# Canadian Students Down Under:
## An Intercultural Perspective for Teacher Training in Australia

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Introduction

Abstract

THE PROVINCE of Ontario in Canada has experienced a recent phenomenon in the training of teachers for its schools. High levels of unemployment, low rates of retirement among teachers in the province, and the general tightening of education budgets has resulted in a government policy decision that has greatly reduced the number of funded places for teacher training in the province's universities. As a result, many students who wish to become teachers and cannot gain entry into teacher training programs seek to acquire professional accreditation abroad. The majority travel to the United States or the United Kingdom, which, for a number of years, have had established appropriate programs compatible with the Ministry of Education requirements in Ontario. Recently, however, another option, one that combines travel to what is perceived as a fairly exotic destination with study, has become available. The University of Western Sydney, Nepean, Australia, offers such an opportunity through a program of study that, although designed to train teachers in Australia, also meets the requirements of the Ministry of Education in Ontario. In a real sense this program may be viewed as a portable credential in teacher education.

This article reports on the underlying reasons for Nepean's involvement with an increasing number of Canadian students, the experiences of the first cohort of twenty-two students to undertake this program, the benefits and challenges that the experience has brought them as the first students in the program, and the advantages that

accrued to the university as a consequence of having a group of Canadian students as part of its student body.

## Background

In 1992 the University of Western Sydney Nepean (UWS Nepean) was approached by a consultancy firm in Canada to discuss the possibilities for Canadians who wished to train as teachers in Australia. In 1993 the principal author, as head of curriculum development within the Faculty of Education and who had been raised in Canada, was sent by the International Centre of the University to explore the idea of attracting Canadian students to Western Sydney. These initial inquiries indicated that there was a conjunction of circumstances present in the manner in which teachers were trained in Ontario that would make the prospect of traveling to Australia for training quite feasible. There was a pent-up demand from very able students who could not obtain a regular place in the local universities because of the Ontario government restrictions on funded university places. UWS Nepean had the right combination of courses, which were both acceptable to the Ministry of Education in Ontario and offered at a very competitive price in a world market.

Generally, the subjects available in the secondary program at UWS Nepean cover the spectrum of curriculum areas available in secondary schools and are well matched with the specializations taught in Ontario high schools. The subjects available in the primary program are an amalgam of subjects adapted from the three-year Bachelor of Teaching degree offered to local undergraduate students. Although open to local students, the graduate diploma is not the common mode by which primary teachers are trained in Australia. Both of these programs, however, are acceptable training modes for teachers in Australia and New South Wales (NSW) in particular. Both diplomas are recognized as acceptable training modes for teachers in NSW, which is important, because the Ontario Ministry of Education specifies that Ontario residents who train abroad must be eligible for certification in the locale at which they train.

On the strength of the initial market research, UWS Nepean appointed the consultancy firm to act as its representative in Ontario and instructed it to initiate student recruitment. The program of study

was coordinated by a member of staff from the Faculty of Education specially appointed to facilitate all facets of the academic, social, and personal needs of the recruited students. Living accommodation was provided, and a number of social events and excursions were organized to acclimatize the students to Australia and Australian educational requirements.

The coauthor of this article took a special interest in this group of students and played an important role in the successful delivery and evaluation of the program. As a former high school head teacher of English for many years, he had substantial experience bringing students f m diverse educational backgrounds and cultural origins to common curriculum outcomes in a range of courses, including Australian Studies and English.

## Introduction

At face value, while Australia and Canada have much in common, there are some stark cultural and geographical differences that impinge on the respective national characters. The two countries are at opposite ends of the globe, experience entirely different climates, and have different colonial sets of experiences that have shaped their identity. The influence of its French heritage sets Canada quite apart from the other nations of the Commonwealth, including Australia. Would Canadian students trained to teach in Australia be adequately prepared to teach in a Canadian context?

A closer look at the idea of preparing teachers in Australia for Canada yields many positive outcomes for all involved, and brings an international and universal perspective to what teaching really is about today. Common aims for education in Western democracies are the desire to prepare people to effectively participate in democratic forms of government, to encourage social justice, and to ensure an environmentally sustainable future for all.

