

At a time when public trust in the teaching profession is under pressure, a review into learning to teach in Australia provides a timely look into the quality of teacher education. The influences of politics on educational policy has brought about national reforms, leading to change and instability, and even uncertainty for the teaching profession. At the heart of these educational reforms is initial teacher education. The last decade has seen a significant increase of regulatory policy and accountability measures in initial teacher education through the introduction of professional standards, compliancy regulations, compulsory skills testing to qualify as a teacher and standardised assessments for students.

This submission explores the contested domain of initial teacher education for teachers in primary and secondary schools and offers four key areas for success. There are disparate views about what constitutes quality teaching and quality teacher education, and with the multiplicity of pathways into teaching, the effectiveness of the provision from higher educational institutions lacks substance. Perhaps this is because policy on teacher education, follows a clear political agenda. The reactions to political pressures are played out in the media, with teachers acting as the fall guy, and the quality of initial teacher education providing the battle ground for reform.

Unanimously, teacher quality is determined as being the key factor in raising academic performance in schools. However, highlighted are the tensions, including the differences in terminology related to initial teacher education, with reference to *training*, *education* or *onsite preparation*. Such discords raise significant questions about how to educate pre-service teachers to acquire and develop the required knowledge and skills that meet the professional competency standards, and about what it means to be a qualified teacher. There is considerable disparity in understandings of the complex, multiple roles of teachers that are represented in initiative from the TEMAG review. Perhaps it is time to work upwards by determining firstly what capabilities quality teacher require or need to develop, and secondly by enacting the most effective ways to select and support budding future teachers learn to teach.

There are a range of pathways to achieve teaching qualifications, with universities being identified as the traditional key providers of initial teacher education program in Australia. Slowly creeping into the education profession, where teachers are in high demand, are shortcut pathways, where the focus is on experiential survival as an initiation challenge into teaching. The introduction of school-based alternative ways to seek practice-based

qualifications in the current high demand have been aggressively promoted by school administrative staff frantically trying to find teachers to stand in front of the classes in their schools. Some of these pathways may evolve in an effective form of preparation for the practical job of teaching, and these different methods set the scene for some of the discussion points that have been identified in the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review.

Furthermore, it is espoused that the business of marketing teacher qualifications has resulted in an emphasis on accountability and regulation. The evidence of impact on the professional learning of pre-service teachers, as a result of the desperate attempts of universities to attract and retain student numbers in educational programs, has further complicated the game and distracted the focus away from developing quality initial teacher education in Queensland and Australia.

In this submission, I will introduce insights about initial teacher education that go beneath the surface of what is immediately apparent and unpack some tensions and challenges associated with learning to teach. If the aim is to meet the vision of all Australian students having the right to a quality education that helps them be the best they can be, the responsibility for producing quality teachers needs to be shared between the qualification providers, e.g., universities, and schools, e.g., practising teachers as the mentors for the profession. However., in Australia at the moment the divide between academic courses and practice has never been wider.

In the following I suggest ways to address this divide, authentically, in practice, not on paper through policy, but actually making an impact on what has become a broken system. The first reaction of many will be well that cannot happen; well you don't understand; that would cost too much; it is inequitable; and/or that is already happening, well maybe but superficially. With 25-years teaching experience in schools and 10-years of experience as an initial teacher educator in university, my response to the above is it cannot happen whilst those saying this stand in the way; I do understand, better than most actually, because I am front-line and I see it everyday in my work; costly true, but you get what you pay for, and the societal benefits of a quality education system far out way the cost of it in the long run; it might seem inequitable to stop someone who *wants* to be a teacher entering education programs but if they do not have the smarts, social skills and emotional disposition at that time it is not timely to accept them into the footstep of the profession; and the system for dishing out teaching qualifications is currently broken as is evidenced by ill-equipped

graduates, some natural teachers develop in spite the system, but I'm referring to those slipping through with a passes or conceded passes.

Four Keys to Success:

1. *Bachelor of Education* is the minimum and initial qualification to teach in schools. No qualification, no unsupervised teaching, no teaching salary. A degree and work experience are highly valued and, with life experiences, assist in the development of the teacher, but it does not qualify someone to teach.
2. A minimum of two years full time teaching experience before starting a *Master Degree in Education*. Salary incentives for teachers to gain these qualifications would also demonstrate that the employer values lifelong professional development.
3. University courses present the theory which is completed in unison with professional experience in a school, i.e., from **week one** of an initial teacher education program pre-service teachers are in schools, **teaching** with a mentor teacher, and **attending** university courses on the other days. (40-weeks in a school term, 40% in schools, e.g., 80 days per year minimum in practicum schools).
4. Academics teaching in initial teacher education programs are registered teachers themselves, attend schools regularly and observe lessons, work with the mentor teachers, model best teaching practice during oncampus classes, and evaluate performance with the mentor teacher, the pre-service teacher progress against standards. APST serve this purpose well.
5. LANTITE or similar test prior to consideration for an interview to enter the initial teacher education program that determines the **right of passage** to enter the front door of an educational qualification. Interviews conducted by experienced educators using a rigorous framework to determine **cognitive, social and emotional readiness** for the initial teaching education.

Let us make being a teacher, a member of the teaching profession, a privilege, to be yearned for and earned by those that really want to make a difference in the lives of all young Australians. I want to be proud to say that I am part of a strong, dynamic profession, where quality is at the forefront. We can still meet the demand for teachers by making the profession refined, knowledgeable and fashionably desired.