

July 18 2021

The Hon Minister for Education and Youth
Mr Alan Tudge MP
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Minister Tudge,

Thanks to you and your Department for a very comprehensive Discussion Paper in preparation for the Initial Teacher Education Review. As a teacher educator of forty years, having been employed across several jurisdictions, and as the immediate past president of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, and a past President of the Australian Teacher Educators Association, could I offer three propositions for your consideration please?

Firstly, an affirmation: The introduction of the TPA has seen one of the strongest innovations in Teacher Education in Australia. Its success has been clearly demonstrated through the research conducted by the two largest consortiums GTPA and AfGT. The consolidation of the TPAs across Australia has promoted public confidence in teacher graduates and heightened the quality of ITE programs around Australia.

Secondly a recommendation to focus on entry: The Deans of Education asked government to shift the focus away from admission into ITE and highlight the quality of graduates on exit. Now that this has been achieved through the TPAs, it is timely to focus on a strategic, rigorous and transparent approach to selection into teacher preparation programs.

Selection into the profession, by the profession, could be initiated and governed through a process of selection like that of the medical profession: the development of a selection procedure similar to GAMSAT. The process need not necessarily be restricted to graduates as is the case in the medical profession but could include anyone, including school leavers who has an aspiration to enter a teacher preparation program – graduate or undergraduate. The process could be designed, implemented and governed by a Board representative of teacher educators, teachers and government. Some principles to consider include:

(i) The purpose is to assess the prerequisite knowledge, capacities and dispositions of potential entrants in an equitable, consistent and transparent manner nationally prior to entry ;

(ii) Applicants can adequately prepare for the assessments through practice assessments, short courses, or further study so that they are adequately prepared to meet the expectations inherent in becoming a graduate teacher;

(iii) The assessment/s can be prepared and validated by the profession based on research evidence of what knowledge, capacities and dispositions are desirable for entry

into the profession of teaching - this would shape the structure and the content of the assessments;

(iv) The assessments could be conducted through a blended approach supported by trained assessors from within the professions of teacher education and teaching across the national – in capital cities, and in regional and rural areas.

(v) The assessment/s could involve a combination of, for example, academic achievement, higher level thinking, cultural competencies, prior learnings, evidence of capacities for leadership and dispositions relevant to the profession of teaching. It could also include literacy, numeracy assessments.

(vi) The implementation of the assessments would reflect principles of equity and inclusivity so that all applicants would be entitled to assessments that are fair and non-discriminatory. As such the design team would include a variety of stakeholders who would well positioned to review the assessments, not only as valid and reliable but also culturally sensitive and inclusive so as to provide opportunities for success across the diverse range of applicants who may want to enter the profession of teaching.

(vii) As the funding body of initial teacher education, the Commonwealth government could provide seeding funds of \$1.5 - \$3 million over 3 years to a professional conglomerate (e.g ACDE, members of the teaching profession, with DESE representatives) commissioned to design the assessments, consult with a broad and diverse communities as to the validity, reliability and authenticity of the assessments, pilot the assessments and launch the selection assessment process nationally.

Third, a longer- term aspiration: ITE Accreditation. Currently the accreditation of ITE is, from a policy perspective, regulated by ITE Standards. However, in practice it is ad hoc, highly variable across regulatory authorities, where the standards are inconsistently applied by panels that lack extensive expertise. In the interest of greater national consistency and enhanced quality outcomes, the Commonwealth could propose an alternative model of accreditation. A national body such as AITSL could complete a high -level assessment of each teacher preparation program against the accreditation standards using AI software. This is a well-accepted, highly reliable and efficient process used in regulating banks and financial agencies.

If approved by the national regulator as meeting the standards, the program would then be progressed to the local regulatory authority for further development, registration and delivery. If deemed lacking, it is returned to the provider with feedback for further development or with an unsatisfactory report and categorised as failing to meet the accreditation standards.

I trust you and your panel find these suggestions worthy of further consideration and elaboration. I would be very happy to provide further work and/or participate in a discussion with you if any one of these ideas is of interest. My commitment over many years is to enhance the education of our young people by providing them with the very best teacher graduates. Many countries of the world think that we do a great job in teacher education. My wish is that our nation will one day share that view.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tania Aspland". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Tania Aspland

Email: [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]