



VCDE responses to the Quality Initial Teacher Education discussion paper

Due: 18 July 2021

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

The Victorian Council of Deans of Education recently convened a webinar with international experts from Singapore, Finland and New Zealand to explore the issues raised in the QITE review discussion paper. Both Singapore and Finland are named as exemplars for initial teacher education (ITE) in the discussion paper and we know that New Zealand has systems in place to support diversity of the teacher workforce (particularly Māori and Pasifika), which is also named as an issue in the discussion paper.

The webinar highlighted that in Singapore and Finland there are few issues in attracting students into ITE because teaching is a high-status profession. Singapore and Finland only select “the best of the best” into ITE, but in return they sponsor students through ITE, they pay a relatively high salary to teachers, there is considerable investment into ongoing professional learning and development and there are multiple career tracks, which helps to retain teachers in the profession in both countries. In Singapore students receive generous scholarships, they are paid as beginning professionals and have 100 hours of funded professional learning per annum. In Finland, ITE students receive a raft of support measures, including 75% of their rent being paid, a monthly stipend, free health care and no fees for any education up to including Ph.D. The experts made the comment that teaching is supported by government as being in the public good and there are few to no private providers. They also commented that the success of ITE in these countries is because of a strong tripartite system between government, ITE providers and schools/centres.

New Zealand is more like Australia in terms of having both public and private providers of ITE. There is however a whole of profession focus, with the Teaching Council as the regulatory body for both early childhood, primary and secondary teaching. All teachers are required to meet the same standards and code of ethical and professional practice (Our code/Our standards <https://teachingcouncil.nz/professional-practice/our-code-our-standards/>). All prospective teachers are interviewed for selection into ITE and in addition to academic entry requirements, need to display that they have the dispositions to teach. In addition, “Our code/Our standards” is aligned to Māori values, reflecting New Zealand’s obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi.

Essential to attracting new students into initial teacher education is increasing the appeal and profile of the profession; this requires higher salaries to be commensurate with other high achieving careers, such as in Singapore, introducing a tiered performance-based pay scale and more diverse and supported leadership pathways. It also requires greater recognition and acknowledgement of the intricate and important work teachers undertake to raise the status of the profession. It is necessary to highlight the complexities of the job to shift the perception that it is an 'easy' career choice or a secondary and back up option to other perceived high achieving careers such as medicine and law. For those who are changing careers, the evidence from VCDE members is that mature age students need financial support in order to make a career change and therefore scholarships and internships such as the *"Teach for the future"* initiatives in Victoria are definitely needed.

The VCDE members also note that Victorian providers have engaged fully with the TEMAG recommendations, and it is too early to be able to fully evaluate the effectiveness of these changes. It should be noted that Victorian ITE providers have all commented on the impact of the ATAR of 70 for enrolment in ITE programmes and most have seen a drop in VTAC enrolments as a result of this requirement on school leaver enrolments. However, it should be noted that for many providers most enrolments in ITE are mature age students, not school leavers.

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 Master's affected your decision to enter ITE?

As above, anecdotal evidence suggests that lack of financial support is one of the key reasons why mid-career professionals do not make the transition to teaching. Federation University's *"Hybrid accelerated pathway"* programme attracted a large number of candidates in this category, who said that the stipend to help with finances and the *"Permission to teach pathway"* as an employee in the second year of their programme while they re-trained was an important factor. There is a lack of pathways for career changers if they do not meet the direct admission requirements and specifically for career changers aspiring to be secondary school teachers, there is no fast track way to qualify for subject method areas to enable entry to graduate ITE courses. Customised support and guidance within a tailored career change pathway would increase the appeal to transition for mid to late career professionals. ITE courses delivery currently lack the flexibility, particularly with regards to placement to fit around commitments, such as lifestyle and family.

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

The evidence from Singapore, Finland and New Zealand suggests that a raft of student financial support from the government is required, as well as a change in public narrative around the status of teaching. There needs to be a clearer narrative on the importance of diversity amongst the teaching profession, with examples of diversity in leadership in education and profiling of the important role culturally diverse teachers have within the profession. Evidence from other countries, such as New Zealand, suggests that mentoring of high performing students from diverse backgrounds needs to start in the middle years of high school. Funding is needed to provide mentoring in high schools and further funding is needed to provide wrap around support to students as they enter university. The support provided needs to be both pastoral and academic to ensure that students feel culturally safe and have a safe place to go if they find the university environment challenging.

