

Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Submission

As a year twelve student who achieved an ATAR of 92 and had always had a keen interest in pursuing a career in education, I was a prime example of the sort of high achieving student universities and the government are wanting to enter initial teacher education. Even as many around me, including my own teachers, encouraged me to aim for a “better” job, I decided I wanted to be an educator.

Beginning my study in 2017 after a gap year, I was motivated to begin learning how to be an educator, excited by the prospect of having my own classroom in four years’ time. However, as I moved throughout my degree I found myself becoming increasingly disillusioned with my career choice before it had even begun. I constantly questioned whether I wanted to be a teacher up until the final semester of my degree where I decided to pursue a Masters of Speech Pathology rather than seek a graduate teaching position. Whilst there were many factors both internal and external that influenced my decision, below are some of the most influential:

- ITE is often disengaging with limited learning that seems readily applicable to real life contexts;
- Limited practicum experience;
- Limited access to professionals working within the field rather than just academics;
- Increased workload of teachers unrelated to direct classroom teaching;
- Lack of support for educators from leadership;
- Broader society’s negative views and attitudes towards educators;
- Feeling inadequately prepared to be a teacher;
- Limited autonomy and bureaucratic red tape surrounding curriculum;
- Limited financial and employment security.

Reflecting upon these factors it is clear to me that some possible changes to ITE might have assisted me to stay in education. The most likely change would be to increase the amount of time preservice teachers spend within classrooms. The current requirement of 80 days is far too low and does not provide the insight and practice that it should. I believe preservice teachers should be within classrooms each semester, whether observing or teaching. This could also be complemented by increasing connections school based teachers currently working within the field to provide useful teaching opportunities to preservice teachers. I learnt much more from my placement supervisors than I did from academic staff who have not set foot in a classroom for twenty years. Furthermore, there also needs to be a greater focus on the pedagogy and classroom management that matters in the classroom. Currently, graduate teachers are leaving ITE with no real idea on how to teach children the basics; we had never really been explicitly taught how to teach a child to read, do addition and subtraction, or improve their writing. We also had no real idea of behaviour management strategies that actually work before being thrown into graduate roles requiring the management of increasingly complex student behaviours and parent/carer demands. Put simply, ITE did not adequately prepare us for teaching.

Reflecting upon my experience now it is apparent that an overhaul of ITE is required in Australia. High achieving young people are unlikely to seek careers in education when society is constantly decrying educators and teachers themselves are quitting in hoards. Increasing the salaries of teachers across their

careers would be an important first step in interesting more school leavers to consider a career in teaching but this does require an improvement in the quality of teachers. However, this improvement in quality cannot occur if preservice teachers are not receiving a quality university education that aptly prepares them for their careers. By improving ITE and incorporating more opportunities for practicum and explicit learning surrounding key curriculum such as literacy and numeracy, it is likely the quality of teachers would improve, teacher turnover would reduce, rises in salaries would be justified and more young people would consider respected careers as educators.