

21 April 2023

Response to the TEEP discussion paper

National School of Education, Australian Catholic University

<https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/consultations/teacher-education-expert-panel-discussion-paper-submissions>

1. Strengthening ITE programs to deliver confident, effective, classroom ready graduates

There is an opportunity to ensure all teachers learn in ITE the evidence-based practices which improve student learning. In addition, there is an opportunity for graduate teachers to be assessed on these practices as part of their final year assessment (known as the Teaching Performance Assessment) so that they develop and practice their skills in these areas.

To what extent would this strengthen ITE to deliver confident, effective, classroom ready graduates?

- ITE programs at Australian Catholic University (ACU) are rooted in evidence-based practice and continue to be highly reactive to the changing needs in schools and society generally. *All* ITE programs need to have some inherent flexibility to do this, such as being able to pivot the andragogy during a pandemic or to accommodate a national teacher shortage.
- ACU's **evidence-based approach culminates in the TPA**, in which pre-service teachers (PSTs) “demonstrate the complete planning, teaching, and assessing cycle” and “show how they **use evidence of student learning** during their final-year professional experience placement.”¹ Indeed, an evidence-based approach is embedded throughout the ITE program, starting with the first placement unit of ACU's ITE programs.²
- There are currently twelve TPA versions operating in Australian ITE programs. ACU is part of a **Collective of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)** that implement the **Graduate TPA**, led by the **Institute for Learning Sciences & Teacher Education**.³ In 2023, this is being implemented in undergraduate and postgraduate ITE programs.
- In discussions with other ITE providers, there is agreement that the TPA requirements need to undergo review, including exploration of the existing versions/models of TPA. For instance, “classroom readiness” as a TPA goal is identified as problematic and perhaps too lofty a goal for practical implementation. In the same way that a driver who has just earned their P-plate is not immediately ready for all scenarios on the road, and continues to learn over time through their practical experience, is it reasonable for us – as a community of practice, and as society generally – to expect freshly minted teachers to be instantly “classroom ready”?
- It has been suggested by some providers and schools that one standardised TPA would be desirable, but we raise concerns that a one-size-fits-all version would be unsuitable or impractical for some educational settings.

¹ What is the GTPA? <https://www.graduatetpa.com/>

² For an assignment, weighted at 50%, PSTs first gather data about an educational setting. The data is then used to inform the content of lesson plans, alongside a relevant curriculum.

³ Who is involved? <https://www.graduatetpa.com/>

- ACU recommends a benchmark approach for TPA to ensure standards of excellence are maintained nationally in any TPA models used and to support schools in their understanding and involvement in the assessments.
- ACU has piloted two supplemental ITE programs, which are currently part of research projects. **We support the inclusion of innovative practices to support our PSTs.** The two supplemental projects are these:
 - simSchool simulated classrooms (with observation and practice).
 - Post-placement workshops, modelled after Health Science practices, to improve PSTs' confidence and self-efficacy.⁴

2. Strengthening the link between performance and funding of ITE

Discussion

There is an opportunity to strengthen the focus on improving performance in ITE by setting standardised performance measures for higher education providers and reporting publicly against them. There is also an opportunity to strengthen the link between performance and funding through the provision of financial incentives to encourage higher education providers to strive for excellence.

To what extent would these opportunities provide a strengthened focus on improving the performance of ITE programs?

- All ITE providers in Australia are currently mandated to adhere to a nationally agreed approach, approved by the Education Council in 2015.⁵ As such, we already report transparently to various external accreditation bodies, such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching.⁶ The teacher education accreditors have stringent, “standardised performance measures for higher education providers”, which meet the Australian standards outlined in the *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*.⁷
- Australia has a history of providing financial incentives for ITE programs, such as the **Teaching Studentships** offered in Victoria (government schools) from 1950 to 1978. These involved sending graduated teachers, in their first year *after* graduation, to the schools identified by the Department that most needed teachers. We should examine how such programs were successful (or otherwise) in the past. The Studentships are investigated in Marilyn Bowler’s 2012 La Trobe University thesis.⁸ Successful applicants were offered scholarships at the end of their secondary schooling; it would be important today to identify eligibility/suitability for such a program taking into consideration a diverse set of criteria.
- Studentships could prove useful to supplement existing efforts, such as state funding in Victoria which supports rural regional placements.
- Funding placements is **essential** to support a key issue in the workforce: **Finding teachers to serve in rural and regional areas.** The current teacher shortage crisis was not unexpected

