

Let me introduce myself. I am a well-qualified mathematician (PhD) with extensive experience in academia and industry who recently decided to enter the secondary teaching profession. At my age this decision was not taken lightly; I was born in 1948. I completed the MTeach (Secondary) at Deakin University in 2019 and since then I have been teaching mathematics in schools in Bendigo on short-term contracts.

On the basis of this experience, let me suggest the following model for preparing prospective teachers for a career in teaching.

The standard preparation for a teacher (in early education, or primary education, or secondary education) should be a university degree followed by a Master of Teaching; e.g. BA MTeach, or BSc MTeach.

The suitability of candidates for the teaching profession could be readily assessed by their overall performance across these five years of study. Indeed, prospective teachers themselves will know whether they are suited to teaching by then.

Consequently, four-year, undergraduate education courses would be discontinued. This will allow schools of education in universities to concentrate on preparing prospective teachers who are mature university graduates, with expertise in their own disciplines, and keen to teach in our schools. Graduate schools of education will be smaller, more focussed entities.

The MTeach degree would have streams for early education or primary or secondary education. The debate about ATARs required for teaching will evaporate because students will enter education courses after completing a university degree. The LANTITE test could be abolished.

Some argue that a nine-month graduate diploma would suffice as in days gone by, rather than a two-year MTeach. One only has to look at the usual selection criteria for teaching jobs to see that school teaching has become much more complex in recent decades. Although one cannot learn everything about a career in a university course, the increased complexity of teaching demands more preparation than in the past. There's more to being a mathematics teacher than teaching mathematics.

To complement the proposed model, university departments in discipline areas (e.g. mathematics, English, psychology, and the sciences) should offer subjects that will be of particular value to prospective teachers. Just as the mathematics department in a university will offer subjects that will be useful in engineering, so too should it offer subjects that will be useful in teaching. To develop such subjects, academics in these departments should be familiar with what happens in schools. Most importantly, during their undergraduate studies, prospective teachers should develop the capacity to absorb and assess new developments that will appear in the curriculum during their teaching careers.

Much has been said about out-of-field teaching. Principals should play a key role in ensuring that they appoint teachers who are well-qualified. They should look closely at the academic records of applicants. For example, an applicant with a degree in science may not be qualified to teach biology, chemistry, and physics, let alone mathematics. A graduate with a degree in mathematics may have never studied statistics.

The model proposes a straightforward approach to entering the teaching profession.