

Student input on Teacher Education Review: The role of teachers and school leaders in supporting the next generation of teachers

Who are we?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Background and Context

On Monday 12th July, a webinar/focus group was held with 28 Pre-service Teachers enrolled in Initial Teacher Education programs [REDACTED] The group included Pre-service Teachers enrolled [REDACTED] Pre-service Teachers enrolled in Masters of Education programs preparing Early Childhood Educators, Primary and Secondary Teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pre-service Teachers completing a Bachelor's degree in Primary Teaching [REDACTED]

Pre-service Teachers were asked to provide their responses to specific questions and placed into break-out rooms to discuss before sharing their responses with the group. Below is a summary of responses to these specific questions.

How could HALT support the development of ITE and newly graduated teachers? What would this look like? What changes to current arrangements would be required to give effect to this?

Teachers and those at Executive levels need to understand that newly graduated teachers do not know everything; they need to adjust to their learning environment and are still learning 'on the job' and so still require support and mentoring. This support could include:

- Providing sample units of work
- Implementation of a mentoring program for the first year of teaching,
 - within the school and/or
 - from another local school,
 - might be a 'Teaching Triad': graduate teacher, mid-career teacher, HALT
- Providing opportunities to observe highly accomplished teachers
- Supporting regular meeting with other newly appointed/graduating teachers
- Ensuring that Graduate teachers are teaching in the KLA they have trained for.

As prospective Graduate Teachers, Pre-service Teachers are enthusiastic about implementing classroom management and teaching strategies that meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and need senior colleagues such as HALTs to be explicitly supportive of their ideas and work with them to implement their learning and ideas.

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

Pre-service Teachers provided a range of responses to this question that reflected the stage of development. A first year undergraduate Pre-service Teacher felt that they aren't prepared for the vast cultural diversity especially in [REDACTED]. Some Pre-service Teachers acknowledged they need more information about working with and teaching students from Muslim and Jewish backgrounds and their communities.

Pre-service Teachers commented on the need for one unit on learning about students from diverse backgrounds in their first semester of the degree, i.e. earlier in the degree. They also believe there needs to be a greater emphasis on Aboriginal histories and education, which should not just be confined to a single unit of study, but rather, embedded throughout all units.

Pre-service Teachers believe they are learning how to teach in ways that are inclusive of all the students they might encounter and expect to be able to transfer this inclusive practice to their work as teachers. However, they note that this commitment to inclusive practice is sometimes not reciprocated in the Professional Experience placements they complete during their programs.

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

Pre-service Teachers generally felt that the Professional experience arrangements in their programs supported their preparation.

Pre-service Teachers expressed a preference for being ‘thrown in at the deep end’ with emphasis on fewer days for observation before they begin teaching some lessons, supported by their mentor teacher. However, Pre-service Teachers also noted that if they are placed in a support class with students with specific intellectual, emotional or physical needs then additional input on teaching and classroom management strategies is needed before they can adequately work with these groups of children and young people.

Pre-service Teachers reinforced the importance of having Professional Experience placements in a range of classes, across stages in Primary or Secondary schools so they build their confidence across the years prior to graduating. Associated with this response, was a request for more time focussed on programming a unit of work before going on professional experience as they learn how to complete lesson plans and sequence of lessons but need more experience on preparing whole units of work.

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

Pre-service Teachers believed that acknowledging the benefit of attracting candidates who speak multiple languages in addition to English would encourage candidates from diverse backgrounds to consider teaching as a profession.

LANTITE can be seen as a deterrent to candidates, especially those from refugee backgrounds when it is placed as a barrier to entry. Where it is placed as a part of their development as a teacher and they are able to be supported to develop their capacities in the numerate and literate practices associated with the work of teachers, the significance of this deterrent is lessened.

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

Pre-service Teachers recommended promoting teaching as a career to communities and schools from an early age. In many schools there are no Aboriginal people/teachers as role models for children and young people. Pre-service Teachers commented that where there is little representation, then there is less likelihood to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into a teaching career, so more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers are needed.

Pre-service Teachers recommended that there needs to be an understanding of the intergenerational trauma and negativity associated with schooling that is passed down to children, as schooling is built around a western system. Specific strategies as well as time may assist with this challenge.

Pre-service Teachers also commented on the importance of community, learning in community and that indigenous people in remote and rural areas don't want to make the move to a city. They noted that the [REDACTED] program was a great opportunity to get started to becoming a teacher. However, they also noted that studying while in community is hard for a range of reasons, especially associated with a lack of resources: internet, computers/ laptops, place to study. Recommendations address these matters included:

- scholarships for resources, laptops etc
- universities to partner with a school or TAFE for rural/ regional students to access internet and for additional support.

There were mixed responses to the idea of studying online so Pre-service Teachers didn't need to move away from country for study. Pre-service Teachers noted that online learning might work better for remote learners – except for issues associated with access to internet. They also commented that some Aboriginal Pre-service Teachers prefer to be/ need to be in front of their teachers rather than online. For those Pre-service Teachers near Sydney, access to a block mode program where online learning was supported by face-to-face intensive period of learning was beneficial.

What impacts on completion of an ITE course and progress?

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pre-service Teachers identified that support from the [REDACTED] Indigenous Support Officer as making a valuable contribution to the completion of their degree and supporting their progress. Barriers such as lack of communication, changing special requirements and poor response times to emails makes it hard to continue with studies; Pre-service Teachers felt they needed to be assured or reassured about their studies and the choices they were making and dedicated Support Officers assist with this.

Pre-service Teachers also noted that the range of compliance requirements – some associated with placements - can impact on enrolment decisions and when they may elect to take up Professional Experience units during the course of their study.

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

The main reason the Pre-service Teachers (particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pre-service Teachers) gave for leaving their course was attributed to LANTITE. LANTITE was considered to be not always culturally appropriate – with a lot of the material grounded in particular ways of knowing/being/doing that might be outside of the experiences of some students. This means that LANTITE is not a fully and genuine assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills but rather an assessment of what they know/have experienced.

The other reasons Pre-service Teachers identified for leaving an ITE course were lack of time due to working and studying and dissatisfaction with their course experiences.