several significant developments in the late 1990s. In March 1997, Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers agreed to Australia's first national literacy goal:

That every child leaving the primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level (DEETYA, 1998, p.9),

and adopted the following sub-goal:

That every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years (DEETYA, 1998, p.9).

The launch of Australia's first National Plan (DEETYA, 1998) worked to maintain literacy as a policy priority, adding weight to the policy position that the challenge for Australian schools is to provide literacy for all. Using a multi-pronged approach, the Plan makes a clear, official commitment to the comprehensive assessment of all students as early as possible for the purpose of identifying those students at educational risk or at risk of not making adequate progress towards the goal. Other key elements of the Plan include: early intervention strategies for those students identified as having difficulty in schooling; the use of minimum standards or benchmarks for measuring literacy achievement at Years 3, 5, and 7, referred to earlier; progress on national reporting on student literacy achievement against the benchmarks; and lastly, professional development for teachers to support the key elements of the Plan, the latter once again giving some recognition to the vital role of the teacher in literacy learning.

The National Plan can be seen as part of the intensity of activity around literacy at federal and state levels. In dollar terms, the intensity is evident in the fact that, currently, the Commonwealth contributes over $300 million per annum to government and non-government education authorities to assist with improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students. The Commonwealth also provides some additional funding of approximately $6 - 9 million per annum for strategic national literacy and numeracy research and initiatives under the Grants for National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects Programme. Also, in the last few years, the various Australian states and territories have undertaken large-scale literacy reviews and developed a raft of state-based literacy policies and strategies, all aiming to keep the focus squarely on ways to secure improved literacy standards. There is, for example, the New South Wales Literacy Strategy, which included a multi-million dollar investment in the professional development of teachers, and the literacy review undertaken for Queensland state schools, reported in Literate Futures (Luke, Freebody & Land, 2000). Further, the machinery of state-based census literacy testing has been put in place, with considerable funds being dedicated to test design and to analyzing and equating the data for national, state, and to a far more limited extent, local reporting.
purposes. Readers interested in an overview of the various testing programs are advised to see Wyatt-Smith and Ludwig (1998).

Currently, however, little is known about how stakeholders view the myriad of literacy policy initiatives established since 1997. No doubt exists, however, about the strong policy message namely that schools, and more specifically, teachers are accountable for ensuring quality literacy education for all students. Also evident is the increasing reliance at school and system levels on literacy test data as 'hard' (i.e., quantifiable) accountability measures, with teachers' work extending to preparing students for the various mandated statewide literacy tests. The irrefutable fact is that the literacy testing programs are being used at state and local levels to lever improvement and as a quality assurance mechanism. This is the case even though the literacy research community has known for some time that 'there is little international evidence that national or State-wide testing systems per se will lead to improvements in instructional effectiveness, innovation or student achievement' (Luke and van Kraayenoord, 1998). It is our contention that if we are serious about improving literacy standards, then the spotlight needs to fall first and foremost on ensuring that teachers are well prepared for presenting quality literacy pedagogy (instruction) and on designing effective interventions that result in improvement.

Working from this position, our intention in what follows is to draw on teacher self-report data from the Teachers in Australian Schools Study (2000) to probe the level of preparedness among the nation's teachers for meeting the challenge of improving English literacy outcomes for all students. Fundamentally, at issue is whether we are really raising the standards of English literacy and language use or just playing policy games?

**Background to the study**

In the Teachers in Australian Schools Study [i] (2000) a quantitative census-style methodology was used to survey over 20,000 teachers in Government and Non-Government schools. The sample was determined and produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and featured independent sampling for primary and secondary schools stratified by state and sector. Over 10,000 respondents completed the survey questionnaire, respondents coming from Government, Catholic and Independent schools across the country.

The primary purposes of the study were to prepare a profile of teachers in Australia at the turn of the century and to compare that profile with previous profiles produced from studies conducted by the Australian College of Education in 1963, 1979 and 1989. The survey sought information on several major areas including: the employment status [ii] and demographics of Australian teachers; official positions and gender; career intentions over the next three years; further professional development and membership of professional and community organizations; professional qualifications, and age. Additionally, there was a section that sought information on national priority areas of which literacy was one. The data presented in this paper are drawn from this section in particular.