Canada and Australia are relatively young, multicultural, and post-colonial countries that have English as an agreed common language and are operating in an increasingly market-driven, technology-supported educational environment that has a common vision: to prepare young people for successful participation into the next century.

Both economies share common values (MacKeracher, 1984; Grant, 1992):

- to provide an excellent education for all young people, developing self-confidence, optimism, and respect for others
- to promote equality of educational opportunities and respond to the current and emerging economic and social needs of the nation, and to provide skills that will allow students maximum flexibility and adaptability in their future employment and other aspects of life
- to provide a foundation for lifelong education and training in terms of knowledge and skills
- to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in a democratic society within an international context
- to provide students with an understanding of and respect for cultural heritage including the particular background of indigenous and ethnic groups, and for other cultures
- to provide for the physical development and personal health and fitness of students, and for the creative use of leisure time, as well as provide appropriate career education and knowledge of the world of work, including an understanding of the nature and place of work in our society. (Adapted from the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia, 1989, and the Ontario Ministry, 1993, Common Curriculum for Grades 1-9).

Research evidence in the 1980s and 1990s provides considerable support for the merit of international experience for prospective teachers. It has been demonstrated that teachers with international experience develop global perspectives that include a wider knowledge base and perceptual understanding. Such experiences also enhance personal growth and development of international relationships (Case, 1991; Sharma & Jung, 1986; Tucker & Cistone, 1991; Wilson, 1983, 1993).

The underlying philosophy behind this program therefore is that successful teaching in the 1990s calls for cultural understanding, flexibility, adaptability, and a capacity to meet educational requirements in a variety of settings. For Canadian graduates to be able

to go back and say they worked with children with a range of learning needs in a metropolitan setting in Australia is to say that they have a range of skills that could apply in any province back home.

Of course, both countries are working hard to foster individual programs, such as indigenous languages and cultures like Inuit, French, or Aboriginal Studies. But there is a consensus on the need for English, be it a Canadian or Australian variety, as one of the common languages by which communication occurs in the public discourse:[1] The development of increasing proficiency in the uses of standard Australian English should be treated an extension of, and an addition to, a student's home language. The goal should be to ensure that students develop an ever-widening language repertoire for personal and public use (A Statement on English for Australian Schools, 1994: 4).

Cultural similarities and differences also impinge on the approach to general education and teacher training in both countries despite the common heritage of a British education model from which both systems evolved. Teacher education in both countries is characterized by geographical, historical, and cultural diversity that has fostered decentralized systems within the political federated structures in both countries. In Canada, education is a provincial responsibility, while in Australia it is a state responsibility. The contrast here refers to provincial and state comparisons rather than a country comparison.

In the late 1980s both tertiary systems underwent considerable change, which generally saw preservice teacher training transfer from the college milieu into the university sector, In the case of NSW this was a result of government policy that transformed a binary system on colleges of advanced education and universities into a unitary university structure. This political change brought with it funding pressures, the need for more flexible approaches to course delivery, and the development of a more diversified funding base through the development of postgraduate fee paying courses and the attraction of full-fee-paying foreign students. The Canadian approach, while less radical, had similar consequences and has resulted in the reduction of funded places within the universities for potential teacher trainees (Tisher, 1990).

Even the courses offered in the two countries and the general approach to teacher training are similar. In both countries two types of certification programs exist, one-year programs that normally follow the completion of an undergraduate degree and full undergraduate degree programs of three or four years' duration. Normally, the former are delivered as an end-on component to the initial degree but may also run concurrently as part of a double degree program. In NSW the end-on component has been referred to as a graduate diploma, but there is a shift toward the bachelor degree nomenclature. The degrees available at UWS Nepean include the fairly common model of the Graduate Diploma Secondary and the less common Graduate Diploma Primary. Both of these graduate diplomas are one-year programs of training for candidates with three- or four-year undergraduate degrees and are the equivalent of Bachelor of Education degrees, one-year pro- grams, offered in Ontario universities.

