



**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TESOL ASSOCIATIONS**

*Submission to*

**TEACHER EDUCATION EXPERT PANEL  
DISCUSSION PAPER**

April 2023

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## **List of Recommendations**

1. The Commonwealth Government should establish the evidence base necessary for implementing effective teacher education reform by requiring the collection and public reporting of data on:
  - (i) the numbers of Indigenous, migrant and refugee background, and international student learners of English as an additional language or dialect in schools, accompanied by descriptions of the methodology used to determine these numbers
  - (ii) the initial teacher education provision in place that is designed to meet the learning requirements of these populations.
2. In regard to meeting the language education needs of First Nations students:
  - (i) the demographic data just recommended should use the descriptive categories in the National Indigenous Languages Report (2020) to distinguish between Indigenous languages (including creoles) and the different ways in which these languages are significant for First Nations communities and people.
  - (ii) explicit attention should be given to:
    - a. preparation of teachers to serve communities where Indigenous languages are their daily mode of communication
    - b. the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate teacher education programs to increase the number of First Nations teachers working in Australian schools, and especially communities where Indigenous languages are the daily mode of communication
    - c. the provision of teacher education programs that increase the number of teachers with expertise in teaching EAL/D and Indigenous languages.
3. The Commonwealth should, as part of the next National Schools Reform Agenda, require jurisdictions to maintain and publish an annual record of the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers and Assistant Teachers employed in their schools.
4. To ensure all teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills for effectively teaching EAL/D learners, all ITE teacher candidates should be required to complete at least one mandatory unit on EAL/D teaching and learning in their initial teacher education program.
5. AITSL's Australian Professional Teaching Standards should encompass supplementary standards frameworks for teaching EAL/D learners, drawing on ACTA's EAL/D Standards Elaborations and AITSL's Capability Framework for Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners.
6. ITE core content should draw from the multi-disciplinary knowledge that underpins teacher education, curriculum and pedagogy, and recognize this knowledge as informing core content for ITE.

7. ITE core content should be informed by knowledge about the development of novice teachers, and structured in accord with ITE best practice.
8. ITE core content should include a focus on the role of language in learning, drawing from international and Australian language in education research into effective approaches to pedagogy to meet the diverse needs of students, including those from EAL/D backgrounds.
9. Any proposed core content for ITE should acknowledge and respond to the fact that teaching is a complex, highly context-dependent activity which requires development of subject matter and related pedagogic expertise as part of a longer-term process of teacher development.
10. A national quality assurance oversight body along the lines proposed by AITSL should be established to develop and promote best practice standards for ITE core content and programs, based on the broad multi-disciplinary knowledge base that underpins the field. The work of the body should be supported by an advisory group that includes educators, teacher educators and early career teachers.
11. As part of any teacher education initiative in the next *National School Reform Agreement*, the Commonwealth should provide support to jurisdictions in planning, resourcing, improving, upgrading and evaluating one or more purpose-designed Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education programs that build on the experience of the Northern Territory RATE trial (see Appendix B).

ITE program(s) for remote Indigenous teachers should:

- (i) contain appropriate content for experienced Assistant Teachers in remote schools, which respects and builds on their knowledge as speakers of Aboriginal languages and their status as cultural custodians in their communities
- (ii) offer qualifications at levels that are directly tied to jurisdictions' salary scales
- (iii) ensure adequate support for enrolled Assistant Teachers to develop their academic English skills
- (iv) be delivered by teacher educators who are:
  - a. employed onsite in the remote schools participating in the program
  - b. qualified, experienced and competent in EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy in remote contexts
- (v) be progressively extended to other communities with relatively large populations; these communities could be designated as "hubs" for more comprehensive coverage
- (vi) include the following stakeholders in developing and accrediting the Program(s):
  - a. employing authorities

- b. specialist training providers (e.g. Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute)
  - c. accreditation authorities (the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership/AITSL, the Australian Qualifications Authority/ASQA, and State/Territory Teachers Registration Boards).
12. Early career teacher transition and associated workforce policies should be the responsibility of education systems. An initiative in the next *National School Reform Agreement* should be additional funding to build school leadership and support system capability to provide sustained mentoring and induction for new teachers in their first five years.
  13. Teacher education performance measures should be developed in consultation with higher education providers to provide a picture of the overall performance of the sector. These measures should not be linked to resourcing for individual providers. The data should be disaggregated by specific programs and program areas to give an indication of provider responsiveness to both local and national priorities and circumstances. These performance reporting requirements should be incorporated within the *Universities Accord*.
  14. Commonwealth higher education base funding for ITE should be allocated to universities as identified, dedicated, ‘ring-fenced’ funding to teacher education faculties and be accompanied by public reporting requirements on the use of this funding to support and improve ITE programs. These requirements should be included in the Government’s *Universities Accord*.
  15. In addition to base funding for ITE, the Commonwealth Government should allocate specific-purpose transition funding to support ITE schools/faculties to improve their ITE programs based on their published improvement plans, with quality of implementation to be evaluated and reported against both plan-specific and sector-wide performance measures. These requirements should also be included in the Government’s *Universities Accord*.
  16. Reforms to improve the quality of practical experience in teaching should be directed to supporting the establishment and development of partner networks between ITE providers and schools recognised for their excellence in teaching in diverse student cohorts.
  17. AERO should investigate, trial and document quality practice experience models that support pre-service teachers and their mentors in culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse school settings, including a community of practice approach that fosters reciprocal mentoring and collaborative professional communication between pre-service teacher peers, school mentor and university mentor teams.
  18. Responsibility for teaching practice placements should be located with education authorities as part of schools’ teacher transition responsibilities, and supported by resources to build transition and mentoring capabilities and leadership. Additional funding and performance reporting measures for teaching practice placements should