Historically, it is worth noting that several national reports, some dating back to the early 1990s, had preceded the study, making a strong case for explicit and systematic
provision for literacy in teacher education. These include what has become known as
the Christie Report (1991), *Teaching English Literacy: a project of national
significance on the preservice preparation of teachers of English literacy*, and the
National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) (1995) report that
focused on both preservice and inservice teacher education in school and adult
education contexts, in the fields of English literacy and English as a second language.
A point worth making is that while both the NBEET and Christie Reports championed
the importance of literacy in teacher education, and the former expressed agreement
with a number of the observations in the Christie Report, it also expressed a
fundamental disagreement with the explicit emphasis in the Christie Report on the
asserted pre-eminence of genre theory, functional grammar and systemic linguistics in
the Halliday tradition (1973, 1975, 1978). This observation serves to highlight the
continuing theoretical contestation that has surrounded literacy and literacy education
for some time. (Readers interested in Australian research that engages with the
contestation especially it relates to the relationship between literacy and curriculum in
senior schooling are advised to see Cumming, Wyatt-Smith, Ryan and Doig, 1998 and
Cumming and Wyatt-Smith, 2001.)

Despite the clear disagreements between the Christie (1991) and NBEET (1995)
reports in relation to theoretical orientation and how the teaching of literacy was best
accomplished, in 1997 the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training
and Youth Affairs (MYCEETYA) continued to build the case for the explicit
provision for literacy in teacher education, agreeing in principle that:

> graduates seeking employment in government schools should have successfully
undertaken university preservice teacher education programs in early childhood,
primary or secondary education which provide comprehensive, systematic and
explicit knowledge and skills in the teaching and learning of literacy (MYCEETYA,
1997, item 1.3).

The MYCEETYA agreement referred to here has found expression in the work of
various Teacher Registration Boards across the country. In Queensland, for example,
the Board of Teacher Registration (BTR) commissioned a Working party in 1999 to
update the Board's 1991 Report *Responding to Literacy Needs: Implications for
Teacher Educators and Training Consultants*. The main outcome of this has been the
BTR report titled *Literacy in Teacher Education: Standards for Preservice Programs*
(2001) which proposed a standards-based approach to literacy in preservice teacher
education as part of a concerted effort to achieve 'shared understandings, renewed
commitment to quality preservice literacy programs, and attendant benefits for
literacy teaching throughout the State (Literacy in Teacher Education Working Party,
2001, p.i).

While the various reports and initiatives mentioned to this point have worked to
highlight the centrality of literacy education in teacher education, it was the release of
Australia's first National Plan, mentioned earlier, that spearheaded the thrust of
federal literacy education policy into schooling and system efforts to secure improved
literacy outcomes. Reflecting this national education policy agenda, DETYA
requested that the Teachers in Australian Schools study generate specific data on three
aspects of training that teachers had undertaken in the field of literacy namely (i)
teaching strategies for early literacy intervention (primary); (ii) teaching strategies for
literacy intervention [iii] (secondary); and (iii) assessment strategies. Teachers were
asked to record training in all three aspects, where applicable. The relevant survey section is provided in Appendix A.

The following discussion presents cross-sectional analyses of the data, addressing the national profile of teacher training in literacy, and the profile of teacher participation in literacy training in terms of age and schooling sector profiles (i.e., Government, Catholic and Independent sectors). Also of interest are the profiles of training across the states and territories, highlighting differences in training provision relating to location and to level of schooling (primary or secondary years). Finally, attention is given to teacher training in assessment strategies. Throughout the discussion significant features of each profile are discussed, with emerging patterns across the profiles highlighted where appropriate.

**Analyses and findings**

**The national profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIORITY AREA</th>
<th>RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>TOTAL %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-service only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Types of training that respondents had undertaken in literacy training (n=10019)

Of the total respondents to the survey, regardless of whether it was for teaching literacy at primary or secondary level, the data revealed that 33.8% (Column B) had had only some inservice training. 18.7% of all respondents indicated that they had had both preservice and inservice training, taking the proportion of those who had reported some professional development in literacy to slightly more than half (52.5%). The proportion which indicated preservice training only represented 7.3%. When combined with the numbers for both preservice and inservice training (Column C), only 26% of respondents reported that they had preservice training.

