



SUBMISSION: QUALITY INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION REVIEW DISCUSSION PAPER

19 JULY 2021

1. Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP) makes this submission to the Expert Panel undertaking the Quality Teacher Education Review (Review) for Minister Tudge, Australian Government Minister for Education and Youth.
2. The submission is in response to the Discussion Paper released in June 2021. Our submission is informed by a range of perspectives across CEDP including first and second year teachers, Principals, Directors and leaders.

INTRODUCTION

3. CEDP is a system of 80 faith-based schools in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains in NSW. CEDP educates over 43,500 students and employs almost 5,000 staff. Over the last five years CEDP has employed on average 170 Beginning Teachers each year.
4. We value the opportunity to contribute to the Review and appreciate there are some important questions raised in the Discussion Paper. However, we believe that these questions are premised on the wrong premise as the construct is based on the current outdated education model. The paper is also silent on the significant Vocational and Tertiary Education (VET) pathways in school, the numerous recent reviews into VET at Federal and State levels and the way that VET is taught.
5. The questions we should be asking are:
 - 5.1. What is the nature of learning and teaching and the role of the teacher in today's world?
 - 5.2. How does the current model fit with our current understanding?
 - 5.3. How does the current model inhibit our future understanding?
6. We need a cultural change in the narrative, where we stop talking about improvement and focus on transformation. We need to stop talking about 'schools of

the future' and create schools for now. The model of schooling requires a complete overhaul. The challenge is to be agents of change, be innovative, have the courage to make bold decisions and be unfettered by the restrictions of the existing models. Innovative thinking and cross-functional approaches are imperative.

7. We elaborate below on the transformation required and the current model's inhibitions to achieve what is needed in teaching and learning. We then discuss issues raised in the Discussion Paper's questions in more detail.

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

8. CEDP has been moving away from an improvement model of schooling to a transformation model. Improvement is about accepting and enhancing an old model of learning and is limited to building on the existing structures of schooling, which are no longer fit for purpose.
9. The CEDP schooling framework is founded on a pre-to-post learning continuum. Rather than breaking up schooling into pre-school, primary, secondary and post-school categories—which can perpetuate a silo mentality—this framework acknowledges learning as a continuum, a seamless learning experience from early years to post-school that is informed by best practice, research and evidence. Quality teachers are key to delivery of this continuum.
10. Each CEDP school is encouraged to reimagine how learning occurs based on local context. Schools network with other schools as co-constructors, collaborators and critical friends. Schools engage with business and tertiary providers, who can provide richer experiences that deepen student insights and improve their skills. The transformation model puts the personal learning growth of each child and teacher at the heart of schooling. We cannot create the innovative new roles needed (learning coach, mentor etc) because of barriers constructed by the education system's adherence to an outdated model.
11. Students require skills that allow them to adapt to the changing nature of the world and work. These skills include critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration. We need to constantly build both teacher and student capabilities. This is not being done in any systematic way in the current model: tinkering around the edges and building on more of the same will have limited success.

12. Significantly, transformation is not captured within a finite time or defined boundaries: it is always evolving and adapting. We should not be striving to find one alternative model to the entrenched industrial model. Rather, we need to *trust teachers and schools to create multiple ways of doing it better.*
13. In AECOM's 2019 article, [Skills 2030:Securing the talent to build our future infrastructure](#), the authors' proposed skills manifesto for creating an engineer of the future is insightful and delineates the challenge we have. Their "call to action" is compelling:
 - *Break with tradition: if the way we've always done things isn't delivering the results we need, then more radical change is essential*
 - *Talk honestly: We need to uncover and address the unconscious biases and assumptions that currently go unspoken*
 - *Check your privilege: just because you don't see a problem, it doesn't mean a problem does not exist. We need to look again and think again.*
14. Standardised models of schools do not support teachers in innovative practice or give them the flexibility, control and trust they need and should have as professionals. Teachers are micro-managed and effectiveness and efficacy are pre-determined by school structures. The current model does not inspire people to join the profession, either as school graduates or career changers. Instead, it entrenches a low perception of the teaching profession.
15. Education should be about more than preparing good employees for particular jobs. Instead of cultivating creativity in students and teachers, standardised curricula and tests stifle the entrepreneurial spirit of students, de-motivate teachers and discourage innovation. Under the current model, students and teachers will be ill-prepared for a future that is constantly changing.

