

## **The QITE Review**

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### **Part A. Attracting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession**

#### **1. Attracting high-quality candidates into ITE matters**

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

Is it “high-achievers” that need to be attracted to the profession or is it passion for teaching as a vocation? Or both? ITE graduates (on graduation from their degrees) are the high achievers we need in schools - teaching the next generations of potential teachers. High-achieving school graduates do not necessarily equate to high-achieving graduate teachers.

Teaching is still viewed by many as a ‘fall-back’ profession, if individuals do not get into the degree they really wanted to, until this changes teaching will not be seen as an attractive career commensurate with the knowledge and skills of “high-achieving” school leavers.

National conversations are needed around how we value education as a profession and what it means to be a professional teacher. Professional teaching degrees and experiences provide a wide range of skills that lead into other professions.

##### ***1.3 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?***

The terms mid to late career imply age, but these individuals should be viewed more so as bringing a great deal of prior, relevant life and career experiences to teaching, that are often engaging for school students in terms of connecting their in-school learning with real-life professions and experiences.

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

It is important for school students to be able to see themselves and their local communities reflected in the teachers who are teaching them. Australian classrooms are diverse and the teaching profession needs to reflect this diversity. The teaching profession would be better able to attract high-quality preservice teachers by creating alternative pathways to entry that do not necessarily rely on narrowly-focused end of school exams. High school graduation/certification may elude underrepresented people from diverse backgrounds, with lower graduation rates (e.g., students from low socio-economic backgrounds, societal and cultural factors). Lack of academic preparedness for university may undermine opportunities. High cost of studying, especially while trying to work part time or full time, and undertake 4-5 week blocks of professional experience placements across a

2-4 year degree, can drive high-quality candidates into more lucrative fields. There is increasing positive signs from research indicating that some students respond positively to teachers who share similar/same background as they do. Furthermore, these teachers may be better able to include culture-specific pedagogical practices in their classrooms, potentially leading to higher academic achievement for traditionally underserved students.

## **2. ITE program completions and entry into a teaching career**

### ***2.3 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?***

Potential in school outreach programs.

### ***2.4 What are the main reasons ITE students leave an ITE course before completion?***

Cost, personal issues, inability to complete assessment requirements leading to exclusion from degrees, work and family/personal commitments, health issues, carer responsibilities, pregnancy/parental leave and not returning to study post-parental leave. Prohibitive commitments to 4-5 week professional experience block placements due to work, family/carer/personal/financial implications/commitments, realisation that teaching is not for them.

## **3. Does the supply of teachers entering the workforce match areas of need?**

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

(Also, see 2.4 below) Distinct teacher shortage in special and inclusive education- teachers inadequately prepared to teach students with special needs, including students with disabilities, students who are gifted and talented, students who are twice-exceptional (gifted students with coexisting disabilities). The TALIS Report (2018) found that 1 in 5 principals believed that the quality of their school's inclusive education program was hindered by lack of competent special education teachers. Queensland Department of Education continues to recognise special education as a high-demand teaching specialty/area across primary and secondary schools (<https://teach.qld.gov.au/become-a-teacher/high-demand-teaching-areas>). To date, there is no nationally recognised pathway to qualify as a special education teacher; remaining unrecognised as a specialisation in the APSTs continues to be a significant drawback to the pathways and preparation of special education teachers to be able to teach in Australian schools.

Graduate teachers need more preparation in instructional differentiation, supporting diverse students and behaviour/classroom management.

### ***3.2 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?***

This is already addressed in some respects, by regions who advertise to recruit teachers where needed, particularly in high-demand teaching areas and for rural, regional and remote needs and specialist schools and programs.

***3.3 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?***

Beyond the Range, bursaries, incentives to teach in rural and remote locations.

***3.4 Why are STEM teachers not teaching STEM subjects? Is this an issue for other subject areas?***

Out-of-field teaching is a problem, not just for STEM subjects but for other teaching areas and specialisations as well. In particular, non-qualified/prepared teachers are filling the roles of special education and gifted education teachers due to teacher shortages in these specialisations.

## **Part B. Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers**

### **4. Are graduate teachers ready for the classroom?**

***4.1 Are the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (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: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards> for more information.***

There needs to be removal of some overlap and repetition across the Standards, as some areas mean the same thing (e.g., APST 1 Focus Areas).

There needs to be an expansion of the APSTs to distinctly recognise the unique requirements for teachers in addressing the diverse learning needs of gifted and talented students and twice-exceptional students (gifted students with coexisting disabilities). This is a well-recognised gap in graduate teacher skill in terms of classroom readiness. Many different government inquiries have considered gifted education and reported on the necessity for ITE to include a compulsory course on gifted education. Some of these include:

1988 Senate Inquiry and Report - Senate Select Committee on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children, and the 2001 Senate Inquiry into the Education of the Gifted and Talented. The main theme that emerged from these inquiries (which still have not been implemented) was “the need for better teacher training (both preservice and inservice) so that teachers are better able to identify the gifted and make provision for their special needs. Better curriculum support is also essential so that teachers can differentiate the curriculum for the gifted.” The Productivity Commission Research Report, Schools Workforce (April 2012) reported that “...it is also important to recognise the learning needs of gifted and talented students who have the potential to excel beyond the achievements of

an average student” (p. 268). Despite all these inquiries, reports, and findings there is still no inclusion of a compulsory course requirement on gifted education in ITE. The APSTs do not include gifted and talented (or twice-exceptional) students anywhere. Quality teaching, and thus a quality education for gifted students is primarily met by underprepared teachers in mainstream classrooms. It is essential for teachers during ITE to develop an understanding of the needs of gifted students and the appropriate identification practices and pedagogical approaches so that they can provide a rigorous, engaging learning experience when they start classroom teaching. This will inevitably lead to improved learning outcomes both for gifted and talented students and other students in schools, because what benefits gifted students has also been empirically found to improve the learning of all students.

