RUN Response to Quality Initial Teacher Education Discussion Paper

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) provides the following submission in response to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Discussion paper.

Some general observations on issues raised in the discussion paper are:

- Teacher education should not be looked at in isolation, but as being part of a broader environment and in relation to the evidence base.

  - Both Singapore and Finland, identified as models for teacher education in the discussion paper, have high requirements for entry to initial teacher education (ITE) programs. However, unlike the situation in Australia, teaching in these countries is a high-status profession, and teachers are highly respected by and in the community. In Singapore in particular teachers are highly paid, and in service teachers are provided with extensive and ongoing professional development.

  - A detailed analysis of Finnish and Singaporean teacher preparation programs, in service and ongoing professional development programs, teacher salary scales, teaching conditions and status of teachers in the countries would provide a clear picture of similarities and differences to Australia.

  Related evidence base:

  - Aspects of Finnish teacher training have been examined from the teacher candidate's perspective. For example, Puustinen, M Säntti, J, Koski, A and Tammi, T (2018) analysed teacher training in Finland focussing on the key concepts of Teacher as a Researcher and the Personal Practical Theory.
    - Their results indicate that teacher students: find these concepts unclear; are not always able to connect the theoretical parts of their studies with practice; and indicate a need for more practical education. Subject teacher candidates in particular, who come from other academic cultures, might consider these concepts educational jargon that have no substance.
    - The authors note this 'challenges the claim that Finnish teacher education has resolved the demanding relationship between theory and practice'.

  - A comprehensive study by Ingvarson and Rowley (2017) provides a comparative analysis of quality assurance arrangements in Teacher Education and Development study in Mathematics in 17 countries, including Singapore.

- Among other areas, this work reviews research studies related to 'each of the three key decision points in assuring the quality of beginning teachers: who gains entry to teacher education, who can provide teacher education programs, and who gains certification and full entry to the teaching profession' (p. 179).

  o Darling-Hammond (2017) examines teacher education policies and practices of well-developed systems in Australia (Victoria and New South Wales), Canada (Alberta and Ontario), Finland and Singapore and the United States in the context of recruitment, preparation, induction, ongoing professional development and collective improvement of practice.
    - Among other things, Darling Hammond notes excellent Australian programs that are offering high-quality initial teacher preparation and are innovating in interesting ways.
    - She also states that 'recurring themes for improvement in nearly all of these countries include strengthening connections between theory and practice and developing teachers' capacities to teach diverse learners, as nations deal with growing immigration and growing expectations of teachers', p 299.

- Many of the recommendations being implemented from the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) review have been rolled out for a relatively short period (four years), and it is still too early to determine their impact/success.

- The majority of students enrolling into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs in RUN universities are mature-age and do not enter with an ATAR. Most go on to work in regional, rural and remote Australia and are critical to school education outside metropolitan areas.

Our response to the consultation questions follows.

- **What can be done to attract more high-achievers and career changers to the profession?**

  • Ultimately, the attraction of higher performing student rests on the esteem in which the profession of teaching is held. This is a matter for the Federal and state/territory governments who need to take action to improve the status of teaching as a profession, and the pay for experienced teachers.

  • Strategic initiatives targeted to both undergraduate and graduate entry levels would assist in attracting more high achieving school leavers, including provision of attractive scholarships and bonding schemes for work, and specific initiatives in STEM disciplines. This would help to provide reassurance, including to know that university fees are paid and a job is guaranteed at the end, particularly for "first in family" students, whose families may not be familiar with universities and employment likelihood.

  • Internships to support and mentor beginning teachers, with employers incorporating interns as classified teaching positions, would provide enhanced opportunities to expand their theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

- A wider repertoire of pathways into teaching may suit candidates from different backgrounds and career stages and would respond to concerns around support for transitioning into the classroom as well as career pathways and progression (see below).

- **What factors influence the higher education course selection of high-performing school students?**

  - A range of factors influence school students' course choices including passion/interest, employment prospects, salary, career opportunities, role models and awareness factors like attendance at career/open days, costs of course and so on.

