

**Submission  
No 28**

## **INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS**

**Organisation:**

**Name:** Mr Joe Alvaro

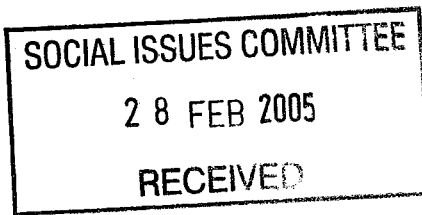
**Telephone:**

**Date Received:** 28/02/2005

---

**Theme:**

**Summary**



THE DIRECTOR

Standing Committee on Social Issues

Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

To: The Director

From: Joe Alvaro

Re: Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers (The Sydney Morning Herald, 18 – 19 December 2004).

I write as a secondary school teacher in my 10<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. Please find below my submission.

1. (*Term of reference no.6*) I would like to point out the importance of secondary school teachers having a high understanding of the subject matter they teach as one of the factors which contributes to quality teaching. University courses can play a major role in producing teachers with this high understanding.

More attention needs to be paid to student teachers studying the subject matter of the school courses they are training to teach, in the relevant university faculty and for the full three years(i.e. a major) when they are completing their degree.

Currently some teachers graduate with studying none, one or two years of a subject, and they then end up teaching this subject in schools.

It is concerning that some teachers training in the Human Society and its Environment Key Learning Area (Secondary, Social Sciences stream), graduate having studied no Geography within the Department of Geography at the university they attended. This is despite Geography being a compulsory subject from years 7 – 10 in NSW. It is most likely the case that most teachers training to teach aspects of the subject matter in this KLA (if they are taking the Social Sciences stream) will end up teaching the Geography course in the schools they teach in, when they are placed in a Social Sciences/HSIE faculty. Currently an Economics teacher can be automatically assumed to be a Geography teacher, despite that teacher having studied no Geography at university. Therefore all teachers training to teach in the HSIE KLA (Social Sciences stream) should have Geography as one of their teaching subjects (based on a major in Geography in the university's Department of Geography).

In the past teachers of Business Studies and Legal Studies (popular subjects within the Human Society and its Environment KLA) have taught these subjects without any study of the subject matter of these courses in the relevant faculties at university.

The above problems may be even more prevalent for students who complete their education studies from the first year of their degree (e.g. a 4 year Bachelor of Education). This type of degree can end up focusing more on education studies and how to teach particular subjects, putting less emphasis on ensuring students have a high understanding of the subject matter they want to teach (that is, three years of study in each subject students want to teach – a major in each).

The process used by the NSW Department of Education and Training of approving teachers to teach particular subjects and allocating teaching subjects to teachers based on a "willing to teach" basis, despite no major or nil study of the subject at university needs reviewing, perhaps in conjunction with teacher educators in universities.

I suggest that teacher educators pay more careful attention to which school subjects their student teachers are wanting to teach and make it a requirement that a full three years of that subject be studied in the relevant university faculty. Particular attention needs to be given to teachers wanting to teach in the HSIE KLA (Social Sciences stream). These teachers need three years study of Geography in the university's Department of Geography, as it is most likely that they will end up teaching this compulsory years 7 – 10 subject (with a statewide external examination at the end of year 10) when they are placed in a Social Sciences/HSIE faculty in a school.

Research shows clearly that one of the factors that contributes to effective teaching is a teacher who "knows his/her subject". Students also identify this factor as one of the qualities in a teacher which helps them learn more effectively. Teachers need to be given the opportunity to develop a solid foundation of knowledge and skills at university in the subjects they want to teach.

2. (*Term of reference no.2*) In the past the demanding and challenging first year of a beginning teacher has not been adequately focused on. It is concerning that a first year out teacher is given a full teaching load just like a teacher who has been teaching for 20 years, for example.

I suggest that the teaching load of a beginning teacher be reduced for the first year, in order for the teacher to settle into the profession, develop teaching strategies, gather resources, discuss experiences and problems with more senior teachers, reflect on what is happening in the classroom etc. This would enable these teachers to have a more smooth transition from university to their first teaching appointment, avoiding high levels of first year teacher stress and teacher burnout.

3. (*Term of reference no.1*) More effort needs to be put into the advertising of teaching positions in newspapers conducted by the NSW Department of Education and Training. These advertisements need to be clearer, more “user friendly” and more detailed. Comprehensive information on each teaching position and the school is needed, rather than just a list of schools and teaching positions.

Date: 20 February 2005