Where there is a marked contrast in the two systems is in the quality of student who undertakes preservice training and the underlying reasons as to why they choose to do so. The students drawn into Ontario universities are characterized by high academic standard, are variable in age, and are often quite experienced in working with children in educational contexts. This group is highly motivated, rank working with children highly, and are less inclined to rate as highly salary or professional prestige ascribed by the community to teachers in Ontario (Wideen & Holborn, 1990). Experience with the Canadian cohort at UWS Nepean also indicates that often they also have engaged in voluntary work that has an education component, for example, as camp counselors or teacher aides in local schools.

Although Canada has recently experienced a fairly severe recession and unemployment has been high, many young people in Canada and Ontario in particular still aspire to become teachers. There is an expectation that many teachers currently in the system are close to retirement and that positions, will become available in the foreseeable future. Teaching is still regarded highly as a profession and Ontario teachers are among the most highly paid in the English-speaking world, conditions that are conducive to attracting large numbers of high-quality candidates to the profession despite the low number of positions currently available in teaching. While there has been no overwhelming

government agenda in Canada to change the status quo for some time, the recent release of the report of the Royal Commission on Learning (1995) has altered community perceptions on the quality of delivery of education in Ontario classrooms. It also recommends some radical changes to the teacher training system in Ontario, including a doubling of the length of the Bachelor of Education program from one to two years for those with initial undergraduate degrees, but this policy has not to date been implemented nor is it evident that the current government has the funds required for successful implementation. In marked contrast, preservice teachers in Australia and NSW are more likely to enter teaching by default, often because other more desirable programs are oversubscribed. They lack clear commitment and more than half enter preservice programs without any clear interest. There is some evidence that more than a third of graduating high school students consider teaching a poor employment prospect that is limited in prestige and potential income (Tisher, 1990).

In Australia the profession has not enjoyed the same high status accorded to teachers in Canada nor the same attractive remuneration packages. Consequently, the demand on places in Australia is not as high nor is it artificially inflated by a low number of funded places. Historically, education in general has not enjoyed as high a status as in Canada. To counterpoint this difference, it is of some interest to note that in Australia educators often talk of retention from secondary to the tertiary sector as the retention rate," whereas in Canada this shift from one sector to the other is referred to as the "dropout" rate.

## The Program

The program of study includes eight subjects over a period of one year, which in most Australian universities is divided into two semesters of six- teen weeks. While the content of subjects varies dependent on the program of study, primary or secondary, and the specific discipline of expertise, both programs include units on methodology of teaching a discipline (e.g., math methods), professional studies (e.g., teaching skills and strategies), psychology (e.g., child development), and a minimum of forty day's practicum that takes place at the local schools to which students are assigned. These practicums occur over two twenty-day sessions, one per semester, and are

supervised by master teachers who are on staff at the schools in collaboration with a university-assigned coordinator. The pro- gram in essence reflects the requirements of the NSW Department of School Education, which coincidentally, although certainly not surprisingly, mirror the requirements of the Ontario Ministry for Education.Given their recent historical attachment to and influence of Great Britain, such requirements are common for professional certification among Commonwealth and former Commonwealth countries. An unfortunate by-product of setting rigid parameters on the content of the course is that there is little degree of freedom for changing the character of the program, although there may be shifts in emphasis. On the whole the Canadian students rated the program highly, but most expressed the opinion that the practicum periods were the most productive and the time during which the greatest amount of learning took place.

## The Students

Within six months of the initial recruitment drive focused on recent graduates or graduating students from the 17 Ontario universities, 22 students enrolled in the first semester of 1994, 10 male and 12 female. On average the males were 26.9 years old, ranging from 24 years 3 months, to 31 years 9 months at the commencement of the course. The females ranged from 24 years 7 months to 31 years 3 months, with an average age of 27.2 years. The students represented all parts of the province, including the far north, which has its own education faculty in one of the local universities. The students were all from middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds and predominantly of Anglo heritage. They had good educational backgrounds with average to above average performance in their undergraduate degrees. Despite all having various levels of in-school experiences on a volunteer basis or having other extensive work experience with young children and youth, they had all failed to gain entry into one of the Ontario University teacher training programs. All were prepared to live and study in Australia for a minimum period of forty-two weeks, which included two semesters of academic study, practicum, and eight weeks of nonclass study/holiday period, two weeks in the middle of each semester, and a four-week period between semesters. The majority, however, stayed for the one

year allowable under Australian student visa regulations and took advantage of the extra time to do extensive travel in Australia.

