Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Institute of Technology Education response

Institute of Technology Education
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Dear Quality Initial Teacher Education Review Expert Panel,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review. This response provides feedback using the questions from the discussion paper, and the Terms of Reference, with a focus on the Technologies learning area.

The Institute of Technology Education (iTE) is the largest teacher professional association in NSW, with over 2200 members. Long term, ongoing discussions with members provide the basis for this response document.

If any of the content of this response requires clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Grant
Institute of Technology Education President
Email:
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1. What can be done to attract more high-achievers and career changers to the profession?

There are a number of factors that must be improved if high-achievers and career changers are to see teaching as an attractive profession, including:

o Improved portrayal of teaching profession in media and by politicians
The view of the teaching profession by society is not that it is a great job to have. Unlike countries like Finland, where people compete to gain entry into initial teacher education courses due to the high esteem in which teachers are held, Australia does not treat its teachers with the same respect. The view of what being a teacher involves by the media and politicians, who often have no first-hand experience in the education profession, denigrates the role of the profession in shaping the most valuable resource Australia has, its young people.

o Greater financial incentive
The current capping of teacher pay based on years of service is seen as limiting by those in the teaching profession and those considering entering the profession. The introduction of the Highly Accomplished and Lead categories has done little to improve this situation when the increased workload to achieve and maintain these levels are considered.

o Improved working conditions
Teachers work in generally poor conditions with little real support from their employers. Teachers 'battle' their employers for pay that is commensurate with the work they do. Because of the difficulty in assessing productivity in the education field, working conditions are often the only points teachers can bargain with when negotiating new awards. This leads to a consistent erosion of teachers working conditions and the need to do more with less every day. An easy to quantify and qualify example is the use of digital technologies and ICT, with the expectation that teachers are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week to students, parents, their supervisors, employers and other organisations that impact education while not being direct employers of teachers, such as NESA.

o Reduced administration paperwork/non-essential paperwork
The increase in paperwork and administration required of teacher has increased significantly, especially over the past 10 years. The impact of social issues and the widening of expected duties of teachers is contributing to a lack of people entering the profession and the increased 'burn out' of early career

teachers. This increased paperwork can be seen in how teachers are expected to apply NCCD, WHS and curriculum policies and procedures, as well as system specific requirements.

o Improve pathways into education
This is not to say it needs to be made easier to enter the teaching profession or ITE courses. However, the lack of recognised prior learning or experience by systems such as the NSW Department of Education, make it very difficult for career changers to have their knowledge, skills and experience recognised in the form of 'approval to teach codes'. This is rife through the Technologies learning area where qualified fitters and turners, boilermakers, metal fabrication career changers have completed ITE courses and not received recognition for the 'Industrial Technology – Metal' approval to teach code. This example can be applied to a variety of Technologies (or TAS) learning area teaching codes. Issues like this need to be addressed in different areas, such as the Australian Qualification Framework, so the NSW DoE can accept these qualifications.

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

Those entering initial teacher education courses are influenced by a variety of reasons. Some of these are based on misconceptions of the profession, such as 'teachers receive 12 weeks holidays a year'. This may have been the case when teachers in NSW were paid at the same level as a parliamentary back bencher, but definitely not anymore due to the increased administration and curriculum demands. A large number of high school teachers give up significant time during the 'holidays' to work with their students. This is especially true for Technologies teachers who have students engaged in project-based learning and need access to specialist equipment and facilities only available at school.

Some enter ITE courses based on the idea there is job security. Again, this is not the case. The number of teachers who cannot gain a permanent position is a cause for concern. The location of permanent jobs is an issue, often forcing teachers to take up positions in non-government schools instead of government schools. It has to be asked, is this intentional? Are less jobs being offered in government schools to reduce the financial burden on governments to fund public education? To counter this, there appears to be a large number of graduates who do not want permanency due to the increased workload of lesson preparation, programming, report writing and other activities that are part of a permanent teachers' duties.

The high initial pay compared to other professions is attractive. This soon diminishes as teachers work through their career and realise they are severely capped at the highest level as a classroom teacher, while the workload and expectations continue to increase with no improvement in remuneration.

3. 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 masters affected your decision to enter ITE?

The potential time unpaid to study an ITE is an obvious and significant deterrent for potential career changers. Two years is a long time to support a family on decreased wages to enter a profession that may pay less than what they were earning and never achieve the higher pay of prior work.

