

## INTRODUCTION

Australian Schools Plus exists to help close the education gap caused by disadvantage. We believe all children should have access to a great education regardless of their background. As a registered charity, we work with teachers and schools in disadvantaged areas to empower them with funding, coaching and resources to implement initiatives that will help their students succeed.

The Commonwealth Bank Teaching Awards is a key Schools Plus program. Each year, 12 outstanding educators receive a Teaching Fellowship that includes professional development, opportunities to develop and influence teaching practice, and funding for a major school project. This unique Fellowship program is designed to celebrate the important work teachers do and build a national community of education change-makers who will inspire and influence practice in classrooms across the country.

There are 60 Teaching Fellows who have been selected since the program began in 2017. Five Teaching Fellows met with the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review Panel in June.

The following submission has been compiled from responses from some of these School Plus Teaching Fellows.

## Quality Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Review (the Review) Discussion Paper

### Part A. Attracting high-quality candidates into ITE matters

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

- a) What can be done to attract more high-achievers and career changers to the profession?**
- The discourse around teaching as a profession needs to change. So often the discourse is that teaching is an inferior career choice and other professions such as being a lawyer, or a doctor are more important. This is not just a public perception, even within the profession we often apologise for ourselves. How can quality applicants be attracted to the profession when even teachers talk themselves down? Build pride within the profession and recognition beyond - of the importance of teachers in the lives of our children, the wellbeing of our communities and the success of our nation.
  - Build recognition of teachers and the status of teaching through a national promotional campaign. Strategies could include positive promotion of teaching as a career to students in their senior years by teacher ambassadors, education leaders or university education faculties; widespread promotion of uplifting stories of early career teachers and their experiences and impact; highlighting opportunities that can be part of a teaching career - within the education sector, both school-based and non-school based; actively promoting the inclusion of teachers in high profile events or awards (at most conferences of note, the

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keynote speakers are rarely teachers or educators - they are predominantly from the corporate sector or celebrities); create a strong social campaign #thankmyteacher or #teachersmatter with high profile diverse Australians thanking their teacher for the impact they had on their lives and careers. The Schools Plus Commonwealth Bank Teaching Awards should be applauded for recognising the importance of great teachers and promoting the inspirational work being done in schools around Australia. Engineers make bridges, artists make paintings, scientists make rockets, but teachers make them all. Tap into the moral purpose of becoming a teacher!

- With career changers, often the salary differential is substantial and the experience and skills they bring with them are not recognised. Why would you study 18 months to go from a six-figure salary to earn in the low \$70k's? There needs to be a system where their additional skills and experience are recognised beyond whether these fit with the ACARA curriculum. The skills an experienced person from another industry brings are not necessarily aligned to APSP's or the ACARA curriculum. A lot of career changers come from middle-management positions. It is not just a teacher shortage we are facing but also a school leader shortage. Could the leadership experience these people bring with them be better utilised as part of education leadership building?

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

- Parents, peers, and public perceptions regarding professions are key influencers. Students achieving high ATARS are often questioned why they would choose teaching when they could do law? Schools and career guidance officers also often encourage students who are top achievers to do careers other than teaching.
- Remuneration in education can be a deterrent when there is potential to earn more in other professions. However, in addition to earning capacity, students are wanting to make an impact on the world. If they are high performing in school, they want to go into a profession where they can continue to be high performing and have something to strive towards. There is opportunity here to promote the impact of teaching, the difference they can make. There should be clearer achievement paths developed and promoted such as the available progression to become a Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher.

**c) 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 additional HECS fee for the master's program over 2 years, as well as forgoing salary during this time is a huge deterrent. The length of school placements is also an issue, and this is also increases earning stresses. It is an expectation during your 6-week in-school placement that this is your key focus. Career changers can struggle during placement balancing the demands of the placement with having to earn some income after school hours.
- If some minimum wage could be paid during prac blocks that might make a difference. Prac blocks could be rethought. If pre-service teachers were allocated to schools for 43 x 1-day prac blocks, as well as their 4–6-week final block, it would make it easier for them to be embraced as a staff member at their placement school for the full school year. If schools knew they could have the additional benefits of having the pre-service teacher with them for the full year, they could do more at the school and the school could pay them a wage.

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- The option for a career change to teaching does not seem to be widely advertised as an option for mid to late career professionals. More professionals might be interested if this opportunity was promoted broadly through successful case studies, although there would need to be incentives to forgo income for the 2-year masters program.

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

- Promotion about a teaching career could be targeted at schools with high numbers of students from diverse backgrounds. This could be done by role models having positive discussions with students on the benefits and impact of a teaching career. Discussions could involve parents who often influence career choices.
- An understanding could be built that choosing teaching as a career does not mean you need to be a teacher your whole life. The benefits of being a teacher for your first or second or third career should be promoted (considering the research that young people are now likely to have 6 to 8 careers over their lifetime.) Teachers can leave their schools for positive reasons and often come back to teaching. They can also contribute to the teaching workforce even if only for a few years. The benefits of starting your career as teacher could be promoted by successful people from diverse backgrounds who are now working in higher positions in education or other fields who started their careers as a teacher.