⁴ Billett, S., Cain, M., & Le, A. H. (2018). Augmenting higher education students’ work experiences: Preferred purposes and processes. *Studies in Higher Education* 43(7), 1279-1294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2016.1250073>

⁵ <https://www.education.gov.au/education-ministers-meeting>

⁶ <https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/providers/accreditation>

⁷ <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/accreditation-of-initial-teacher-education-programs-in-australia---standards-and-procedures>

⁸ Bowler, M. (2012). ‘How lucky my generation was’: Teaching studentships in Victoria 1950—78. La Trobe University. <http://arrow.latrobe.edu.au/store/3/4/8/4/6/public/MasterVersion.pdf>

and has been experienced in rural/remote areas for many years, as noted in the Australian Government Department of Education's Issues Paper: Teacher Workforce Shortages (2022).⁹ Now that the crisis has reached major cities, it is garnering more attention and the Issues Paper predicts further decline in future.

- Funding alone is not the solution, of course. Our colleagues in South Australia reported that financial incentives have been offered for rural placements and/or Permission to Teach (PTT) prior to graduation. The financial incentive has not made a significant difference to the number of PSTs willing to undertake those placements/PTT roles. As such, **further investigation is needed to determine how best to fulfill these opportunities/needs.**¹⁰
- At ACU, with the highest engagement of rural/remote placements¹¹, we note that **consistent provisions attract PSTs.** This includes consideration of social engagement and wellbeing (e.g., community-based activities such as sports teams on weekends during a multi-week placement in a rural setting), and other practical considerations such as accommodation with other PSTs (ensuring peer-to-peer support) and access to free Wi-Fi (to ensure they can stay connected with loved ones). The model should consider transportation to, from and during the placement, accommodation before, during and after the placement, meals and other incidental expenses, and loss of wages from the PSTs' usual part-time work.

3. Improving the quality of practical experience in teaching

Discussion

There is an opportunity to improve the quality of practical experience in teaching through:

- developing more comprehensive system level agreements between school systems and higher education providers to improve the coordination and quality of placements
- developing national guidelines for high-quality practical experience
- supporting particular schools to specialise in delivering high quality placements who can share their expertise, and
- providing targeted support for ITE students with competing commitments, additional needs or studying in areas of workforce need to complete their placements.

To what extent would these opportunities improve the quality of practical experience?

- Centres of Excellence exist now in various formats across Australia's educational jurisdictions (e.g., school hubs or clusters, ambassador schools, demonstration schools, and teaching school partnerships), in which multiple schools work together with ITE providers. Such models could be adopted/encouraged more broadly. ACU is actively pursuing this approach, with significant expansion in 2022-2023.
- Much research exists on the success of the abovementioned models, but more can be done to ensure longevity of the partnerships and to find ways to 1) engage PSTs at the start of their ITE programs; 2) to strengthen the involvement of the qualified teachers in the schools through mentorship development; 3) direct involvement of school teachers in the ITE program delivery, e.g., guest lecturing/tutoring or serving on panel discussions.

⁹ <https://ministers.education.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Teacher%20Workforce%20Shortages%20-%20Issues%20paper.pdf>

¹⁰ Editor (11 August 2022). Can incentives address the teacher shortage in rural and remote schools? [Media release, Media Centre for Education Research Australia]. *Australian Rural and Regional News*. <https://arr.news/2022/08/12/can-incentives-address-the-teacher-shortage-in-rural-and-remote-schools/>

¹¹ (9 November 2022). Record teaching placements in regional, rural, and remote Australian schools. [Website]. News, Australian Catholic University. <https://arr.news/2022/08/12/can-incentives-address-the-teacher-shortage-in-rural-and-remote-schools/>

