

## INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

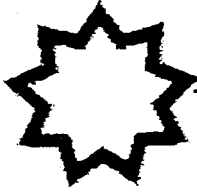
**Organisation:** Baha'i Council  
**Name:** Mr Farid Hatami  
**Position:** Secretary  
**Telephone:** 9748 1297  
**Date Received:** 21/02/2005

---

**Theme:**

**Summary**

Reed 21-2-05  
Vand



## Bahá'í Council

for New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory

21 February 2005

Social Issues Committee  
Legislative Council  
Parliament of NSW  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear members,

### **Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers**

The Bahá'í community welcomes the Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers. We are grateful for this opportunity to express our views on a subject which is so important to the future of our children and youth, and indeed of our entire community.

The Bahá'í Faith is an independent religion with followers spread across virtually every country in the world. The Bahá'í community of NSW dates back to the 1920s, and our membership reflects the full diversity of modern Australia. Bahá'ís are active members of their communities and place particular emphasis on working towards unity and peace, including interfaith work, support for Refugee Week and Harmony Day, reconciliation, and promotion of settlement in rural and remote areas. The Bahá'í teachings address a range of social issues which include human rights, the advancement of women, social harmony, global prosperity and moral education.

The Bahá'í Faith places great importance on education. The Bahá'í Writings describe the promotion of education as "the primary, the most urgent requirement ... it is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward". We believe that the well-being of humanity depends on the quality of physical, intellectual and spiritual education of every individual, especially children. Knowledge plays a central role in human life and human society: it is the process of generating and applying knowledge that lies at the heart of civilisation, and all social advancement, including economic, political, and social change, flows from it.

Accordingly, the role of teachers in society is of fundamental importance. In the Bahá'í Writings, the education and training of children is described as "among the most meritorious acts of humankind"; "among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered"; "a service than which none is greater".

Despite the best efforts of educational authorities and others, however, the value of teaching as a profession has declined unchecked around the world, and the moral authority of teachers

as respected members of the community is eroding. At the same time, schools are being asked to address a growing list of moral and social concerns traditionally relegated to the family.<sup>1</sup> This pattern of decline in the status of teachers must be addressed and reversed if we are to attract and retain the best quality teachers to NSW Public Schools and meet the needs of school communities.

Naturally, the provision of appropriate material compensation to teachers is one means by which our society expresses its recognition of the importance of their role. The allocation of adequate resources and training is also very important. But this is not, in itself, enough. Elsewhere, increased pay has not been sufficient to arrest the decline in the value placed upon teaching.<sup>2</sup>

We believe that a broad-based community education program to restore teaching to its rightful status is essential to meet the goals of this inquiry. This program should take place at the grass-roots and reach out to all sectors of society. Without committed endeavours to ensure that the entire community recognises, appreciates and expresses support for the true station of teachers, any other programs to attract and retain the best quality teachers in our schools will inevitably fall short.

For its part, the Bahá'í community in NSW – and indeed around Australia – has been working to raise the status of teaching by undertaking annual “teacher appreciation” activities. We are aware that some other groups, and indeed some school administrations, undertake similar initiatives in the public and private school systems, and we commend them for this work. If our experience can be of assistance to others, we are happy to offer it as an example to be considered.

Every October, around the date of World Teacher's Day,<sup>3</sup> children attending Bahá'í Special Religious Education classes in public schools, as well as after-school Bahá'í education classes, are encouraged to find ways to express their appreciation of their school teachers. In some local areas, the entire Bahá'í community is involved in hosting an event to express gratitude to teachers for their endeavours. The resulting activities range from simple expressions of gratitude, such as giving flowers or making thank-you cards, to special morning teas, presentations at school assemblies, dinners, and special services of appreciation at the Bahá'í House of Worship.

Each year, some teachers touched by these activities will make remarks to the effect that “in all my years of teaching, no-one has recognised and appreciated my work like this before”. The frequency of such comments leads us to believe that programs like this are relatively rare. However, we believe that their benefits go beyond the boost in morale gained by the individual teachers. In the process of conceiving, planning and carrying out such events, children, parents, and other community members all reflect on the important role of teachers in the lives of every one of us. Positive and constructive relationships are built with teachers and school administrations. The coverage attracted by such activities in school newsletters and the local media multiplies and amplifies this educative process to a wider public.

---


<sup>1</sup> “The Teacher's Situation: The Determining Factor in a Quality Education for All”, statement of the Bahá'í International Community submitted to a roundtable discussion at the United Nations World Conference on Education for All by the Year 2000, Jomtien, Thailand, 5-9 March 1990 (<http://www.bic-un.bahai.org/90-0308.htm>).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> World Teachers Day was initiated by UNESCO in 1994. It is recognised internationally on 5 October and in Australia on the last Friday of that month. Giving this day appropriate recognition is one simple step towards raising the status of teachers in the eyes of the community.

Every child – girl and boy, rich and poor, from every background – has a fundamental human right to receive an education that will enable them to attain their fullest potential, and to make their own unique contribution to an ever-advancing civilisation. As a society, we have a collective duty to ensure that there is no impediment preventing those best qualified and suited to the task from not only being recruited and trained as teachers, but being respected, supported and appreciated in their vocations, so that they may offer a lifetime of service in this “most meritorious act of humankind”. We believe that a concerted community education program to restore the status of teachers and the teaching profession is an essential measure to help achieve this goal.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Farid Hatami".

Farid Hatami  
Secretary