

13 July 2021

Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM
Chair
Expert Panel, Review of Quality Initial Teacher Education
Department of Education, Skills and Employment
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601

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Dear Ms Paul,

Review of Quality Initial Teacher Education

The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute written comment to the Review of Quality Initial Teacher Education.

AHISA contributed verbal comment on a number of aspects of initial teacher education (ITE) in May 2021, as part of a consultation conducted by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Since that consultation, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has published the *Teaching futures* background paper¹ to inform national policy development 'to build an effective, sustainable, supported, and high-status teacher workforce'. AHISA commends the paper to the Expert Panel to inform its deliberations.

Given the thoroughness of AITSL's research and consultation base for the *Teaching futures* policy backgrounder, in this submission we offer brief comment on two issues which pertain directly to the role of schools in ITE:

1. The practicum placement of ITE students and the challenge of teacher supply and demand
2. Graduate induction into the profession and the journey from provisional to full registration.

We comment on these issues conscious that, since 2012, there have been significant improvements to ITE in Australia following the establishment of key national frameworks for accountability and quality assurance. Most notable of these are: the development of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers; adoption of the Standards nationally by state/territory teacher registration bodies; and national accreditation of ITE courses. At the same time, it has been possible to retain diversity in pathways to achieve teaching qualifications.

The accommodation of diversity within robust accountability structures is a key strength of Australia's ITE system. It allows not only for a range of entry points for students into the ITE system, but the possibility for a range of collaborative partnerships between schools and training institutions to meet the needs of ITE students and the needs of schools, including internship arrangements.

AHISA strongly advocates for retaining and even enhancing flexibility in the ITE system, while ensuring there is commonality in the skills and attributes demonstrated by ITE graduates as described in the Professional Standards. Technological disruption to traditional modes of schooling provision has been accelerated by the exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic. To assist schools adapt and transform, it is vital that all elements of provision – including the professional development and accreditation of teachers – are evaluated according to whether they support rather than hamper this movement.

AHISA also recommends that initial steps be taken toward the development of a national approach to the training and certification of school-based teacher-mentors, which we set out in section (2) of this submission.

I welcome further inquiry on AHISA's submission. I can be contacted at our National Office on 02 6247 7300 or at Beth.Blackwood@ahisa.edu.au.

Yours faithfully,

(Ms) Beth Blackwood

AHISA Chief Executive Officer

About AHISA

AHISA Ltd is a professional association for Heads of independent schools.

The primary object of AHISA is to optimise the opportunity for the education and welfare of Australia's young people through the maintenance of collegiality and high standards of professional practice and conduct amongst its members.

AHISA's 440 members lead schools that collectively account for over 450,000 students, representing over 70 per cent of total independent sector enrolments and 11.4 per cent of total Australian school enrolments. AHISA members' schools also educate a significant proportion of senior secondary students: 20 per cent of Australia's Year 12 students attend AHISA members' schools.

AHISA's members lead a collective workforce of over 44,000 teaching staff and some 28,700 support staff.

The socio-economic profile of AHISA members' schools is diverse. Over 20 per cent of our members lead schools serving low- to very low-SES communities.

AHISA believes that a high quality schooling system in Australia depends on:

- Parents having the freedom to exercise their rights and responsibilities in regard to the education of their children
- Students and their families having the freedom to choose among diverse schooling options
- Schools having the autonomy to exercise educational leadership as they respond to the emerging needs of their communities in a rapidly changing society.

1. The practicum placement of ITE students and the challenge of determining teacher supply and demand

School leaders are aware of and accept their obligation to foster the development of pre-service teachers to the profession through the offer of supervised practical experience placements in their schools. It can be challenging for schools, however, to meet the requests of ITE providers. For example, the selection and/or release of appropriate staff to supervise and mentor ITE students can depend on timing of practicums, with some schools reluctant to release Year 11 and 12 teachers or allow ITE students to take certain senior secondary classes after Term 1. Size of school may also determine whether a school is better able to accommodate early stage ITE students who wish to simply observe rather than ITE students who need supervision, mentoring and assessment of their teaching.