#### ***4.2 Are ITE programs preparing graduates for teaching diverse student cohorts, including through cultural competency and inclusive education?***

There is a distinct need to ensure that there is a shared understanding of inclusive education - there has been a considerable paradigm shift over the last several years to move away from the previous conceptualisations of inclusion as solely aimed at including students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, to now recognising and being able to respond to diverse student cohorts (e.g., Qld DoE Inclusive Education Policy, 2018) - recognising that inclusion should refer to all diversities - students with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, gifted and talented students, students with trauma backgrounds, rural and remote students, LGBTIQ+ students etc.. There is increasing demand from the profession for Special Education teachers, not solely inclusion teachers for mainstream schools, but specialist teachers who can teach in special education settings (e.g., Special School specifically supporting students with disabilities), specialist teachers who can teach in Special Education centres in mainstream schools - although this is not ‘true’ inclusion, and special education teachers who can teach and mentor other teachers in mainstream schools. As inclusive education refers to all diverse students, including those who are gifted and talented, those who are twice-exceptional and those with disabilities, special education teachers are the specialists in the field who should be adequately prepared in their ITE degrees to teach diverse students and mentor and provide professional learning to other teachers in schools. The TALIS Report (2018) found that 1 in 5 principals believed that the quality of their school’s inclusive education program was hindered by lack of competent special education teachers. Queensland Department of Education continues to recognise special education as a high-demand teaching specialty/area across primary and secondary schools (<https://teach.qld.gov.au/become-a-teacher/high-demand-teaching-areas>). To date, there is no nationally recognised pathway to qualify as a special education teacher; remaining unrecognised as a specialisation in the APSTs continues to be a significant drawback to the pathways and preparation of special education teachers to be able to teach in Australian schools.

More is needed in ITE programs and courses to support the development of key skills for graduate teachers to be able to address the diverse students in their classrooms (e.g., a stronger focus on how to differentiate instruction, see APST 1.5; focus on Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with disabilities -NCCD - is also required). This is particularly evident as needed for supporting students with disabilities, gifted and talented students and twice-exceptional students (students with both giftedness and disabilities). Research consistently shows that teachers are graduating unprepared to teach diverse student cohorts. There are over 400, 000 gifted students in

Australia, graduate and currently practicing teachers have been identified by research as being inadequately prepared to teach these students. There are nearly 20% of students in mainstream Australian schools with disabilities which require varying levels of educational adjustments (supplementary, substantial and extensive adjustments). These adjustments are no longer just the realm of specialist teachers, mainstream teachers are expected to understand how to modify student learning through educational adjustments.

There is a disconnect in ITE preparation and some of the APSTs, especially those which require graduate teachers to be able to teach students with disabilities (APST 1.6), and differentiate teaching to meet specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities (APST 1.5 - which also includes gifted students and twice-exceptional students - which are not explicitly mentioned in the APSTs but need to be and should be a separate, distinct APST).

Teachers in schools need to be diverse (e.g., culturally diverse, people with disabilities), to reflect the diversity of students in their classrooms, schools and school communities - when students see themselves reflected in the teachers who teach them they are more likely to be engaged in learning/school and have 'better' schooling outcomes; also more likely to attract diverse students into ITE programs when they can see themselves reflected in the teachers in schools. It is imperative that students see themselves reflected in the teachers who are educating them every day in their classrooms.

**(This and next point might be better fit under 1.4)** Possible pathways - Early outreach programs may be one potential solution for recruiting high school students into the profession before they apply to universities. These outreach programs could be designed/developed to provide direct pathways and entry opportunities through mentoring and pre-university skill development/augmentation into the teaching profession. An alternative form of outreach program might be aimed at recruiting individuals from other professions into teaching. Partnering universities that provide ITE programs, with particular local schools and communities can provide further outreach opportunities to not only recruit quality individuals into ITE degrees, but also support the promotion of the teaching profession and the work of teachers to the broader community.

Bridging courses, also provide alternative pathways for entry into ITE programs, possibilities include high-school type courses/programs to cater to and support early school leavers to develop the requisite skills to gain entry into ITE programs.

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

In the most part, yes current professional experience arrangements support the preparation of ITE students for the classroom and school environment, yet there are distinct gaps which many practicing teachers also need professional learning in (e.g., differentiated instruction, supporting the

unique learning needs of gifted students and twice-exceptional students). Professional experience placements provide opportunities for preservice teachers to make connections to their course learning (e.g., theories, pedagogical approaches, student engagement, classroom management, catering for diversity, high impact teaching approaches), to enacting these in real-world situations supported by a supervising teacher.

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

Current provision of professional experience is adequate although there are always issues with timing and school/university calendars/timetables.

### **5 The role of teachers and school leaders in supporting the next generation of teachers**

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

Creation of bespoke and tailored professional learning for individual schools and school regions can help to address requisite knowledge and skills and address teacher currency by developing and providing authentic research-informed professional learning courses and packages.

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

Mentoring.