### Implementation

Two sets of objectives presented themselves in the meshing of Canadians with Australians in their respective teacher education programs: to integrate Canadian graduates with Australian graduates in the Graduate Diploma of Education Secondary, and to integrate Canadian graduates with Australian undergraduates for the purposes of the former obtaining the Graduate Diploma in Education Primary, while the Australians were at various stages of their three-year Bachelor of Teaching Primary program.

On the whole, it was a policy decision to integrate students irrespective of their backgrounds. This was important so as not to develop a ghetto mentality among the Canadian students or isolate them from the Australian students. Indeed, it was the objective of the course organizers to purposefully let Australians work with non-Australians, so that everyone would benefit from shared experiences and an appreciation of other cultures.

One consequence of this policy was that standards and quality of work increased in an atmosphere where there was a healthy drive for best practice. Australians appreciated the freshness and different ways by which Canadians approached Australian issues in education, and Canadians clearly enjoyed working in an English-speaking environment quite distinct from their own home experiences. The Canadian students, who, on average, were more experienced and mature than their Australian classmates, were more confident and critical in their comments and discussion, often taking leadership roles during class discussions. This example tended to rub off on the Australian students, who in turn adjusted their learning and presentation styles. It was a win-win situation where the values espoused in common and agreed goals of schooling could as much be the common and agreed values by which the teacher education program derives its values.

There were some problems that needed working through. Characteristic of any new program, recognition of prior learning and tailoring the program to ensure best individual outcomes is a process

that the faculty has put in place and that is ongoing and will always be capable of further refinement. While the program concentrates on teaching methodologies, philosophy, psychology, and sociology of education, allowance had to be made for differences in background. A coordinator for the Canadians ensured that special initiatives, such as excursions, bushwalks, visits to cultural events, and the like were put in place so that Canadians would benefit from their stay n Australia. Many Canadians availed themselves of the opportunity to travel and to explore beaches, the night life, and so forth on their own. No doubt independence took on new meanings for some, while others were seasoned travelers who were simply adding to their experiences.

## Evaluation

In order for the university to establish itself in the highly competitive "study abroad" market in Canada, a review and evaluation was conducted of the experiences of the first enrollment of Canadian students at Nepean. The study was carried out in the form of seven small-group formal interviews, where the students' experiences of academic, institutional, and general life factors were canvassed with a view to improving facets of the program that may have been perceived by the clientele as deficient. The following presents a summary of the results obtained from the interviews.

The fact that these were full-fee-paying students who chose to come to Nepean made it imperative that their experience was both positive and perceived as offering value for money. Their experiences will be relayed to their friends and relatives in Canada and will have a great influence on the continuing success of Nepean's recruitment strategies in Canada. The value of personal recommendations cannot be underestimated, as we have considerable anecdotal evidence to show that there exists a comprehensive network of information in Southern Ontario, the major catchment area for these students.

The initial cohort of twenty-two students were approached to participate in an interview to discuss issues related to the conduct of the program. Two students were asked to interact with the chief investigator, a research assistant, and a member of staff of the Faculty of Education to discuss the issues and areas of concern to the Canadian students. With their help an initial set of interview questions was

formulated. Students were asked to participate in groups of two or more students and to interact with the research assistant as the interviewee. The questions were used as framework for the interviews, but the participants were not required to limit their responses and were encouraged to discuss and contribute over a range of issues. Each case study was analyzed and interpreted through qualitative data analysis techniques recommended for semistructured interviews (see, for example, Yin, 1989).