In surveys undertaken for previous reviews of Australia's ITE system, AHISA members have noted their concern at the time and cost burden of catering for practicum placements for ITE students who may never secure a teaching position. While universities may benefit from filling course places that are not tied to supply and demand pressures in the workforce, schools must bear the impact of over-supply on the demand for practicum placements. This concern was raised by the Productivity Commission in its 2012 Report into the Schools Workforce²:

“... large and persistent [teacher] surpluses mean that a sizeable part of the community's investment in teacher training is providing no direct benefit to the schools workforce (though there are clearly more general benefits to the individuals and the community from their education). Further, the specific investment by schools in providing practicum for students who do not find employment is largely unproductive.” (Page 65)

AHISA has welcomed the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative as having the potential to provide the teacher supply and demand information that supports the planning and decision making of schooling providers as well as intending ITE students, ITE providers and ITE graduates.

Already, the first report issued as a result of the ATWD initiative, the *National Initial Teacher Education Pipeline: Australian Teacher Workforce Data Report 1* ('the Pipeline Report')³ suggests the initiative will generate valuable insights. For example, the Pipeline Report notes rapid declines in primary ITE completions between 2014 and 2017. This may indicate ITE students responding to reports of a 'glut' of primary-qualified teachers.⁴ Intending ITE course applicants deserve access to reliable information about their employment prospects before commencing an undergraduate teaching degree. The availability of such information should also be a determinant of the feasibility of suggestions to mount a national advertising campaign to attract high academic achievers into teaching.

AHISA looks forward to the issue of a further report, *National Teacher Workforce Characteristics: Australian Teacher Workforce Data Report 2*, due to be released this year.

AITSL's *Teaching futures* paper notes that, while work has begun to collate and link workforce data held by state and territory teacher regulatory authorities, significant data gaps remain. AHISA recognises that amassing and analysing the significant amount of data involved is not a simple task. We suggest, however, that consideration be given to commissioning specific research projects to augment the work underway as part of the ATWD initiative. For example, surveys similar to the Staff in Australia's Schools surveys commissioned by the federal

Department of Education and conducted in 2007, 2010 and 2013⁵ could build on jurisdictions' data and help provide information on teachers' intentions to leave the profession as well as on a range of other employment factors, including 'other duties'⁶ and teacher mobility.

AHISA's 2020 member survey on staff recruitment, retention and turnover found that the three most common reasons for the departure of teaching/academic staff in the preceding year given by respondents in schools with a turnover rate at or below 9 per cent were 'job offer in another school', followed by 'retirement' and then 'family relocation'.

This finding reflects national data from the 2013 Staff in Australia's Schools (SiAS) survey. Drawing on responses to the 2013 SiAS survey of school leaders, the 2014 National Teaching Workforce Dataset Data Analysis Report noted that the most common destination reported for teachers leaving their school in 2012 was 'Relocation within same sector and jurisdiction', followed by 'Retirement'. According to the Report (page 85), some 29 per cent of primary and secondary teachers who left their school in 2012 moved to another school within the same sector and jurisdiction. This suggests there may be significant teacher mobility between jurisdictions that is not captured by data collected within jurisdictions.

Now that amendments to the Commonwealth *Mutual Recognition Act 1992* have passed into law, more comprehensive data on teacher mobility may be helpful to encourage states and territories to align their teacher registration requirements more closely, which in turn may support the mobility of ITE graduates, especially those who have undertaken online courses offered by providers in a jurisdiction different to their place of residence.

While ITE providers, individual schools and employers are all powerful influences on the quality of initial teacher education, the influence of teacher registration bodies must also be recognised: The point at which pathways into teaching meet the gateway to the profession is teacher registration.

A recommendation of the National Review of Teacher Registration was that 'a national strategy be developed and implemented to ensure national consistency in the judgements made about whether teachers meet the Proficient career stage of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, in the provisional to full registration process'.⁷ AHISA supports this recommendation. If implemented, such a strategy would establish a strong platform for the development of a national approach to the training and certification of teacher-mentors, which we discuss in the following section.

