

Dear Ms Lisa Paul and members of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review,

I am writing to you as a Gifted Education Coordinator.

Many different government enquiries have considered gifted education and reported on the need for initial teacher education to include a compulsory unit on gifted education. Some of these include:

- Report by the Senate Select Committee on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children 1988,
- Senate Inquiry into the Education of the Gifted and Talented 2001, amongst its hearings found:

“The main theme that emerged in the inquiry is the need for better teacher training (both preservice and inservice) so that teachers are better able to identify the gifted and make provision for their special needs. Better curriculum support is also essential so that teachers can differentiate the curriculum for the gifted.”

- Productivity Commission Research Report, Schools Workforce, April 2012, which reported:

*it is also important to recognise the learning needs of gifted and talented students who have the potential to ...“
(p268) “excel beyond the achievements of an average student*

Despite all these inquiries, reports, and findings there is still no inclusion of a compulsory unit on gifted education included in initial teacher training. The AITSL teaching standards do not include gifted students anywhere. They are a missing piece of the classroom puzzle.

This issue is of personal interest to me because I am a teacher overseeing Gifted & Talent Development programs in my school. I have studied Gifted Education at the Masters level. I have taught 'Language in Education' to pre teachers at The University of Melbourne and spent four years in my school in partnership with The University of Melbourne implementing 'Assessment for Learning'. My observations over the past twenty years have consistently reinforced the sad fact that teachers are ignorant of the learning needs of gifted students. There appears to be very little professional development available for pre teachers and this is having a detrimental impact on students. While differentiation is acknowledged and Vygotsky's theories explored, teachers do not know how to implement these theories in practice. While most teachers can teach to the middle and schools have quality support programs for students with disabilities, curriculum structures that target gifted students are rare. In particular, students who are twice exceptional, (gifted and have a disability) who are misunderstood. The disability is the focus rather than understanding that the characteristics of giftedness and disabilities such as anxiety are interrelated. I am seeing more gifted students 'overexcitabilities' emerge as anxiety often escalating due to a lack of knowledge about gifted students.

Quality teaching, and thus a quality education for gifted students is primarily met by teachers in mainstream classrooms. It is essential for teachers during initial teacher training to develop an understanding in the needs of gifted students and the appropriate pedagogies and identification processes so that can provide a rigorous, engaging learning experience when they start classroom teaching.

I urge you to make a unit of study in gifted education compulsory in all initial teaching programs across Australia.

Yours faithfully,
Jullianne Brookman