- Involving school teachers in ITE delivery is a win-win: professional development fulfilment for the teachers, and enabling the ITE providers to learn from the “coal face” about the most current needs/practices in schools.
- One of the identified challenges of the Centres of Excellence model is that the participating schools inevitably offer more than their fair share of placements, which can add undue stress and strain the relationship with the ITE provider. It can also lead to certain schools – especially those that may have certain challenges such as low SES or being in a very remote location – are overlooked by graduates (further exacerbating those schools’ teacher shortages).
- There should be an expectation for schools to be more accountable for their role in providing placement opportunities. Ultimately, schools will benefit from engaging as fully as possible in the entire teaching profession continuum. Recent studies from the Australian Council of Deans of Education indicate that smaller schools (comprising less than 1000 students) are doing the heavy lifting of providing placements.¹² Recognising this discrepancy and the challenges ITE providers face currently in finding suitable placements for their PSTs, the Department of Education Victoria is currently sending communication to schools to "encourage" state schools to take more placements. **We recommend this approach be formalised and adopted nationally.**
- AITSL already offers training options for Supervising Teachers (STs), including mentoring and coaching resources¹³, and NSW’s Education Department provides modules for mentors.¹⁴ Developing AITSL’s resources as a national requirement for teachers would undoubtedly improve consistency and quality. Schools report that their teachers are “burnt out” so it is becoming more difficult to find a sufficient number of teachers willing to serve as STs. Tying mentor credentialing to teacher promotion could be a useful incentive to balance the burnout factor. **We recommend mentor training as part of the Lead Teacher requirement across all jurisdictions.**

Consistency is needed to ensure PSTs are receiving support during their placements, especially if they are in a jurisdiction which allows Permission to Teach (PTT, aka Waiver B in NSW) prior to graduation. The need for PSTs to enter teaching roles prior to graduation has been increasing due to the teacher shortage, so we need to be prepared and not reactive. **Being PAID during a placement would help to offset PSTs’ wage losses.** It would also serve to help offset some of the negativity around the profession generally.¹⁵

4. Improving postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants

Discussion

There is an opportunity to attracting mid-career entrants into ITE by:

- enabling mid-career entrants to enter the classroom sooner as part of their degree
- developing evidence and provide guidance on the features of effective programs to attract mid-career entrants, and

¹² Ure, C. et al. (2018). NADPE report: Professional experience in initial teacher education. <https://www.acde.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Final-Report-NADPE-Project-Revised-March-2018.pdf>

¹³ Develop others. AITSL. [Website]. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others>. (Accessed 21 April 2023).

¹⁴ Further support for in-school mentors. NSW Government – Education. [Website]. <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/professional-learning/teacher-quality-and-accreditation/strong-start-great-teachers/developing-focus/further-support-for-in-school-mentors>. (Accessed 21 April 2023).

¹⁵ Mockler, N. (2022). *Constructing teacher identities: How the print media define and represent teachers and their work*. Bloomsbury.

- improving the flexibility of available postgraduate ITE programs to support mid-career entrants in managing competing commitments.

To what extent would these opportunities improve postgraduate programs to attract mid-career entrants?

ITE academic content: Flexibility / accommodations need to be balanced against the necessary knowledge and skills needed for teacher preparation. ITE programs for mid-career could be customised to focus more heavily on areas to need further focus (identified by research), such as classroom management, pedagogy, understanding diverse learners, teacher behaviour/ethics, reflection processes, curriculum development and implementation, understanding APST fulfilment, and so forth.

Incentivisation: Loss of income during training is an issue, of course. Perhaps the Teach for Australia model could be used as a basis for developing a suitable mid-career pathway.

Research opportunities: Mid-career entrants could be encouraged to engage in research. Due to the relatively low number of teachers with higher degrees, there is a disproportionately low number of researchers in Australia in the field of Education.

Furthermore, Australia can learn from other countries in which the Teaching Profession is revered, desirable and highly successful. Noted in Table 1, below, is a list of the top 10 countries identified as having the world's best educational systems. Australia deserves to be on this list. Making a long-term commitment for Australia's ITE, to plan for a strong future for *all* Australians, may require our state and federal governments to shift some financial priorities. We believe this is necessary for Australia's future.

Table 1

Countries with the Best Educational Systems - 2020 Global Citizens for Human Rights¹

1. Denmark
2. Finland
3. Japan
4. Canada
5. Sweden
6. Germany
7. Israel
8. Netherlands
9. Singapore
10. South Korea