2. Graduate induction into the profession and the journey from provisional to full registration

While there is considerable variance in what is understood as induction (for example, the term is sometimes used to refer to a graduate's orientation within a specific school context, a process which teachers of any level of experience and new to a school might expect), it is now increasingly common to see the term used in relation to a graduate's journey from provisional to full registration. This latter approach is adopted by AITSL in its publication, *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession*⁸, which has informed jurisdictions' frameworks and guides for the induction/mentoring of ITE graduates in schools.⁹

The development of national teacher induction guidelines has helped principals define the responsibilities of schools and ITE graduates in the move from Graduate to Proficient status. The guidelines also give some clarity to school leaders on their role in establishing, implementing and evaluating induction models. Importantly, the guidelines establish common ground for discussions between graduates and employers on the conditions of their employment and the assistance graduates can expect to receive in meeting Proficient status. The guidelines also establish the contribution of mentoring to graduate professional development.

2a The case for teacher-mentors in schools

In 2015, national Australian principals' associations were asked to prepare papers on aspects of teacher preparation for a project related to outcomes of a review conducted by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG). AHISA was invited to prepare a paper on mentoring.

In its paper AHISA discussed the issue of mentoring in relation to improving practicum placements and teacher induction, and to assisting in on-going teacher professional development. In interviews conducted in preparation for the TEMAG project paper, AHISA members reported that mentoring and/or observation and feedback are considered successful models for professional development of teachers at all stages in their careers.

Among AHISA's members' schools there is increasing adoption of peer-to-peer models of teacher professional learning such as learning circles, 'action research' programs and peer observation models, including pedagogical rounds and learning walks. Peer-to-peer models promote collaborative professional learning, which can help embed new and/or improved practices far more readily than attendance at external professional development courses. Trained teacher-mentors are seen as enriching this process.

AHISA's 2015 paper noted that a system of trained teacher-mentors in schools also has the potential to support alternative pathways into teaching, for example for career-change professionals, including practitioners in the visual and performing arts or from VET-related industries, and for those in targeted areas of teacher shortage, including native speakers of languages other than English, or with a background in physics and chemistry or higher level mathematics.

The introduction of Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) arrangements for ITE students suggests a further benefit of teacher-mentors: to assist ITE students on practicum placements develop and demonstrate the attributes and skills to be assessed.

In recognition that promoting the training of teacher-mentors could have significant impact on ITE students' success in negotiating pathways into the profession and on overall teaching quality by assisting all teachers at critical points in their career pathways, AHISA made the following points in its 2015 paper:

- School-based mentors are the most appropriate model for maximising the effectiveness of school-based practical experience for a range of programs (such as clinical teacher education programs) and for particular stages of ITE students' development, as well as to support the ongoing professional learning of graduates and experienced teachers.
- Mentoring of ITE students on practicum placement signals a greater commitment of time and expertise to students on the part of schools and teachers than supervision, and demands specialist training for the mentor.
- Selection of mentors should recognise that mentors need to be outstanding adult educators, not just outstanding child and adolescent educators.
- The selection, training and support of teacher-mentors demand a considerable commitment of time and financial resources from schools.

The potential of teacher-mentors to contribute to school-based professional development and the overall quality of teaching in Australian schools indicates that a national approach to the training and certification of teacher-mentors is warranted.

2b Steps toward a national teacher-mentor training and certification scheme

As noted above, it is AHISA's view that school-based teacher-mentors are the most appropriate model to gain maximum impact of mentoring on the profession as a whole, as well as to address the needs of ITE students and graduates. This is not to say that ITE providers do not have a role in coaching of their students or of school-based teacher-mentors where the provider has an internship arrangement with schools.

In selecting school staff for mentoring roles, it is AHISA's view that Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) certification is not the most efficient means to encourage experienced teachers to train and practice as teacher-mentors. Not all jurisdictions make HALT certification available as yet; further, it is unlikely – at least in the near future – that the number of certified HALTs would be sufficient to address the demand for mentoring among ITE students and graduates, and also contribute to the professional development of Proficient teachers.

If teacher-mentor certification need not signify advancement to a new pay scale, this would serve as an encouragement to employers to bear the still considerable cost of time-release for training of the teacher-mentor and then time-release for mentoring of ITE students on practicum placement, of graduates and of peers. That is, it could help quickly increase the number of teacher-mentors and therefore their impact on teaching quality. Teacher-mentor certification could also be recognised as a pre-requisite and therefore an encouragement to undertaking HALT accreditation.

A further consideration is the increasing demand for work flexibility among teachers.⁹ Teacher-mentor certification should be a viable option for teachers who do not want or who are unable to work full-time, or teachers who do not wish to seek HALT certification, yet who are still attracted by the opportunity to contribute to the profession through mentoring of pre-service teachers, graduates or peers, or who might wish to undertake a mentoring certification course simply to improve their reflection on their own practice.