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

- Promotion about a teaching career could be targeted at schools with high numbers of students from indigenous backgrounds. This to be by indigenous teachers as role models discussing the journey of how they became a teacher.
- More stories of indigenous teachers and their work in schools around Australia promoted more widely.
- Support could be offered via a formal program of providing mentors for students completing teaching degrees and similar mentoring support could be continued during their early teaching careers.

**f) 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?**

- It is not known there have been any changes introduced, so it is difficult to comment on evidence of impact. It would be interesting to see this applied. From a school leadership perspective, many 'non-academic' characteristics such as resilience, working well in a team, adaptability, leadership skills, willingness to learn etc would be just as, if not more valuable and applicable than academic results.
- The assessments for prac sessions could include a reflection journal of what is being learnt along the way including the collection of evidence of examples of proficient teaching practice observed or delivered. These could be linked with the AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) standards and would be evidence of professional development progress and growth.

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

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

- Non-completion of tertiary degrees is similar looking at University data from a range of universities across Australia. It is not only teaching degrees. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) dictates the academic integrity and rigour required to achieve an accreditation of a masters or bachelor's degree. Some universities have lowered their entrance scores for teaching degrees, but the courses still require a level of academic achievement for completion. Is support sufficient in these first years to make up for any academic deficit or should assessments be more non-academic until greater proficiency is attained?
- Students change their area of study more frequently than in the past, especially if their first choice is not what they envisaged it to be or when they are exposed to other career choices when at university. Could this be sheeted back to original career advice at school or how the courses are presented in their first few years? The largest dropouts seem to be in the first year. The degrees have been set up to have a placement as early as possible to ensure students make an informed decision around teaching as a career.
- One way of addressing low completion rates could be to introduce 43 x 1-day placements blocks where pre-service teachers are allocated to a school and attend the school for 1 day per week for the full school year. Pre-service teachers could also undertake the student-free professional development with their placement schools at the beginning of the school year. It is imperative trainee teachers see and are a part of the changes that happen on an ongoing basis throughout a school year. (This is one of the reasons why teachers leave in the first 5 years - they are not prepared for the rapid change that happens in every school every year).

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

- Variability in completion rates is not ideal. It can skew the completion rates at 'better' providers. High dropout rates from teaching degrees then become 'a fact' amplified by the media which cycles back to the career not presenting well.
- One of our learnings from Covid should be the use of technology to standardise university training around our P-10 curriculum. This could be delivered by ACARA to all universities via technology. In QLD, QCAA could and should deliver standardised lectures to students. This should not be done by separate universities. If every school knew that this was the baseline understanding that every pre-service teacher had, no matter what university they attended, it would be helpful.

**c) 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?**

- This is meant to be covered in the National Standards for ITE, however it needs more difficult conversations to be had at an early stage. There are many students who are not suitable who need to be 'nursed' through each placement. This sets them up for failure when they are on their own in the classroom.
- The first 2 weeks of the masters at the University of Wollongong is immersion in the school experience, not fulfilling any role other than observing the daily work of a teacher. It provides candidates with a realistic experience of the array of roles and responsibilities of teachers.

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**d) What are the main reasons ITE students leave an ITE course before completion?**

- ITE students can have an unrealistic perception of teaching. Teaching is possibly the main, if only career, they have been exposed to in their lives to date. It is a 'comfortable' choice, but they embark on it viewed through their own unrealistic bubble. They are often not suited to teaching for whatever reason, but do not realise this until a few years into their course.
- Financial strain is a large factor.
- Teaching pracs should be done very early in students' study. Pre-service teachers should spend their first prac, following one student to all their classes and watching the student to understand their learning experience.

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

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

- Marsden State High School in Queensland does not have teacher shortages as we have developed special links and have a very comprehensive tracking system through universities (which is unique). However, a lot of schools, especially schools in rural and regional area are suffering this.
- The tightest subject areas are Home Economics and Manual Arts. There are very few teachers being trained in these subjects coming through the system versus the demand from schools and students in these areas.
- There is a severe shortage of teachers for day-to-day casual relief as well as subject specialist shortages. It used to be confined to rural and remote locations, but it is now more widespread.
- The cost of housing in metropolitan areas is now contributing to teacher shortages. Graduates are declining positions in previously sought-after areas as they cannot afford to live within a commutable distance.
- Yes, to experiencing shortages. In my last 3 schools, we have not been able to access quality teachers, and in the last year, we have not been able to access any teacher. Certain regions in QLD are operating schools without their allocation of teachers.

**b) 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?**

- ITE providers should ensure everyone has a core subject- English, Maths, Science, or Humanities.
- Yes definitely. Incentives to encourage teachers to sectors are important. These incentives could include reduction of course fees.
- If the 43 x 1-day pracs are introduced, this would be a great way for schools to take responsibility for the final year of training and the experience they want for their teachers. Understandably this model would not work for remote schools, as it would be impossible for pre-service teachers to do 1-day a week pracs at a remote school and still be able to attend lectures, tutorials and work part-time/ full time whilst studying. However, remote schools could be linked with 'sister schools' where their pre-service teachers could work.

