

Submission to Quality Initial Teacher Education Review, July 2021.

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RE: Response to QITP Review Discussion Paper PART B – Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers

I have been teaching in Western Australian schools since 1990 in a variety of contexts. Most of my experiences have been with students from years one to four and students with learning difficulties. In the last ten years I have sought opportunities to mentor university students on their teaching practicum placements. I am currently mentoring five of our staff members who graduated from teacher training in 2019 and 2020. Through my experiences with new and preparing teachers I have formed the opinion that their training has not prepared them for the diverse learning needs of students.

For some years now the numbers of diagnosed learning and behavioural disorders have been increasing year by year. Australian research reported in 2000 that teachers report between 10% and 16% of students had some kind of learning difficulty that required some modification or support in the classroom¹. The Education Department of WA's Annual Report for 2019 reported that 20.8% of students required some kind of modification to enable inclusion and attributed the higher rate to an increase in the diagnosis of ASD².

When I graduated, my first teaching placement was in an early childhood unit delivering remedial reading programs for year one students. My training had not prepared me for this task. It had not covered any theory or practice on the how to address the need of students experiencing difficulties while learning to read. My second position was as a classroom teacher at a language development centre, an education support school for children with developmental language disorder. At the time, I was unaware of the disorder or how to support these students. All of my knowledge about DLD, ADHD, ASD, and specific learning disorders such as Dyslexia has been acquired as a response to having children with these disorders in the classroom. My postgraduate training has been focused on learning and behavioural disorders so that I could be certain that I was doing all I could for these students.

As I mentor pre-service and graduate teachers, much time is dedicated to directing them toward professional reading on the variety of learning difficulties students face, how to recognise them and cater for them in an inclusive manner. They do not know how to write an individual learning or behaviour plan. They do not know how to adjust their language, teaching strategies and classroom management to be inclusive of these students. They do not know what accommodations can be given to these students. They do not understand how to extend high-achieving students, or that gifted students disengage when there is a lack of challenge in their learning. They do not understand the strong correlation between well-being and the ability to learn. They experience high levels of stress because they are

faced with a classroom full of challenges they were never taught to expect. They often comment to me that they 'wish they had been taught this in their training'.

Furthermore, I find it more disturbing that many of the experienced teachers I work with have the same knowledge gap. There is no expectation that teachers upskill themselves in inclusive practices other than statements within the teacher standards. I believe that some states are introducing requirements that a mandated percentage of the required professional development hours be on inclusive education. So not only does initial teacher training need to include such training, but ongoing training in inclusive education should be expected nationwide.

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to contribute to this review.

¹Louden, W., Chan, L., Elkins, J., Greaves, D., House, H., Milton, M., Nichols, S., Rivalland, J., Rohl, M., & van Kraayennoord, C. (2000). *Mapping the territory, primary students with learning difficulties: Literacy and numeracy, Vol. 1, 2, & 3*. Department of Education, Training, & Youth Affairs: Canberra, ACT.

²Education Department of Western Australia Annual Report 2018-2019. p32. Retrieved from <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/kx163j>