ATTRACTING HIGH-QUALITY CANDIDATES TO INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

16. **Current inhibitors**
 - 16.1. Teachers are generally poorly regarded and compensated. The Government's current failure to prioritise the COVID-19 vaccine for teachers is a pertinent example and in stark contrast to other developed and progressive countries. Our beginning teachers report feeling undervalued in the eyes of society. There are many adjunct positions in the education system that are less onerous and require fewer qualifications and yet are paid more highly

than teachers, and in some cases, principals (eg. HR positions, project management roles etc).

- 16.2. While some teachers feel part of a rich intellectual culture and supported to pursue further learning and opportunities, this is not always the norm. Whilst we are not advocates of the HSC or ATARS, they currently exist and students and their parents are well aware of the low ATAR entry marks for entering into teaching degrees in some universities - particularly our Catholic universities. High quality candidates want to be surrounded by other high quality candidates. They want to learn with other smart and motivated students and move into a profession that values and further develops those attributes. The perception is that universities with low ATAR entry requirements will have low quality candidates.
- 16.3. Teaching is relational, intellectual and creative work. This is not emphasised in the recruitment of candidates into the profession. For some students selecting the teaching profession is based on a perception that the job is from 9-3, has great holidays and they do not have to work too hard. These are the teachers who leave the profession after a year or two.
- 16.4. The Discussion Paper refers to only 39% of entrants to degrees having an ATAR of 80 or more. These entrants are also the students more likely to complete their degrees. Clearly universities continually lowering the ATAR is not the answer. It does not achieve higher completion rates in degrees or ensure we have a diverse, intellectually rigorous and diverse profession.
- 16.5. The profession lacks cultural and professional diversity. There is a narrow traditional concept of what constitutes a teacher. It ignores how teaching in the classroom can be a partnership with other highly skilled and knowledgeable professions and industries. It does not encourage people from different cultures to join the profession, as their experiences and the nuances of their individual and community ways of knowing and learning are not always well understood or appreciated. The structures, including funding and Enterprise Agreements, wrapped around teacher entry, course and training requirements and subsequent professional life are significant obstacles.
- 16.6. Current models of schooling, including our own, inculcates rigidity, inflexibility, agency, poor intellectual rigour and a lack of innovation in a teacher's day.

They demand teachers have boundless energy, devotion, commitment, goodwill but micro-manage them and overload them with compliance. None of these are attractive to the onlooker or a potential teacher.

17. Imperatives

- 17.1. We need to make the teaching profession prestigious with aspirants competing for entry as we see in other countries such as Finland. A systematic focus on celebrating the achievements of teachers is needed.
- 17.2. The Government and universities should provide fully funded Commonwealth Supported Places for teaching for candidates with at least an ATAR of 90, combined with a robust assessment of a personal application. In subject areas where there are teacher shortages, offering scholarships combined with guaranteed employment are likely to entice high quality applicants.
- 17.3. The issue is not about reducing the two year Masters postgraduate teaching qualification. We need employment based pathways, not necessarily accelerated pathways. It is about a student's propensity for learning bundled with employment pathways and funding to complete their degrees. An employment pathway may look like a higher apprenticeship or a paid Teacher Aide's position while students are completing their degree.
- 17.4. We need to address how we bring other disciplines into schools to work with teachers in the classroom. The expectation that teachers should be an expert in everything is flawed. The better construct is to transform the design of learning and how we remove the structural barriers, including obstacles in Enterprise Agreements. We need teams of specialists in schools actively participating in student learning.
- 17.5. We suggest psychometric screening (with proper adjustments for cultural and language diversity), an interview process and passing the literacy and numeracy test currently conducted with initial teachers should be undertaken before offers for entry. The extension of TCAT (Teacher Capability Assessment Tool (Melb Uni)) or adaptation of ACER's Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT) could be considered to support the identification of the best suited teaching candidates. It is good to see that this is on the agenda.

- 17.6. It is critical that the profession welcomes more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Fully funded degrees and guaranteed employment for them is essential. However, this will not be enough initially as it will take time to overcome their justified fear and distrust of institutions. We need to have more schools that are established in partnership with and co-designed with Aboriginal communities and ultimately transferred to Aboriginal leadership, that employ all or mostly all Aboriginal staff who work in ways with non-Aboriginal colleagues to deliver a curriculum that honours Aboriginal ways of knowing. The Government could provide establishment grants for existing systems or schools to partner with their local Aboriginal communities to embark on this endeavour.
- 17.7. Our student populations consist of significant numbers of migrants, including refugees. We should apply the same partnership and co-design approach with migrant communities.