Of special interest is the proportion of respondents (40.2%) who ticked 'none' for each of the possible responses relating to literacy training. Also of interest is how, at a national level, the data indicate that literacy education for teachers was mainly provided through inservice education, as distinct from preservice programs. Drawing on the 40.2% of survey respondents who did not answer any of part of this question (Column D), the data suggest that 74% of the total respondents to the survey had no literacy training at preservice level. This suggests that the responsibilities for providing professional development in literacy education lie largely with school and system authorities, with universities playing a limited role in preparing teacher graduates as literacy educators. It seems schools and systems have been more
responsive to literacy policy initiatives than tertiary institutions, though there are some signs that this situation is changing, as discussed in the following section.

**Linking teacher preparation and age**

Gaps in provision highlighted in the national profile can be considered further in relation to data on the age of respondents. For the total respondents to the survey, the median age was 42, with 56.4% older than 40, and the largest proportion aged between 41 to 50 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE-BAND</th>
<th>21-30 yrs</th>
<th>31-40 yrs</th>
<th>41-50 yrs</th>
<th>51-60 yrs</th>
<th>61+ yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Preservice only</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Inservice only</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>1396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Both pre- &amp; inservice</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No response</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>1479</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Types of training that respondents in each age-band had undertaken in the priority area of literacy

Table 2 provides evidence that younger teachers were more likely to have preservice training than were older teachers. 41.7% of teachers aged 21 to 30 years reported having participated in preservice training (rows 1 and 3). This suggests that the focus on literacy in preservice programs has increased in recent years, with only 22.7% of teachers aged 41-50 years reporting preservice training in any of the aspects of literacy education specified in the survey. It is for this age group and the 51 to 60 age group where inservice has been an important mode for literacy training - 55.2% and 52.5% respectively (rows 2 and 3). Further, inservice training was also an important support for literacy teaching knowledge for at least 50% of respondents in each of the 21-30 and 31 to 40 age bands.

While the data indicate that universities are assuming some responsibility for the preparation of teachers as literacy educators, much remains to be known about the theoretical approach/es to literacy and literacy pedagogy taken in such preparation, and how preservice and inservice opportunities articulate. Future investigations of
preservice provision in particular need to move well beyond national and state mappings in terms of the number and type of courses in degree programs to confront the more serious issues of how, within university courses, literacy education is presented in relation to English, all curriculum areas, and in relation to information and communication technologies.

Sectors and access

In keeping with the interest in studying patterns of provision in terms of schooling sectors, each return was coded according to one of three sectors - Government, Catholic, and Independent. The figures in Table 3 suggest that up to 52.4% of respondents from Independent schools had completed neither preservice nor inservice training in the aspects of literacy education listed in the question. This compares with 38.5% from Catholic schools and 35.5% of those from Government schools. Further, the results shown in Table 3 for the Government and Catholic sectors are more consistent with the overall survey results, revealing only small differences between these two sectors. In both sectors, inservice training has played a major role in training teachers in the aspects of literacy education specified in the question. In particular, nearly 60% of respondents from the Government sector had completed relevant inservice training (38.6% + 19.3%), somewhat higher than the 54% of respondents from the Catholic sector (33.6% + 20.4%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF TRAINING</th>
<th>SCHOOLING SECTOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.Preservice only</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.Inservice only</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.Both pre- &amp; inservice</td>
<td>1007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Types of training that respondents in each schooling sector had undertaken in the priority area of literacy

State and Territory provision

In relation to state and territory provision for training teachers in literacy education, two main findings emerge (see Table 4). First, the response rate from teachers in Victoria and Queensland was markedly lower than in other states/territories. In both
these states, nearly half (47%) did not respond, while the proportion of the non-
respondents to this part of the survey in all other states was approximately one third.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE/TERRITORY</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>NT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PreS Only</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InS Only</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both PreS &amp; InS</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Resp</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1148</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Types of training that respondents in each state/territory had undertaken in the priority area of literacy

Second, when the data from respondents who indicated literacy training at preservice only (4.8%) and both preservice and inservice (14%) are combined, Victorian teachers report the least access at the preservice level (18.8%). Tasmanian teachers reported the highest provision, with 36.2% (preservice only: 8.2%; both preservice and inservice: 28.0%), while NSW teachers reported the highest level of preservice only opportunities in literacy training (9.2%), more than double that reported by Victoria's teachers (4.8%).