  - The low status of the teaching profession in general, including salaries being unattractive for experienced teachers, lack of opportunities for promotion/career paths, and negative rhetoric around teaching are a disincentive for many students to enrol in ITE courses.

  - In general, there is an expectation that people with high ATARs will choose other more in demand/high status courses, and a perception that students in ITE have low literacy and numeracy.

  - The majority of preservice teachers in RUN ITE programs are not ATAR eligible. Many are mature age. The ATAR is an overly simplistic predictor of teacher quality when applied to a small percentage of entrants to ITE programs.

- **What features of the current ITE system may prevent high-quality mid- to late-career professionals transitioning to teaching? Has the move to a two-year masters affected your decision to enter ITE?**

  - A wider repertoire of pathways into teaching may suit candidates from different backgrounds and career stages.

  - Many postgraduate ITE programs are compressed to eighteen months, rather than two years, which provides a faster transition option for mature age entrants.

  - Federal and state funded models provide additional resources and incentives to attract aspiring teachers, but these need to be researched for their sustainability and ongoing funding needs, and retention of graduate teachers.

  - It would be beneficial to review the long-term benefit of alternative programs for retaining career-changers.

  - Professionals need to be paid while they train e.g., through scholarships.

  - Regulatory hurdles at both a Federal and state/territory level need to be looked at to facilitate further uptake of teaching by other professionals.

- **How could more high-quality candidates from diverse backgrounds be encouraged to consider a career in teaching?**

  - RUN universities have a track record of quality ITE programs for attracting and retaining aspiring teachers from diverse backgrounds.

  - Strong links with schools in the regions to support professional experience placements significantly influences recruitment of aspiring teachers from diverse backgrounds.

  - We have a strong track record of preparing graduate teachers to teach in rural and remote, and hard-to-staff schools via supported professional placements in the schools.

  - The high employability (QILT employment data) of our graduate teachers demonstrates that study in regional universities means students are well-placed for employment in regional schools upon graduation, which is attractive to regional and remote students.

  - Financial incentives to attract students from diverse backgrounds to undertake an ITE program in a regional university would accelerate the goal of diversifying the teaching profession.

  - In Australia in general, the majority of students are still white, middle class and female. Measures to address this could include:
    - Targeted marketing to diverse groups;
    - Targeted scholarships to diverse/equity groups, with guaranteed employment in regional areas for at least three years;
    - A comprehensive campaign to promote teaching as a profession, with enhancement of promotional prospects, status, and pay for experienced teachers.

- **How could more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples be encouraged and supported to choose a career in teaching?**

  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students could be mentored to consider teaching as a profession from their middle high school years, consistent with a model used in New Zealand for Maori students.

  - Other strategic initiatives designed to encourage First Nations people to take up a career in teaching could include supporting and encouraging Indigenous Teacher Aides to become teachers.

    Related evidence base:

  - In developing these initiatives more diverse frames of reference are needed to make breakthroughs.

  - An international example is a study by Tao Han (2018) which examines the complex interactions of racism and xenophobia in the United States in relation to teacher

education preservice teachers, teacher educators and community members. It uses a process called 'nexus analysis,' to analyse the complex human interactions. Nexus analysis requires examination of a problematic situation not only in its current state, but also by placing it within its historical context.

- Demographic changes in the First Nations population (younger demographics than non-Indigenous population) and the persistent gaps in educational outcomes, point to the need to make transformative and sustainable changes that support greater diversity in the teaching profession in RRR Australia and in teacher education programs. This is also relevant to Australian history curriculum content.

- **What evidence is there that the introduction of assessments of non-academic characteristics has had an impact on admission, progress, completion, and retention of ITE students?**

  - There hasn't yet been enough time for the impact of the TMAG reforms to be assessed, as there is only four years of data available.

- **Are low completion rates an issue? What is the impact? Can low completion rates be addressed?**

  - Early attrition in an ITE program is a welcome statistic as it indicates that students realise early that teaching is not for them. Many RUN ITE programs include a practicum in the first year of the program to assist students make the decision to continue or not with their degree.