PREPARING ITE STUDENTS TO BE EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

18. Readiness of graduate teachers for the classroom

- 18.1. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Standards) codify teaching practice with 37 descriptors. They name the relevant parts of teaching practice and are not an issue. It takes time and practice to develop in each of these descriptors. A graduate teacher is at the beginning of this learning journey. Without sustained opportunities in schools to develop practice in the areas of the 37 standard descriptors, it is difficult for graduate teachers to be “ready” to teach.
- 18.2. Whilst the Standards emphasise the need and opportunity for reflective practice, this is lacking in many due to time constraints in schools, lack of priority for these in timetables and insufficient mentoring. It needs to be routine in schools and not sidelined. This is particularly the case for Beginning Teachers. During their journey towards proficient accreditation, they should be on a reduced face-to face-teaching load enabling them to shadow more experienced teachers and to systematically reflect on their practice with mentors.
- 18.3. Schools are populated with diverse cohorts of students. Western Sydney has one of the most diverse student populations. Graduates need to be prepared

for teaching diverse student cohorts, not just the mainstream middle class. Students need practical experience in diverse contexts, immersed in the culture and mentored. They will be far better equipped to meet the challenges after graduation.

- 18.4. Initial education students need innovative patterns of study and paid practical immersion experiences throughout their degrees, not undertaking block practical teaching components at significant cost to the student.
 - 18.5. Systematic mentorship is needed for initial teacher education students in their final year of study. The majority of their time in the final year should be in school. For example, they could be placed in a school for four days a week and complete one day of study at university.
 - 18.6. Practicum experiences need to be anchored in what a teacher's work actually involves. Initial teacher education students need to be able to engage in all aspects of the work (e.g. parent relationships, report writing, assessment, marking). Without getting the full picture of the work, students may not understand the demands of the role or build some experience in it before commencing as a Beginning Teacher.
 - 18.7. Employers, regulatory authorities and universities must explore ways of supporting supervision of initial teacher education practical students as part of their mandatory professional learning and research.
19. **Role of teachers and schools supporting the next teaching generation**
- 19.1. Highly Accomplished or Lead Teachers (HALTs) are crucial to ensure we build the capacity and growth of our future generation of teachers. We need to celebrate and value their expertise. Schools must support them to become sage mentors with time for preparation and mentoring not relegated to a meal break or slotted in around the edges of a school day when time permits. Schools should be funded to provide release time for experienced teachers to supervise practical students and mentor graduates. In theory they should already be providing quality mentoring, but this has not been fully realised in some schools due to these issues.
 - 19.2. HALTs need the opportunity in schools to lead developmental pathways for teachers within their schools. They should have formally allocated time to

mentor aspiring HALTS, initial teacher education students and beginning teachers. They need a reduced teaching load to do this work. Further, the focus on achieving HALT accreditation is on completing prescriptive regulatory paperwork that is checked by authorities who do not have HALT qualifications. It is the wrong focus.

- 19.3. Schools need embedded processes for peer-to-peer conversations, reflective conversations and shared lines of inquiry. If HALTs can engage in action research and inquiry in schools, together with enhanced meaningful mentoring, it will build intellectual rigour and demonstrate there are highly regarded and fulfilling pathways for teachers within schools. Becoming a HALT should not be for a select few. Every teacher should have the potential, opportunity and support to be a HALT.
- 19.4. Undergraduate teachers should be supported through their study through part-time, parallel employment as Teachers Aides/Assistant, allowing them time to develop capabilities in the school/classroom context. This would enable an undergraduate time to acquire context specific knowledge, build social capacity and apply their study to the school context. We see that graduate teachers actively seek skills in behaviour management, differentiation (dealing with diversity), reporting to and partnering with parents and being able to seek accreditation at the proficiency level. Active engagement in schools throughout their study would support the acquisition of “on-the-job” skills.
- 19.5. Secondary schools, with the support of tertiary providers, could create a pathway to teaching from Year 9 onwards through micro-credentialing of courses designed around the attributes of social/service careers (including medicine, etc).

If you require further information or wish to discuss this submission, please contact CEDP’s Director of Learning, Maura Manning, or me on (02) 9840 5600.

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