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

This is an issue which has been addressed by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand in relation primarily to attracting Māori and Pasifika peoples into teaching. It has involved investment in schools to recruit and mentor high performing students for entry to university, scholarships for students to attend university, and funding to universities to provide Maori and Pasifika staff to provide mentoring, pastoral care and academic support. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education has provided funding for the establishment of total immersion early childhood settings, schools, and units within schools to provide opportunities for language and culture to be sustained. There are some successful examples in the Northern Territory that the NT Council of Deans of Education can provide information on.

f. What evidence is there that the assessment of non-academic characteristics has had an impact on admission, progress, completion and retention of ITE students?

It is too soon to assess the impact of the assessment of non-academic characteristics at admission on student progress, completion, and retention of ITE students. Moreover, isolating the impact of this aspect of selection amongst a range of factors, including COVID-19, will be challenging.

2. ITE program completions and entry into a teaching career

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

It should be noted that the QUIT review panel have taken their statistics about completion rates from HEIMS data, which does not reflect when students have taken a pause on enrolment, rather than completing leaving a programme, so the statistics need to be treated with caution. The issue of completion rates needs to be addressed as an accreditation issue, as the results reflect some contextual issues which need to be reviewed.

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

Further research would need to be done on the reasons for variability in completion rates. Typically, completion rates are high for those who successfully complete the first year of their degree, including the professional experience. Analysis of when people are leaving degree programmes is required before any judgement can be made. Moreover, the research suggests that background factors, such as SES, impact on completion. Maintaining the social and cultural diversity of the teaching profession is likely to lead to differences in the completion rates by virtue of differences in the social composition of different providers.

c. Should more be done to identify suitability for a career in teaching earlier in the degree or before entry into ITE? What might this look like?

Non-academic assessments are inconsistent across states and institutions with some universities asking for a personal statement, some use CASPer and other institutions have developed their own test. The lack of consistency is off putting for potential students. Other countries use compulsory interviewing and ranking of students as part of selection, but this has mixed success in predicting which students will be excellent teachers. In ITE and other professions (such as medicine and veterinary science), a range of selection criteria and selection tasks have led to greater success in predicting student success. Note that even those who are suited need careful support to ensure they are retained in programmes. We consider there is potential to use other approaches, like other

professions such as medicine, which examine both dispositional and academic attributes for teaching.

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

It is very difficult to prepare students for the reality of the classroom, so it is common that students withdraw from an ITE programme following the first placement. Another factor that contributes to students leaving ITE programmes is balancing other work and often family commitments with multiple assessment tasks. Although completion rates in Victorian providers are generally very good, the reasons cited for students withdrawing included problems with placements, failure of coursework, health difficulties or problems balancing other commitments.

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?

In Victoria, we know that there are shortages of early childhood teachers, which is impacting the roll out of the three-year-old kindergarten initiative. There are also shortages of secondary teachers in some hard to staff schools and in some regional/rural areas. There are shortages of Science, Maths and LOTE teachers in many parts of the state.

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?

This would require significant collaboration and data sharing between DET, Catholic and Independent schools and ITE providers, with ensuing need for careful data protocols. Some current initiatives for scholarships for particular areas and subjects could feasibly be extended. It may be worthwhile the commonwealth extending further, targeted, funding to ITE providers to increase provision in hard-to-staff areas. Targeted recruitment by ITE providers of students from remote and regional areas and for high demand subjects accompanied by incentives such as scholarships and fee assistance would potentially increase supply in high demand sectors and areas. ITE providers facilitating partnerships between pre-service teachers in hard to staff schools in particular subject areas, with clear pathways for employment, would also support clear progression for pre-service teachers to areas of demand.

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?

Yes, in Victoria there are several providers involved with “*Teach for the Future*” or “*Teach for Australia*” initiatives, which involve “accelerated” options into a teaching career. The evaluation of these programmes could suggest strategies for rolling out across sectors and in other states.