  - Many aspiring teachers interrupt their ITE program for family and financial reasons and this is reported as attrition; however, in many cases, the students return to complete their degree program at a later date. Attrition and completion data needs to be interpreted in relation to its context.

- **Is the degree of variability in completion rates between providers ideal? What could be done to address this?**

  - Diversity across the sector is a good thing.

  - As outlined above, many regional students interrupt their studies due to financial reasons, and return to study at a later date. There are place-based factors that must be taken into consideration when looking at different completion rates.

- **Should more be done to identify suitability for a career in teaching earlier in the degree or before entry to ITE? What might this look like?**

  - There already are measures in place through the "Motivation to Teach" initiative which flowed from the TMAG review. It is too early to say how successful this reform has been.

- ITE courses and universities have an important role in building the capacity of students to be good teachers.
- In order to provide students with an insight into whether teaching is the correct pathway for them, all of our ITE courses offer a practicum in schools in the first year of their course. However, the first practicum in the Master Teaching is now redesigned to become a Wider Field Experience. This means that the experience is contextualised to orient students to the notion of leading learning and opens up a range of opportunities for students to experience learning in multiple settings that were previously unavailable to them.

  Related evidence base:

- A study by Ingvarson, L and Rowley, G. (2017) 'Quality Assurance in Teacher Education and Outcomes: A Study of 17 Countries' investigated the relationship between policies related to the recruitment, selection, preparation, and certification of new teachers and (a) the quality of future teachers as measured by their mathematics content and pedagogy content knowledge and (b) student achievement in mathematics at the national level. A consistent positive association was found between the strength of a country's quality assurance arrangements and future teachers' knowledge of mathematics and mathematics pedagogy. Countries with strong policies for assuring the quality of new teachers were also found to be among the strongest performers on international tests of mathematics achievement. It would therefore be useful for the Review Panel to make a detailed analysis of Finnish and Singaporean teacher preparation programs.

- **What are the main reasons ITE students leave an ITE course before completion?**
  - Some students realise that the profession is not for them.

  - Anxiety and stress around lack of income, particularly for mature age students who dominate the ITE cohort at regional universities, are important factors.

- **Have you experienced teacher shortages? Has it been in a particular subject area or region?**

  - Teacher shortages are widespread in regional, rural and remote Australia, but there is some variation between states. Queensland has a significant shortage of secondary teachers in all disciplines, particularly STEM and English, and some shortage of primary teachers.

  - In Victoria, the shortage is in secondary STEM and languages, and early childhood, but there are enough primary teachers.

  - An insufficient number of teacher education students are coming through the pipeline to remedy the shortage.

- **Should something be done to match the supply of teachers from ITE providers with the demands of jurisdictions and sectors? What would this look like?**

  - Education departments and other employers should ensure that there are enough placements in regional, rural and remote (RRR) areas, and that students are placed with the best teachers.

  - Providing additional incentives to train in RRR areas e.g., scholarships to help students undertake placements in the regions, and reduced teaching load in the first year for those who take up a position in regional Australia.

  - Consideration of RRR content in the Australian curriculum.

  - Developing new strategies to meet the future demand for specialist teachers.

  - Considering ways in which the pipeline of graduate entry teachers transition to the workforce can be accelerated to assist with acute shortages.

  - Progressing discussion on the skills and needs of the teaching profession.

  - Undertake research to discover the extent to which a solution to current teacher shortages may be found by re-engaging with the large number of registered teachers not currently employed in the profession.

- **Are there examples of incentives that have successfully worked to attract quality teachers in areas of shortage? How could these be rolled out more broadly?**

  - ITE students getting a final placement in a RRR area could encourage them to stay and work in the regions.

  - More flexibility is needed in the accreditation system to e.g., facilitate pathways for tradespeople into teaching.

- **Why are STEM teachers not teaching STEM subjects? Is this an issue for other subject areas?**
  - The lack of experienced teachers and leaders in many RRR schools leads to STEM teachers taking on broader roles, and moving away from teaching STEM.

  - Teaching out of field is particularly common in the junior high school years. It contributes to attrition from the teaching profession.