The difficulty in having prior knowledge, skills and experienced recognised as part of ITE graduate qualifications is also a difficulty career changers need to assess.

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

Address the issues identified in Q1 as a starting point.

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

Address the issues identified in Q1 as a starting point.

A number of systems and incentives are in place to assist and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people selecting teaching as a career, support them through the ITE course of study and find an appropriate placement in schools upon graduation.

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

Anecdotally, there are a number of social media groups and professional associations fielding questions from potential career changers coming into teaching. The lack of recognition of their prior knowledge, skills and experience can be a significant contributing factor to these people not choosing to become teachers.

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

Yes, low completion rates are a huge issue, especially for the Technologies learning area. In NSW during Semester 1, there have been approximately 490 Technologies learning area classroom teacher and Head Teacher positions advertised across government and non-government sectors. The best case scenario is there are 100 Technologies learning area graduates from all ITE providers in NSW. There is no way these positions can all be filled.

One thing this does is lead schools not to offer subjects they cannot find a teacher for. If the subject is not offered it is viewed as there being no need for it, when the truth is a teacher is not available. This self-fulfilling spiral of no need will continue until there aren't any teachers available because they aren't training in these areas due to the apparent lack of need for teachers.

The introduction of a one year paid internship as part of the ITE course could encourage pre-service teachers to complete their studies. They may find a job from the internship, have more time to improve their practise and help them make informed decisions about their role as a teacher.

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

It is not ideal, although it is still more effective than Teach for Australia when the cost of the programs and the number of graduates are considered.

The idea of an internship as part of the ITE pattern of study, as mentioned in Q7 may help retain more pre-service teachers to completion.

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

The nature of teaching means that very few people may feel they are suited to until they have a few years of experience in the role. It is a very demanding and dynamic job

The idea of an internship as part of the ITE pattern of study, as mentioned in Q7 may help retain more pre-service teachers to completion. Pre-service teachers should be

made aware of what being a teacher involves with a long term, 5-10 week professional experience in their first year of study.

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

A number of pre-service teachers leave ITE courses when they realise the supposed perks, such as 12 weeks holidays and 9am-3pm days, do not exist. The workload is huge, the pay is poor and there is no respect for teaching by society in general.

Difficulties in finding a job that is suitable to their specific situation and receiving accreditation for prior knowledge, skills and experience also cause pre-service teachers to leave ITE study before completion.

11.   Have you experienced teacher shortages? Has it been in a particular subject area or region?

Yes. The Technologies learning area suffers hugely from teacher shortages, and from graduates lacking curriculum content knowledge and skills. All geographic regions are finding it harder to attract teachers due to the increased cost of living and the low pay of teachers. In many cases this means teachers cannot afford to live close their place of work, or if they live in regional or remote communities, jobs may not be available for their area of expertise.

12.   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?

Yes, there should be targeted learning areas such as Technologies. Within the Technologies learning area are a wide range of specialist areas that need to be identified and targeted, such as Industrial Technology (Timber, Metal, etc), and Engineering. Technologies is the learning area that delivers authentic STEM experiences. It helps students make sense of the isolated content they often study in Mathematics and Science by applying the concepts and principles learned in those subjects to real world, hands on project-based activities.

These areas need to be targeted with real scholarship and mentoring programs. Examples such as the teach.NSW scholarships do not necessarily attract or award the right applicants. The processes are also difficult for career changers to address.

13.   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?

Throughout the history of Industrial Arts/TAS/Technologies education in NSW there have been retraining programs to address the shortfall of appropriately trained teachers. This has included retraining programs focusing on industry or artisans, as well as existing teachers from other learning areas such as PDHPE or Visual Arts. These have met various levels of success. This may be improved with more structured support and suitability screening processes.

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

There are a variety of reasons STEM teachers may not be teaching STEM subjects. The most common would be, due to a lack of appropriately trained STEM teachers, schools may not be able to confidently offer STEM subjects they have historically offered. This lack of confidence in a teacher's ability to safely and appropriately deliver a STEM subject is not good for the self esteem and wellbeing of the teacher.

The opposite is more common, where untrained STEM teachers are delivering STEM subjects. This may be teachers of PDHPE, Geography, etc, delivering a Technology Mandatory or Year 9 Industrial Technology class. There are multiple examples of this happening in numerous schools around Australia due to the massive shortage of trained Industrial Arts/TAS/Technologies/STEM teachers.