The South Australian teachers' experience of literacy training is highest (61.9%). This results from the combined data of inservice only (46.6%) and both preservice and inservice (15.3%). In fact for 'inservice only', South Australian teachers' experience is highest of all their colleagues in other states. Queensland teachers report the least experience of inservice from the combined data (inservice only: 27.9% + pre- and inservice and 16.9% =44.8% total) as well as when the 'inservice only' data is used (27.9%).

Provision by level of schooling
In focusing on the two parts of the survey question seeking information on primary and secondary training, it is clear that experience of training in the specified aspects of literacy included in the survey, is mainly associated with primary schooling. Regardless of sector, most training occurs for primary teachers. However of the three sectors, the data from Independent school teachers suggest that they experienced the least inservice training. More teachers in the Catholic sector reported greater preservice training experiences than the other two sectors, while inservice experiences were greatest amongst teachers in the Government sector.

Assessment Strategies

State

The breakdown of the data relating to assessment strategies indicates the marked variations that occur among States in terms of teachers' access to training in this vital area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>NT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N=912</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>1148</td>
<td>1608</td>
<td>1176</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>336</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservice only</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>8.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inservice only</td>
<td>25.88%</td>
<td>25.69</td>
<td>22.82</td>
<td>18.91</td>
<td>31.89</td>
<td>25.13</td>
<td>20.63</td>
<td>22.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Teacher responses to training experiences for Q 36 (iii) Assessment Strategies

The involvement of teachers in preservice and inservice assessment training is, in the main, similar to that shown for experience of early literacy intervention training (Item 36a-i). In NSW, for example, 7.13% of respondents had preservice training in early literacy intervention strategies, 20.61% inservice, and 11.4% both preservice and inservice. The percentages in Table 5 for NSW suggest a slightly higher level of experience at both preservice and inservice levels. Total preservice experience is 17.11% (7.46% preservice only + 9.65%, both preservice and inservice), while total inservice experience is 35.53% (25.88% inservice only + 9.65% both). The data (for preservice only, plus both preservice and inservice) for Victoria indicate that at preservice level, the experience of training in literacy assessment strategies is the lowest in the country (11.24%). The ACT (20.81%) and Tasmanian (21.83%) data place their respondents as highest amongst the country for preservice experience in this area (adding percentages of preservice only plus both preservice and inservice). Using a similar process by adding inservice only data to both preservice and inservice, South Australian respondents reported the highest levels of experience in literacy assessment training provision - 41.24%. As with NSW, this breakdown was similar to
South Australian respondents' experiences of early literacy intervention strategies. Queensland (29.3%) and Victorian (30.75%) respondents had least inservice experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>GOVERNMENT (N= 5217)</th>
<th>CATHOLIC (N=2515)</th>
<th>INDEPENDENT (N=2153)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qn</strong></td>
<td>36a- i</td>
<td>36a- ii</td>
<td>36a- iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservice</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inservice</td>
<td>26.11</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>25.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>12.06</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>11.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Teacher responses to training experiences for Q 36 by Sector

In Table 6 the results of the three parts of Question 36(a) are shown according to sector breakdown. The data show that secondary teachers' report less experience of training in literacy intervention than their colleagues in primary schools. This is the pattern for all sectors. For section (iii) of the question, respondents from the Independent sector, while having comparable 'preservice only' experiences in training for assessment strategies, have less experience than their colleagues in the Government and Catholic sectors of inservice training in this area. This is also shown by the data to be the case in relation to training for both primary and secondary literacy intervention, as discussed earlier. However for the Independent sector respondents, it is in the area of assessment strategies that their experiences of literacy inservice (15.56+8.92= 24.48%) take place, rather than early literacy (10.59+3.9=14.49%) or secondary intervention strategies (13.10+8.41=21.51%).

