

**'PRESSURE COOKER' TRAINING FOR
TEACHERS 1948-1962:
WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES
FIFTY YEARS ON**

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DEDICATION

To my beloved mother

Janina Zychal (1921 – 2002)

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ADDENDA

1. Insert the following sentence to the end of paragraph one on page 8.

The literature discussed in the sections that follow has been mainly restricted to the Australian context, with most publications from the U.S. and U.K. considered not pertinent to the concerns of this thesis.

2. Insert the following two sentences to the end of paragraph three on page 251.

It is noteworthy, however, that the 'marriage bar' was not mentioned in any official documentation of the South Australian Education Department or SAIT during the period 1948-1962, nor by any of the 'pressure cooker' teachers who were interviewed. It can be argued therefore that the removal of the marriage bar was never considered a solution for the post-war teacher shortage in South Australia.

ABSTRACT

This study gives voice to the women who embarked on careers as emergency or ‘pressure cooker’ teachers within the South Australian Education Department between 1948 and 1962 and allows them to describe their experiences. In 1948 the Education Minister introduced the emergency teacher training scheme, an *ad hoc* arrangement that varied over the years according to the needs of the Department to overcome a severe post-war teacher shortage in State schools. Short courses of teacher training were offered to mature age people, most of whom were married women with children. These ended officially in 1962, much to the relief of the S.A. Institute of Teachers, which criticised the courses as providing manifestly inadequate teacher preparation that could result in harm for the students, schools and the professionalism of teachers.

The study investigated the emergency system from an historical and humanistic sociological perspective, using three sets of juxtaposed data to explain the views of the various stakeholders. As one line of enquiry, historical documentation from the Minister of Education, the Education Department, the Education Inquiry Committee as well as the S.A. Institute of Teachers and the print media, were used to establish the views of the proponents and opponents of the emergency teacher training scheme. The other method utilised an oral history or memoir approach to the lives of women teachers who had been largely ignored by historians in the past. This method was grounded in feminist historiography with a focus on the ‘mother-teacher’ role of nurturing young children. Of the sixty respondents interviewed for the study, most were women who had become emergency teachers, but some were Education Department Officers who had been responsible for the training and supervision of these teachers. The interviews, recorded and transcribed by the researcher, were based on a number of questions that elicited concrete and cultural data. Analysis

of the extensive data gathered was interpreted using the humanistic sociological approach of Polish-American sociologist, Florian Znaniecki.

Initially, a chronological account of the Department's emergency or 'pressure cooker' short courses of teacher training, their gradual modification in the face of teacher criticism and their eventual demise is presented. The subsequent analysis of the women's comments gives the study a human aspect to provide a far more comprehensive picture of what actually took place in the training courses and in the classrooms of the period, than could be gleaned from official documentation or the objections of critics. The analysis of the memoir data is presented in five chapters that discuss the women's reasons for applying to be emergency teachers, their experiences in being interviewed, trained and subsequently appointed to schools. In addition, their position in the Education Department hierarchy and the educational debate of whether the pressure cooker women were natural teachers or harmful interlopers are both considered at some length.

From the data it was apparent that, while the emergency scheme was not an ideal solution, for the Education Department the emergency scheme achieved its objective in addressing the teacher shortage problem and enabled them to secure the services of the extra teachers required at the minimum wage level. Although some of the worst emergency teachers resigned quickly, in the case of the women interviewed, work compatible with their domestic arrangements which eliminated the need for child care and provided a sufficient and secure income, led to a satisfying long term teaching career until retirement.

The long term outcomes of this period can be seen in changes to State legislation in 1972 that resulted in married women, previously excluded from permanency, being granted full status as

professional teachers. As well, the 1976 Teacher Registration requirements in South Australia that all teachers have adequate professional training and qualifications, ensured that it would not be easy for emergency schemes to be used again.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Signed: Date:

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Many people have contributed to the production of this thesis. Paramount, were the respondents, for without them the research process would not have commenced. Thank you to Connie, for suggesting the nature of the research and being the first participant.

Of the sixty women and men who contributed their thoughts, opinions and recollections of a period in South Australian educational history that occurred over fifty years ago, I can only express gratitude and amazement for the quality and quantity of information they offered. These men and women showed genuine interest in, and appreciated the value of my research. Many have since passed away, to take with them (apart from what they gave to this study) their knowledge and understanding of the personal and professional lives of educators in South Australia.

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