- **Are the <u>Australian Professional Standards for Teachers</u> (Teacher Standards) fit for purpose in identifying the key skills and knowledge pre-service teachers need to be ready for the classroom? Do the Teacher Standards adequately reflect the role of teachers in supporting pre-service and graduate teachers? See: <u>https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards</u> for more information.**

  - The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) are the result of a collaborative and extensive consultation over many years with key stakeholders.

  - The APST provide sufficient scope and breadth, based on extensive research, to ensure quality preparation.

  - ITE teaching staff comprise a mix of teacher educators with high level educational qualifications and who are current and active researchers in the field of education, as well as recent and practicing teachers with current and demonstrated effectiveness as a teacher in the classroom.

  - National accreditation requirements ensure that courses are designed and draw up best-practice evidence-based high impact strategies.

  - The creation of something akin to the UK ITT would be an unnecessary waste of resources, and result in a restrictive document that assumes one educational approach meets the learning needs of all students.

Cost of preparation of teachers

  - New funding models for teacher education have resulted in a cheaper degree for aspiring teachers, but a reduction in EFTSL funding to ITE providers.

  - Payments to schools and supervising teachers for practicum is an ongoing cost for ITE providers.

  - LANTITE results show high success rates for first-time test-takers.

  - RUN ITE providers have provided additional local support for students to prepare for the LANTITE at particular points in their program.

  - LANTITE results reflect the improved literacy and numeracy development of aspiring teachers in their ITE program.

  - Supporting LANTITE has been an additional financial cost to RUN ITE providers.

  - Additional funding to acknowledge increased national accreditation requirements would be a welcome recommendation as a result of this review.

- **Are ITE programs preparing graduates for teaching diverse student cohorts, including through cultural competency and inclusive education?**
    - The ITE courses at many RUN universities already incorporate relevant elements to address cultural competency and inclusive education.

    - Mentoring of new graduates in the school environment is also needed.

- **What are the benefits and costs of the number of TPAs in operation?**

    - TPAs are a valuable inclusion as a capstone assessment.

    - Introduction of TPAs has resulted in benchmarking opportunities between ITE providers and this is a welcome collaboration.

    - Research opportunities associated with TPA as an authentic assessment of classroom readiness is a further welcome outcome for ITE providers.

    - The current process of a national TPA accreditation panel provides confidence in the validity and reliability of TPAs

    - Various TPAs have differing cost and resourcing requirements for implementation, but RUN ITE providers report that TPAs have similar overall costs (all three nationally accredited TPAs are used by members of RUN).

    - TPAs are adding a significant financial burden to ITE providers.

    - With changes to university funding for teacher education, sustainability of resourcing TPA implementation is becoming increasingly challenging.

- **How could the TPA endorsement process be improved? Are the current arrangements leading to quality outcomes?**

    - The system benefits from diverse TPAs.

- **Do the current professional experience arrangements support the preparation of ITE students for the classroom and school environment? How could these be improved?**

    - Practical experience is an essential component for all ITE degrees yet there are difficulties in
        - Finding, facilitating and maintaining placements, particularly in RRR areas.
        - Level of support within schools due to either an internal response or external requirement.
        - Quality of supervisory teachers.

    - The arrangements vary between states.

- **How can professional experience be delivered in a more efficient way for school systems and higher education providers?**

  - Leadership structure in schools to support the liaison with universities and be the conduit for students.

  - Financial support for universities to pay for practical supervision.

- **Do the current course accreditation arrangements support ITE students being taught evidence-based high-impact teaching strategies? How could this be improved?**

- **How can ITE providers best support teachers in their ongoing professional learning?**

- **Do the current HALT arrangements support the education ecosystem, particularly in relation to ensuring quality mentoring and supervision of ITE students?**

- **How could HALT support the development of ITE students and newly graduated teachers?**

- **What would this look like? What changes to current arrangements would be required to give effect to this?**

- **Should ITE providers continue to support the development of newly graduated teachers? What would this look like?**

- **How could teacher and school leader workloads be made more manageable to allow them to provide more support to pre-service and newly graduated teachers?**

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