**Conclusion**

Drawing on the most recent survey study of *Teachers in Australian Schools* (Dempster, Sim, Beere and Logan, 2000), the discussion in this paper has brought to light significant differences in the preservice and inservice training that teachers have experienced in three important aspects of literacy education. In this regard, the survey does not lay claim to being wholly comprehensive of professional development components, nor does it seek to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of State and Territory approaches to professional development for the teaching of literacy. However, as a significant source of teacher self-reported evidence about professional development experience, the survey data make clear how the provision of such experience varies with age, location and employment sector. Of more fundamental
significance is that the data suggest a disjuncture between literacy policy initiatives and practice, with some teachers reporting no experience in preservice and inservice training in literacy. This finding begs the question about the extent of literacy training in other critical areas, such as cultural and linguistic diversity, information technology and educational disadvantage. The study also raises serious issues about the capacity of State and Territory education systems to achieve equal opportunity for all students when the teaching profession itself seems not uniformly well prepared to deliver quality literacy education opportunities. If literacy policy initiatives are to have impact in the classroom, and if they are to raise literacy standards for all students (as distinct from playing policy games), then hard questions need to be asked and answered about what constitutes effective literacy training at both preservice and inservice levels. Further, if the training experiences of teachers are to be enhanced in the interests of improved student learning, university educators, policy makers and teachers need to work together to generate a coherent and comprehensive approach to preservice and inservice education.

In concluding, we ask readers to reflect on their experiences of being inducted into knowledge about literacy and its theoretical orientations. The point is that the literacy research field provides compelling evidence of how there are many current and different perspectives on literacy/ies and literacy education. Theories offer different ways of viewing literacy and, by implication, of constructing teacher and student identities in different ways. The theories also frame different ways of providing learning opportunities that are made available to students. It is recognised within the academy that different theories have predominance in different teacher education institutions for a host of reasons, including the theoretical preferences and alignments of senior research and teaching staff. We contend therefore that teacher education programs should make explicit the theoretical orientations that they use in literacy education and ensure that differences in theoretical approaches are highlighted. Further, in the interests of bringing research, practice and policy into productive partnerships and of producing critically reflective practitioners, we emphasise the need to continue to move literacy policy-formation and implementation towards research-driven and databased decision-making. We therefore welcome moves underway in some education faculties throughout Australia to build alliances between practising and preservice teachers and to develop new and innovative models of professional development that network personnel across systems, sectors, and levels of education. The potential of such alliances lies in allowing policy to move beyond rhetoric, with literacy policy officers, classroom teachers and university-based research and teaching personnel working together in highly productive ways to secure literacy for all.

ENDNOTES

[i] The teachers in Australian Schools Study was funded by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) and the Australian College of Education, and undertaken by researchers in the Griffith University Centre for Leadership and Management in Education and the University of Queensland.
[ii] Status categories included: full-time, part-time, temporary, and contracts of varying lengths.

[iii] We acknowledge that the term 'intervention' remains open to interpretation in the absence of a given definition. In designing the questionnaire, however, a starting point was the currency of the term in contemporary literacy policy initiatives at both state and national level.

REFERENCES:


Dempster, N., Logan, L., & Sim, C. 2000 *Teachers in Australian Schools*, Griffith University: The Australian College of Education and The Griffith University Center for Leadership and Management in Education.


National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1995 *Teacher Education in Language and Literacy: preservice and inservice teacher education in both school and adult education context, in the fields of English literacy and English as a second language*, Canberra: AGPS.


**APPENDIX A:**

**F: SIX PRIORITY AREAS**

36. For which of the following do you have training? (Tick as appropriate)

   a.  **Literacy Preservice Inservice**
      
      i.  Teaching strategies for early literacy intervention (primary) ☐ ☐
      
      ii. Teaching strategies for literacy intervention (secondary) ☐ ☐

      Assessment strategies ☐ ☐

   b) **Numeracy**

      i.  Teaching strategies for numeracy intervention (primary) ☐ ☐
      
      ii. Teaching strategies for numeracy intervention (secondary) ☐ ☐

      Assessment strategies ☐ ☐
e) English as a Second Language (ESL)

   i. Teaching strategies for primary students
   ii. Teaching strategies for secondary students

f) Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Students

   i. Teaching strategies for primary students
   ii. Teaching strategies for secondary students

  Assessment strategies

e) Indigenous Studies

   i. Primary
   Secondary

f) Information Technology

   i. Teaching strategies for primary students
   ii. Teaching strategies for secondary students

  Assessment strategies

g) Vocational Education and Training (VET). *(Indicate the area/s in which you have worked and the length of time).*

  VET AREA INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

  Retail

  Hospitality

  Tourism

  Administration / Management

  Racing

  Information Technology

  Automotive

  Engineering

  Other (please specify)