



**Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry
Education & Training Committee**

Suitability of Current Pre-Service Teacher
Training Courses

CMYI Submission

April 2004

Terms of Reference Criteria Relevant to CMYI

The Parliament of Victoria has referred to the Education and Training Committee a reference to inquire into, consider and report on the suitability of current pre-service teacher training courses, including:

- (a) Future requirements of such courses to train teachers appropriate for future schooling:
- (iii) Determine the skills and knowledge required of teachers, and therefore of pre-service teacher training courses, in response to reflect the changing nature of education in the 21st century

Organisational Background

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) is committed to improving the life opportunities of culturally and linguistically (CLD) diverse young people in Victoria.

The centre operates within an inclusive framework dependent on strong partnerships with youth agencies, migrant and refugee communities, government and non-government organisations as well as having an on-going commitment to CLD youth participation.

CMYI provides:

- ❑ Sector development
- ❑ Community education and cross-cultural training
- ❑ Policy development and research
- ❑ Programs and special projects

Rationale

CMYI supports young people through direct service, advocacy and policy development. Through its broad networks with agencies and young people themselves, a number of inadequacies are apparent regarding the structure and flexibility of the current Victorian Education System. These inadequacies have a significant impact on young people from migrant and in particular refugee backgrounds. The impact is evident when examining low retention rates and the resulting broader social and mental health implications for migrant and refugee young people.

The evident limitation in pre-service teacher training is one of many aspects compounding systemic problems that exist currently within the system. This system as a whole often inhibits the successful participation of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Victoria's Multicultural Diversity

- ❑ According to 2001 Census data over forty percent of Victorians were born overseas or come from a home where at least one parent was.

- ❑ Victorians come from 233 countries, speak 182 languages and follow 116 faiths.

Given these figures and a real shift in the demographics of schools in Victoria, urgent changes to the pre-service teacher training for teachers and indeed the on-going professional development of school staff must be implemented.

The issue of additional and appropriate educational supports for refugee and newly arrived young people is an issue that is recurrent and directly related to this group's:

- ❑ Future rates of educational participation levels (within secondary schools, vocational and tertiary institutions),
- ❑ Economic and social well being, (employment eligibility)
- ❑ Young people's personal experiences of community connectedness and therefore their participation in it. ¹

Some of the issues faced by these young people are:

- ❑ Language barriers, many young people find it difficult to cope with language acquisition compounded by curriculum requirements. There are also significant implications for students who may be, for various reasons, illiterate in their first language also.
- ❑ A lack of understanding of the Australian education system, curriculum and pathways. (This is usually the case for whole family units)
- ❑ Lack of a quiet space to study at home.
- ❑ Disrupted schooling for varying lengths of time and circumstances, and in some cases no previous schooling at all, either in their country of birth and perhaps in the transitional country prior to the young person's settlement in Australia. ²

If the State Government is to meet its target of 90% retention in Year 12, by 2010, the pre-service teacher training, professional development of all teachers and the very framework under which they operate, including an overhaul of curriculum, need to be changed. The current system limits the successful levels of participation of young people from a number of life experiences including migrant and refugee, indigenous young people and young people with disabilities.

¹ CMYI, Briefing Paper on Educational Support Issues for Refugee Young People. 2002

² Ibid

Some of the recommendations put forward by CMYI in consultation with the Statewide Education Support Network (SES) convened by CMYI. This working group was established to provide feedback on educational support issues for migrant and refugee young people. The group consists of a number of agencies concerned about the issues faced by young people when attempting to participate in the education system.

Collectively the following recommendations and key issues were raised

- ❑ An essential focus in pre-service teacher training must be a focus on the needs of a diverse student population, of which migrant and refugee young people are a significant part.
- ❑ That pre-service teacher training creates in future educators the skill and capacity to provide for the educational needs of refugees in a flexible manner that recognises their refugee experience and settlement issues that have a significant impact on their schooling lives.
- ❑ That the Victorian Education System takes a holistic approach to the needs of young people, which would involve whole school/community approaches.
- ❑ That the current pre-service teacher training lacks an awareness of social and health wellbeing of young people, instead focussing only on curriculum.
- ❑ That there is an evident lack of a consistent understanding of the impact of family on the lives of young people, and strategies for working with them.
- ❑ That pre-service teacher training must include child/adolescent development training, identity formulation of young people, cognitive development, sexual development and an understanding of the factors that inhibit healthy development (social and physical).
- ❑ That great emphasis needs to be placed in understanding external community structures and networks to support young people. Providing the capacity to utilise existing networks and resources, such as counselling and interpreting services.

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