Of the twenty-two original students, four declined to participate but did not offer any reason for their reluctance. Their right to do so was respected and all other participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. All transcripts were forwarded to the appropriate groups, who were invited to comment and negotiate any changes of content they perceived not to have reflected an accurate account of the discussion. No such changes were requested by any individual or groups.

## Implications of Cultural Differences and Similarities

Although, as stated in the opening of this article, Australia and Canada have more in common than not, students nevertheless experienced significant variables of culture that are worth mentioning, because of the implications that these had for preparing teachers. Rather than complicating the preparation of teachers, the differences developed and enhanced qualities of adaptability and tolerance, and promoted the gaining of self-confidence and a greater sense of independence. Thus the gaining of awareness of cultural differences promoted intercultural sensitivity and understanding, rather than prompting a further search for the common ground between the two countries. Similar attitudinal changes like these have been previously reported (Hoffman & Zak, 1969; Sharma & Jung, 1986).

When asked, students identified the nature of teacher-student interactions to be an area of difference. In Canada, these relationships are more formal, and consequently students' preparedness to challenge a professorial opinion was more reserved. By contrast, the greater level of informality prevalent in Australia allowed teacher-student relationships to be more relaxed, and consequently more open and

subject to debate. This was interpreted as a positive quality, as it promoted a debate more commensurate with what a tertiary learning environment was about, in that interactions were more personalized and opinions considered more worthy.

Further, the age of universities accentuated differences. The University of Western Sydney's being less than six years old allows this institution to be described as evolving, young, and small. Being smaller than some Canadian counterparts was seen as a good thing, as greater attention to individual learning needs seemed to be a feature experienced in such a place. Larger Canadian universities were perceived to have a greater sense of tradition and more resources, but were also more impersonal in their working relationships with students unless one found oneself in a small program. On the other hand, the evolving nature of UWS Nepean did have some serious implications in respect of resources and service, The resources available at UWS Nepean were justifiably critiqued for three shortcomings: First, its level of computer facilities was not considered commensurate with that experienced in Canada, with the number of machines provided being considered barely up to the task, Second, the library's resources were somewhat short of meeting student demand; that is, the number of books on shelves in the education area was smaller than could be met by the demand on its collection. Third, the administrative wing of the university experienced difficulties in meeting the record-keeping demands generated by the inclusion of so many students.

A further area of difference was seen in the way sport facilities are institutionally catered for in Canada, while in Australia they are more commun1ty based. Although generally this was the overarching experience of Canadian students at UWS Nepean, they did make some interesting observations. Intervarsity competition and intermural games are fostered much more in Canada than was the experience down under: competition there was more confined to within the university or local residential community. The level of providing for sports was invariably tied to funding, and having children in Australia act as umpires or referees was a practice new to Canadians. It was observed, however, that the promotion of competition games in Canada often meant the funding of those teams that were winning, at the cost of those less competitively oriented sports, who were arguably no better off than

many in Australia. When asked in which country they felt they were more fit, answers differed. Because most Canadian students did not have access to a car, mountain bikes were the preferred means of getting around, or walking, and thus fitness was developed by default. Others said that they pursued fitness to equal extents, while others talked of the particular availability of specific sports affecting their fitness levels.

Two further intercultural differences that were felt in and especially outside the university were the topics of service and speed. It was generally agreed that the quality of consumer-oriented service was much higher in Canada than in Australia. In Australia, speaking as consumers, tourists, travelers, or students, the Canadians' experience was that service did eventually come, if the customer was prepared to pass a "waiting test" as a means of ensuring that they were serious about their inquiry, and thus were seen to have earned the right to be served. Service in Canada was generally perceived to be much more spontaneous, with the service provider looking to satisfy customer need immediately and finally. One implication of this cultural difference is that Canadians learned to adjust to a different time dimension, one that initially annoyed them, but that eventually was accommodated within a broader, tolerant frame of mind. "No worries" and "She'll be right" were phrases the true meaning of which only gradually dawned on many visiting students.