This places an unfair burden on the classroom teachers direct supervisor, who often needs to run weekly professional learning sessions outside of school hours to ensure new graduates can deliver content safely and to an appropriate standard. This is rarely needed by Head Teachers outside of the Technologies learning area.

15. 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.

Yes, the APST are appropriate. However, what they do is reduce the time in the ITE course of study for Standard 2, especially 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 to be addressed in any level of detail in the Technologies learning area. While the development of content knowledge and skills continues through a teachers career, the base level of content knowledge appears to have diminished with the introduction of the APST. The APST has leads to ITE courses developing subjects that address each element of each standard, creating a broad but often superficial level of knowledge depth.

Again, this places an unfair burden on the classroom teachers direct supervisor, who often needs to run weekly professional learning sessions outside of school hours to ensure new graduates can deliver content safely and to an appropriate standard. This is rarely needed by Head Teachers outside of the Technologies learning area.

Interestingly, in the discussion paper[1] (p.20) "Graduate teachers report being better prepared in – pedagogy", while on the same page, "Graduate teachers report being less effective as beginning teachers in – pedagogy". This certainly suggests Standard 2 is not being address consistently, or well, by ITE providers.

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

Yes, ITE programs generally covers these Standards well. The internship idea and longer professional experience sessions would improve the ability of pre-service teachers to do this upon graduation and appointment to a teaching role.

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[1] Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2021). *Quality Initial Teacher Education Discussion Paper*. Canberra: Quality Initial Teacher Education Review Secretariat.

17. What are the benefits and costs of the number of TPAs in operation?

TPAs can have a positive impact depending on how they are implemented. The introduction of an internship may allow for graduates to demonstrate achievement at the Proficient level prior to graduation.

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

The AITSL description of a TPA being "not the shoebox model of an e-portfolio where you just throw in any evidence you can find"[2] is unfortunately exactly what it is in most cases. In the same video AITSL acknowledges schools do not see a difference in graduates completing TPAs. If there is no visible impact, are they effective?

The introduction of an internship may allow for graduates to demonstrate higher levels of achievement when completing the TPA process, as they have had more time to prepare authentic evidence in a real-world context.

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

No, the current professional experience arrangements are interpreted differently by different ITE providers, leading to variations in the duration pre-service teachers are in schools.

Professional experience sessions should be longer and an internship should be introduced in the final years of study. A number of Engineering undergraduate programs include an internship and a similar model could be applied to ITE courses.

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[2] AITSL. (2018). *Teaching Performance Assessment* [Video]. Retrieved 17 July 2021, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWaAyQ2tk5s&t=91s.

18. How can professional experience be delivered in a more efficient way for school systems and higher education providers?

ITEs need to be better organised and communicate more effectively, in an ongoing manner with schools.

During the final two years of ITE study, pre-service teachers completing their professional experience should be able to do so as a paid casual employee. This would provide incentives for schools to take on more professional experience pre-service teachers.

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

Generally, yes. Experience shows that current research is rarely used as reference material in ITE courses. It is often 5-10 years behind. This is concerning for Technologies learning area ITE courses where technologies and practices change so quickly.

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

Teacher professional associations are best placed to support the ongoing professional learning of teachers, with their network of experienced teachers to deliver not only content knowledge and skills, but pedagogical knowledge and skills relevant to the variety of school contexts. Teacher professional associations can adapt and respond to changes much quicker than ITGE providers due to a lack of bureaucracy.

ITE providers should develop a network of alumni and seek feedback at various points in their career as a teacher to help shape their ITE course structure. There may be opportunities for ITE providers to work with teacher professional associations.

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

No, the HALT arrangements do not help ITE students because they are under no obligation to do so in NSW. The use of HALTs is generally determined by the school because NESA's requirements for maintain accreditation at higher levels is so vague[3].

22. 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?

HALTs should be assigned as mentors, or running school-based mentoring programs for pre-service teachers and new graduates.

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[3] *Higher levels | NSW Education Standards. Educationstandards.nsw.edu.au.* (2021). Retrieved 17 July 2021, from https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/meeting-requirements/maintaining-accreditation/higher-levels.

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

See response to Q22.

24. 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?

Direct supervisors of new graduates should be on a reduced teaching load, as the new graduates are, to provide dedicated time for them to meet and engage in professional discussion, observation and learning.