Response to QITE Review Discussion paper

The School of Education at the UNSW provides quality initial teacher education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in the context of a teaching and research-intensive university. UNSW is one of only two higher education institutions nationally to have achieved the highest possible rating for Education Research in the most recent ARC Excellence in Research for Australia exercise.

In this response we focus on the following areas of the discussion paper:

1. Attracting high-quality candidates into ITE matters
2. ITE program completions and entry into a teaching career
4. Are graduate teachers ready for the classroom?
5. The role of teachers and school leaders in supporting the next generation of teachers

1. Attracting high quality candidates into ITE

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

High-achievers and capable career-changers have options that include those with more attractive career structures, greater long-term earning potential, and higher status.

There is an urgent need to raise the status of the teaching profession. This will take, among other things, a concerted effort by all stakeholders to counter negative rhetoric about education and teacher quality that seems endemic to politics and the media in Australia. Constant calls to increase teacher quality necessarily imply that teachers are not good enough. Attempts to focus concern on teacher education without implying criticism of current teachers are transparently illogical.

Other specific measures that would raise the status of teaching and make it more attractive to high-achievers and capable career-changers include:

o   Increasing teacher salaries
o   Providing career structures that are not necessarily tied to administrative roles
o   Reducing casualisation of the teaching workforce
o   Actively promoting the teaching profession including through social media
o   Promoting teaching as an intellectually demanding profession

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

The status of the profession is an important influence. Prospective teachers are likely deterred by rhetoric about enhancing teacher quality that necessarily implies that there is a quality problem in the profession. Moreover, some are likely deterred by the increasing number of hurdles in addition to achieving a degree qualification (e.g., Literacy and Numeracy testing, Teaching Performance Assessment, GPA minima, pre-employment psychometric testing).

What features of the current ITE system may prevent high-quality mid- to late-career professionals transitioning to teaching?

Two-, rather than one- year post graduate ITE programs may deter some career-changers due to the loss of income at a time of life when financial commitments are likely to be greater than those of school leavers. It is important that measures to address this do not work against efforts to enhance the status of the teaching profession as described above. Reducing the academic content and rigour of ITE programs would negatively impact both the status of teaching and the quality of teachers.

Consideration should be given to:

- o Encouraging compressed, intensive programs such as the UNSW MTeach that provides 2 years of content in 1.3 years and allows prospective teachers to teach after the first year.
- o Bonded scholarships paid throughout initial teacher education and offering guaranteed permanent employment in hard to staff locations or targeted to areas of need (e.g., maths, physics). These were effective in the 70s and 80s in many Australian jurisdictions.

2. ITE program completions and entry into a teaching career

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

Students leaving their ITE programs is positive if it is the result of prospective teachers realising they are not a good fit for the profession. Low completion rates may relate to the low regard for the profession too often evident in the media and promulgated by politicians and in society generally. Highlighting the strengths of the profession and raising its status would likely help prospective teachers feel their contribution is and will be valued.

Increasing demands on ITE providers in the form of compliance and reporting displace resources that might better be used to support students to complete their programs.

4. Are graduate teachers ready for the classroom?

*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.*

The Teacher Standards emphasise important knowledge and skills but not the dispositions and critical thinking capabilities that allow teachers to thrive rather than merely to survive in the demanding profession of teaching. They miss vital non-cognitive attributes such as motivation for teaching, resilience, and self-efficacy.

ITE programs are appropriately designed to ensure that graduate teachers meet the Graduate Teacher Standards. They also endeavour to address the sophisticated thinking that is needed to use the knowledge and skills articulated in the standard in practice. Capacities that go well beyond technical competence support new teachers to value, understand, and develop in their roles as members of a profession in which they exercise judgment and professional autonomy. These dispositions are, however, emphasised in the TPA. This links to the earlier point about promoting teaching as the intellectually demanding profession that it is.

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

ITE programs in NSW include dedicated compulsory courses and assessment tasks in these areas. UNSW ITE programs include mandatory courses addressing Indigenous perspectives, social dimensions of learning, and special and inclusive education.

Different ITE providers serve differing cohorts of prospective teachers so variety among ITE programs is an important part of collectively preparing a diverse teaching workforce able to teach diverse student cohorts in a diverse range of contexts.

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

Prospective teachers greatly value Professional Experience placements, but the quality of that experience is highly variable. Current Professional Experience arrangements could be improved by:

- o Building upon and investing in current examples of sustained school and university partnerships that are working well. For example, the UNSW Matraville Education Partnership
- o Providing consistent training of mentor teachers to support their ability to work effectively with prospective teachers
- o Recognising the important work of mentor teachers through, for example, career progression, workload recognition, and accreditation at higher levels.

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

Accrediting bodies require the teaching of evidence-based high-impact teaching strategies and these are supported by teacher educators in ITE providers who are contributing to the research evidence around effective practices. Strong research cultures in ITE institutions are crucial to this end.

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

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

School and university partnerships ideally facilitate and support the quality of professional experience placements and teachers' ongoing professional development needs. Funded partnership arrangements in NSW have been effective but require ongoing funding and structuring to ensure that benefits for schools and universities are maximised.

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?

HALT could make an important contribution to supporting school and university partnerships.

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

School and university partnerships that include professional development could contribute to mentoring programs for graduate teachers.

Graduate teachers in casual and shifting employment can fall outside school provision of support and professional development opportunities or experience such support and opportunities in a sporadic, incoherent way. Maintaining links with their ITE provider for continuous professional learning could assist but reducing the casualisation of teaching needs to be prioritised.