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- c) **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?**
- NSW DoE has a number of incentives to attract teachers into hard to staff areas, but shortages are still widespread. Another more recent factor is teacher housing and the lack of availability and affordability even in rural locations.
  - The financial offerings for rural and remote placements are insufficient to be attractive particularly for younger teachers. The possibility of reducing or eliminating their HECS debt could be considered. This might attract quality teachers to rural or remote schools for several years who might also extend their commitment.
  - In subject shortages, exchanges with countries where there are different shortages could be considered. In Singapore, there are shortages of PE, Art, and Music teachers while they have a plenty of Science and Maths teachers. A formal international exchange program could be an interesting avenue to investigate.
- d) **Why are STEM teachers not teaching STEM subjects? Is this an issue for other subject areas?**
- There are simply not enough STEM teachers to teach STEM subjects and there are so many STEM subjects to teach. It is also an issue from time to time in other subject areas, but the shortage is not consistent.

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

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

- a) **Are the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards) (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.**
- The AITSL standards are a fantastic common language to use with all teachers and the introduction of the highly accomplished and lead teachers have added another level to the professionalism of teachers which are keeping our best teachers in the classroom.
  - There are little of the soft skills reflected sufficiently in these which are so important for the role of teachers in supporting pre-service teachers.
- b) **Are ITE programs preparing graduates for teaching diverse student cohorts, including through cultural competency and inclusive education?**
- I am not sure how extensively this is covered in ITE programs, but a candidate's practicum experience should provide some opportunities for observation. A pre-service teacher can observe and reflect on the strategies teachers choose to engage diverse student cohorts to achieve inclusive education.
  - ITE programs can provide background preparation, but this is mainly gained through experience. You need to experience the classroom. It cannot be covered adequately even in prac placements. Time and experience in your career are key.

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- No, with the current practical blocks in the ITE programs, it is impossible for teachers to be exposed to the real complexities and rhythm of a school.
- c) What are the benefits and costs of the number of TPAs in operation?**
- It makes the accreditation process easier.
- d) How could the TPA endorsement process be improved? Are the current arrangements leading to quality outcomes?**
- This is a sign off aspect for jurisdictions to agree on. It is more of an AITSL question.
- e) Do the current professional experience arrangements support the preparation of ITE students for the classroom and school environment? How could these be improved?**
- The in-school experience is so important, but it really is about time constraints. If you expand placement blocks it creates its own set of problems.
  - The initiative developed by the University of Wollongong to provide candidates with regular weekly experiences in schools provides a more comprehensive experience in addition to their regular blocks.
  - No, with the current 4–6-week prac blocks, it is impossible for teachers to be exposed to the real complexities, constant changes and rhythms of a school. 43 x 1-day blocks at the placement school where the teacher will be doing their 4–6-week prac block later in the year would be invaluable in supporting the preparation of ITE students.
- f) How can professional experience be delivered in a more efficient way for school systems and higher education providers?**
- Professional experience could be uniform and more consistent. It should provide more regular programmed opportunities for candidates to be in schools to be immersed in the daily work of teachers and all their formal and informal experiences as much as possible.
- g) Do the current course accreditation arrangements support ITE students being taught evidence-based high-impact teaching strategies? How could this be improved?**
- It is not my experience that pre-service teachers talk a language of high-impact teaching strategies. If high-impact teaching strategies are not part of their courses their inclusion should be a priority.
  - It is imperative that all pre-service teachers speak a language of behaviour management - such as the 10 Essential Skills of Classroom Management. Behaviour management issues are one of the major factors leading to beginning teachers leaving the profession.

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

- a) How can ITE providers best support teachers in their ongoing professional learning?**
- Providers should engage with teachers more directly in schools. For teachers to go online or onto campuses is increasingly difficult with teachers under constant time

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pressures. More on-site school learning and working face to face with teachers would provide better support.

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

- Where this is in place it is supportive, but it is not consistent across schools. Few schools have a HALT on staff and consequently schools either invest significantly in running their own ITE programs or outsource it to other organisations.
- No, we have not found it particularly useful, as the entire process is too onerous on the teacher.

**c) 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?**

- It works well with the likes of the Q/GTPA assessment. It assists with data collection and interrogation. A good point to add is for ITE providers to work with upskilling students on the increasing use of data.
- Some schools are doing this very well. A suggestion to look at the program and processes in place at Marsden State High School in Queensland. The school is frequently recognized and awarded for running one of the best programs in the country.

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

- Yes, they could provide Professional Development days to bring newly graduated teachers back together to reflect and focus on their first-year learnings and issues.
- Yes, if they could be offered follow-up training in behaviour management, high yield teaching strategies and mentoring to debrief and reflect would be of great support to their continuing professional development.

**e) 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?**

- Schools could be provided with FTE's to assist with the time needed to really provide assistance to both pre-service and newly graduated teachers. Time is the key stress point factor in schools to enable teachers and school leaders to provide sufficient support.
- The provision of additional funds to schools to employ administration officers, to assist in completing administrative tasks could relieve time pressures and allow school leaders to be doing the work that has most impact - which is connecting with students, teachers, and parents.