Notwithstanding these cultural differences, or perhaps because of them, benefits of study abroad included these personal gains: students felt that having to make adjustments for different ways of getting things done made them more tolerant and open to accepting intercultural variables at work in their study, lecture, and interpersonal relationship levels. They saw this unquestioningly as professionally enhancing of their understanding and sensitivity toward individual differences, attributes also reported by Bach- net and Zeutschel, 1990 (cited in Wilson, 1993), and Tucker and Cistone, 1991.

Being called on to adapt to local and prevailing learning and teaching styles, which were widely perceived by the students in their practicums to be more open to challenge, test, and endurance than were perhaps less inter- active and formal teaching and learning relationships back home in Canada, also was seen as enhancing career

preparations by developing an internationalized, multiskilling flavor to their teaching.

A metacognitive outcome for many of the students was that it was inappropriate to compare two countries, as the standards of comparison were evasive in that it was realized that because two different countries have different things to offer, and different drawbacks, it was wrong to engage on a path that said "back in Canada we do or do not have Instead, students learned quickly to develop a positive attitude to those qualities the country offered, and to develop an intercultural tolerance of those features that were dissimilar to their knowledge of Canada. It made them better appreciate themselves and their relationships with others within a global perspective.

Some students believed that they could see the common ancestry of Irish and English influences on both countries to be so strong as to clearly enhance Cultural understanding between the two countries. Others felt that the growing evidence of multicultural pluralism was equally pervasive in both countries. In any case, huge interest in the host country meant that students took advantage of their stay and traveled widely.

This discussion shows that the two countries still have so much in common that the effort of accommodating a teacher education course in one country for service in another is perfectly in accord with the objectives of the profession. In addition, significant small differences do manage to test the adaptability, philosophy, and tolerance levels of some students abroad to the point where these small differences help shape those students' professional readiness in significant ways. The most important outcomes for the teaching profession thus are the internationalization of the profession across, in this instance, two dominantly English speaking nations, and the awareness of multicultural, multilingual diversity within these nations as helping to shape particular uniqueness in each country, such as Aboriginality in Australia, or French or Native Canadian presence in Canada.

## Final Outcomes

The faculty was particularly interested in whether it had succeeded in accommodating the needs of the Canadian students. One factor that certainly was a key indicator was the success of all of the students in the

initial group in acquiring accreditation from the Department of School Education in New South Wales when they were required to undertake interviews to determine their suitability to teach in NSW. The general success of the group and the positive impression that they left among the interviewers are strong testimony for the success of the program.

Understanding of the classroom and school environments explored a candidate's sensitivity to other cultures, an appreciation of a variety of teaching and learning styles, as well as knowing how to manage student behavior in the classroom. Because many Canadian students had indeed traveled a lot, both internationally as well as in Australia, they brought a tolerance and sensitivity to other cultures, religions, and family backgrounds that was exceptionally high. This was further underscored by an appreciation of cultural minorities, including Aboriginal people.

The variety of teaching and learning styles had been addressed by both theoretical lectures and readings at the university, which in turn were then field-tested against what teaching and learning styles were found to be at work when they got to particular schools for their practicum. It would be fair to say that students were acquainted with old and new ways of going about teaching and learning, as well as old and new ways of managing student behavior. All the department really wanted to be satisfied on was that student-teachers could recognize and allow for varying classroom ability, motivation, and ways of learning. This requirement was most easily met by those who could say that they had worked with students in a range of subject situations, as well as in a range of school activities.

The Department of School Education was particularly interested in personal qualities and the students' interest in teaching and in working with children. Did the interviewee bring a positive attitude toward children and their educational needs? Enthusiasm, a love of people, and initiative were personal qualities that were well demonstrated. These were further reinforced by a professional presentation at interview, such as standard of dress and deportment, taking questions seriously, and being as expansive in answer as was possible given the limited teaching history they had encountered. Another highly regarded quality was the perceived sensitivity to and aware- ness of community views, which can and do frequently vary according to religious influence,

particular parental views on teaching or learning styles (e.g., emphasis on grammar, reading schemes, drill and practice, rote learning spelling lists), as well as differing attitudes to managing student misbehavior.