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

A report prepared for the Regional Universities Network (RUN) by KPMG in 2018 showed that many secondary teachers in regional areas are teaching out of field. The reasons given are that regional schools are short staffed, so they make best use of the teachers they have and often the people teaching STEM subjects have limited background in these subjects and even more limited access to appropriate professional learning. There are also identified issues for teachers, such as the lack of a STEM curriculum. Providing

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 (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 the pre-service and graduate teachers? See: <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards> for more information.**

One of the biggest challenges in the Australian education system is that there are different standards for teaching for early childhood and primary and secondary, with different regulatory bodies. The VCDE webinar with experts from Singapore, Finland and New Zealand identified that common standards for all sectors of the education system led to greater consistency in expectations for the teaching profession.

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

This is a matter that is part of accreditation. Although most ITE programmes suffer from crowded curriculum, these are issues which are addressed within programmes and are a requirement of accreditation. Further local initiatives funded by DET in Victoria are designed to give students opportunities for placements in low SES, disadvantaged communities, in which they will gain firsthand experiences of working with diverse cohorts and have opportunity to better understand how to demonstrate cultural competency and inclusiveness in classroom practice.

- c. **What are the benefits and costs of the number of TPAs in operation?**

Most providers of ITE in Victoria are members of one or more TPAs. The costs are twofold: there are obvious annual costs to membership of a TPA; as well as more hidden costs of internal and cross consortium moderation, briefing of students, preparation of mentors in schools and so forth. However, the benefits include students' awareness of their own competency as teachers, opportunities for cross institutional moderation and reflection on each institutions' preparation of students, and opportunities for collaborative cross institutional research.

- d. **How could the TPA endorsement process be improved? Are the current arrangements leading to quality outcomes?**

Many of the Victorian ITE providers belong to the larger national TPAs and have spoken about the benefits of having a national benchmarking of TPAs, so that providers are assured that all students nationally are meeting the same standards.

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

- a. **Do the current professional experience arrangements support the preparation of ITE students for the classroom and school environment? How could these be improved?**
- b. **How can professional experience be delivered in a more efficient way for school systems and higher education providers?**

VCDE has worked in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Training over the last year to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding for placements in government schools. This involves a set of principles for professional experience, as well as shared assessment templates

across ITE providers, so that teachers in these schools are only having to deal with one approach to assessment of preservice teachers across programmes and year levels. The agreement has been negotiated with ITE providers and with school principals, so we have confidence that it will work for both groups. We are hopeful that the MOU will be extended to Catholic and Independent schools in future, but we know that the MOU is a large step forward towards the type of tripartite system advocated by our experts in Singapore, Finland and New Zealand. We know that other states are having similar discussions about how government, ITE providers and schools can work together more effectively to ensure efficient use of resources, effective mentoring of preservice teachers on placements, and sustain teacher supply.

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

All providers of ITE are required by TEQSA to ensure that staff are qualified at a level higher than the degree in which they are teaching and most staff teaching in ITE programmes have doctoral qualifications. In addition, the regulatory bodies require evidence that there are appropriately qualified, research active staff employed to coordinate and teach in ITE programmes. Furthermore, the accreditation process requires ITE providers to demonstrate that programmes will enable students to meet or exceed the AITSL standards and to demonstrate that the programmes are underpinned by a research-practice nexus. Our experts from Singapore, Finland and New Zealand said that quality ITE programmes encompass multiple perspectives, which encourage critical thinking skills and enable graduates to become “architects of learning”. Furthermore, although ITE helps to prepare students for the profession, it is also important to examine the induction framework in place for graduates as they join the profession. It is arguably more important to look at ways of standardising mentoring opportunities for new graduates and ensuring they have ongoing opportunities for research informed professional learning.

6. 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?

Most ITE providers already offer opportunities for professional learning via postgraduate qualifications, micro-credentials and mentor preparation sessions. It should be noted that the current funding model does not provide any support for support beyond this. A review of the funding model to better support professional experience, professional learning for mentor teachers and ongoing professional learning for mentor teachers and new graduates would be a useful way forward.

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

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?

Some new models where HALT teachers work with universities to plan, deliver some of the content and then oversee the quality of student placements in their school show promise. Maybe a model like "HALT teacher in residence" where teachers are seconded to a university for a period of time could work.

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

As above, the ITE providers are not funded to provide ongoing support to newly graduated teachers. This would require a revision of the current funding model.

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?

Although this is not a key concern for VCDE members, we do consider that credit or PD hours for mentoring and working with preservice teachers and graduate teachers would be worth exploring.

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