There is value in a nationally consistent approach to the training and certification of teacher-mentors:

- As with accreditation of ITE providers, accreditation of teacher-mentor training courses gives assurance to those undertaking the courses as well as their future mentees
- Accreditation recognises the importance of the contribution of teacher-mentors to the profession
- Consistency in mentoring approaches supports Teacher Performance Assessments
- Consistency in mentoring education and certification assists recognition of teacher-mentor training courses as professional development counting toward teachers' re-registration requirements.

As initial steps toward a national approach to the training and certification of teacher-mentors, AHISA suggests:

1. A review of teacher-mentor training and certification already offered in Australia, and their supporting standards or frameworks and tools/resources. For example, the Victorian Department of Education and Training's Effective Mentoring Programs encompasses a two-day mentoring course as well as online modules and is supported by a Mentoring Capability Framework¹⁰; Queensland University of Technology offers an online certificate course, *Mentoring Beginning Teachers*, rated for 13 hours of certified professional development.¹¹
2. A review of international teacher-mentor training and certification programs and/or related standards, tools or resources and any evidence of their impact. For example, see Washington State Standards for Mentoring and related resources for mentors¹² and the non-statutory national standards for school-based initial teacher training mentors developed by The Teaching Schools Council in the United Kingdom.¹³ (It is worth noting that the Teacher Registration Board of South Australia commissioned such a review in 2016-17.¹⁴)
3. Development of draft standards for Australian teacher-mentors for consultation among ITE providers and the profession.
4. Identification of resources or tools for teacher-mentors that could be developed nationally and existing resources or tools that could be linked via a dedicated page on AITSL's website. ■

NOTES

- ¹ AITSL (2021); accessed at [https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/ait1793_teaching-futures_fa\(web-interactive\).pdf?sfvrsn=d6f5d93c_4](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/ait1793_teaching-futures_fa(web-interactive).pdf?sfvrsn=d6f5d93c_4)
- ² Productivity Commission (2012) *Schools workforce*. Research report, accessed at <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/education-workforce-schools/report>.
- ³ AITSL (2020); accessed at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/atwdreports>
- ⁴ A collection of newspaper article links and related comments relating to teacher 'gluts', 2009-2016, is available at <https://www.theteachersareblowingtheirwhistles.com/therearenojobs.htm>.
- ⁵ Staff in Australia's Schools survey reports can be accessed at <https://www.dese.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/school-teacher-workforce-data-reports>.
- ⁶ The category 'other duties' was noted in the 2014 National Teacher Workforce Dataset Data Analysis Report as one for which no data was collected by employing authorities; see https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/ntwd_data_analysis_report.pdf.
- ⁷ AITSL (2018) *One teaching profession: Teacher registration in Australia*; accessed at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/national-review-of-teacher-registration>.
- ⁸ AITSL (2018 edition); accessed at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/graduate-to-proficient-australian-guidelines-for-teacher-induction-into-the-profession>.
- ⁹ Pfeiffer T (2017) 'Staff welfare: A critical management issue for independent school leaders' in *Independence*, Vol 32(1), May 2017, pp 32-35; accessed at <https://independence.partica.online/independence/independence-vol-42-no-1-may-2017/flipbook/36/>.
- ¹⁰ See for example, the Victorian Department of Education and Training's *Mentoring Capability Framework*, accessed at <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/mentoringcapabilityframework.pdf>, and *Principal and school leader guide to induction of graduate teachers*, accessed at <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/Principalandschoolleaderguidetoinductionofgraduateteachers.pdf>.
- ¹¹ Accessed at <https://www.qut.edu.au/study/professional-and-executive-education/courses/mentoring-beginning-teachers>.
- ¹² Accessed at <https://www.k12.wa.us/educator-support/beginning-educator-support-team/washington-state-standards-mentoring>.
- ¹³ Accessed at http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofsocialsciencesandinternationalstudies/education/partnership/primary/Mentor_standards.pdf.
- ¹⁴ The report of the review is available at <https://www.trb.sa.edu.au/sites/default/files/PdfDocuments/TRB-Induction-and-Mentoring-Report-June-2018.pdf>.