The level of interpersonal skills was adjudicated on whether interviewees could work as part of a team-whether they could work with other more experienced teachers to achieve the common goal of the school's particular management plan. Other valued interpersonal skills included the ability to accept guidance from senior members of the school staff, that is, the ability to accept criticism.

While personal presentation at interview was important, both academic results and practicum reports were considered as part of the overall impression made by the presenting potential teacher. The fact that in many instances students had accumulated other life experiences, including work experience, was of advantage in the interview presentations of the Canadians. Among this group, knowledge of a foreign language, the ability to play a musical instrument, computing skills, and additional qualifications such as first aid certificates were also evident. In many instances, students could demonstrate successful and complex business skills, writing and presentation skills like sales, or working with people in a variety of settings both inside and outside education, such as social welfare, nursing, or sports.

The local accreditation was of course transferred to Ontario once the Ministry of Education processed all of their documentation. Under the strict student visa requirements in Australia, full-fee-paying students cannot remain in the country. If they wish to apply for residency, they must return to their country of origin. Consequently, these students had to leave Australia on completion of their studies.

We have not been able to trace their movements or to monitor their career tracks systematically at this stage, although there are certainly plans to do so in the very near future. Nevertheless, we do have anecdotal evidence based on correspondence of a couple of students who have informed us of their and some of the others' experiences since their formal graduations from UWS Nepean.

We know, for example, that one of our graduates has found a permanent position. We quote from some recent correspondence addressed to the coordinator of the program: "This was the first

possible opportunity to be hired full-time since our class returned from Aus. *{sic}* and I was hired right away! Coming from UWS was a plus as it was something interesting to talk about during the interview and it showed my dedication in becoming a teacher. Training in outcomes helped as well since our system is moving towards destreaming." Another student has also been successful in finding a job in a private school in Toronto.

We also understand that a couple of students have gone to seek work in the United Kingdom and are known to be working regularly. Another student has gone to teach English as a foreign language in Korea. Two of this original cohort have also received postgraduate scholarships from UWS Nepean to pursue studies in a Master of Education degree. There may well be others who have been successful in beginning to establish their careers as teachers, but we have at least accounted for seven, about a third of the group.

Unfortunately, the job situation in Ontario is very tight and there are not too many opportunities yet. Our successful student writes: "I often run into supply teachers at school who have come from Universities all over Ontario who have been supply teaching for years who look at me half surprised and half resentful that I am working. It really is that tight a market. Judging from the number of people mentioned that have found work out of that small group of 32 *{sic}*, it seems that we had something special."

The students who come to us are well aware of these job limitations, as we ensure to emphasize during our recruitment drives that students will not be able to teach in Australia due to very tough immigration laws and that their opportunities in Ontario are limited. Nevertheless, the attraction of teaching in Ontario, the high rates of salary, and the high public esteem of the public for the profession continues to attract large numbers of potential students.

Our second intake, in July 1994, attracted a further 33 students, and 1995 saw a massive increase to more than 180 students in the program. As other universities in NSW and Queensland open their doors and recruit students, our numbers have decreased slightly in 1996, but UWS Nepean is still by far the largest provider of teacher training programs in Australia for Ontario residents. If number of students provides a

measure for the success of a program, then we believe we can justifiably judge the experience so far as highly successful.

The experience of the original twenty-two students as well of consequent intakes will be monitored over the years, and it will be extremely interesting to find out whether they have found jobs, how they have been accepted into the system, and what their perceptions are of the value of their experience with the hindsight of some years of experience on their return to Canada. There are plans to carry on the evaluation of the student experiences by interviewing them through their initial years of employment.

There is no doubt in the minds of staff in the faculty that the Canadian students enrich the experiences of our own local students and that the gains to the faculty and the university go far beyond the financial gains made by initially attracting them to study in Australia. The network of alumni with an interest in education will have a permanent and lasting influence on the activities of the Faculty of Education and the university for many years to come.

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[1] It is important to note that Canada is officially a bilingual country and that our references here are really to the province of Ontario as part of Anglophone Canada.