be included as part of the teacher education reform initiative in the next *National School Reform Agreement*.

19. The Teacher Education Expert Panel should set in train a task force to:

- (i) gain accurate data on:
  - a. the numbers of migrants and humanitarian entrants who hold teaching and relevant professional qualifications from their home countries
  - b. their English proficiency level.
- (ii) recommend on types and levels of training that would qualify these teachers to teach in Australian schools, specifically:
  - a. support to undertake English language courses in TAFE or tertiary settings that bring learners to IELTS level 7.5 or equivalent
  - b. pathways to bespoke Master of Teaching programs, consisting of:
    - academic preparation/ academic English
    - specific support for the first half of the program
    - flexibility that takes into account family/ work responsibilities.
- (iii) determine priorities for providing support to:
  - a. teacher education institutions to offer bespoke teacher education programs for overseas qualified speakers of English as an additional language.
  - b. prospective teachers with appropriate overseas qualifications to receive fee support for English language tests and English language tuition, on the basis of agreed criteria re their suitability for teaching in Australian schools.

20. Grants should be made to teacher accreditation authorities to assist overseas qualified people seeking to become teachers in Australia by:

- (i) upgrading their websites to provide easily accessible information on degree and English language requirements
- (ii) providing careers advice and other assistance regarding qualifications.

21. The Teacher Education Expert Panel should explicitly specify meeting EAL/D learning needs as a priority area in initial and post-graduate teacher education, and recommend to relevant authorities (State and Territory education authorities, teacher accreditation bodies and AITSL) on the need to create employment and career pathways for TESOL qualified teachers in regard to:

- (i) appointment to permanent positions with responsibilities for teaching EAL/D
- (ii) becoming Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in teaching EAL/D

- (iii) creating an EAL/D leadership career pathway by developing EAL/D Elaborations for the AITSL Australian Professional Standard for Principals and Leadership Profiles.
22. The Teacher Education Expert Panel should recommend that the forthcoming National Schools Reform Agreement develops a national model of teacher supply and demand that includes EAL/D teachers, specifically with reference to:
- (i) data gaps in the supply, demand, retention, and attrition of TESOL-qualified teachers
  - (ii) regular public reporting and projections based on:
    - a. EAL/D learner population data arising from Australia’s migration program and its increasing linguistic diversity
    - b. system staffing data and resourcing plans
    - c. provision for specialist EAL/D teaching
    - d. TESOL-qualified graduates (ITE and postgraduate)
  - (iii) EAL/D teacher recruitment and retention strategies.

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## 1. Introduction

This submission is made on behalf of the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA). ACTA is the peak professional body for TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) educators in pre-school, school and adult settings.<sup>1</sup> It comprises representatives from state and territory TESOL associations, whose members include teachers, school consultants, curriculum developers, teacher educators and researchers in the field of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) education.

ACTA's mission is to advocate for the educational interests of those learning English as their second or additional language in all sectors (early childhood education, schools, VET, other adult, community and tertiary education) and for those who teach them in specialist and mainstream classrooms. These learners include First Nations people for whom traditional and new Indigenous languages are the first or main language in daily life, as well as children, young people and adults from migrant and refugee backgrounds.<sup>2</sup>

ACTA's focus is pedagogy, and the content, resources, procedures, contexts, policies and research that promote quality EAL/D teaching and learning. We espouse the fundamental evidence-based principle that teaching and learning must respect, build from, develop and extend what the learner knows as a thinking, feeling, culturally and socially situated person. This is the foundation for a person's learnings, including learning English as an additional language or dialect.

ACTA notes that the Expert Panel's terms of reference focuses on two recommended reforms from the Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education (QITE) Review (Recommendations 7 and 15) and adds two others, so the scope and purpose of the Discussion Paper is limited to determining the most effective policy mechanisms for implementing these. This submission is confined to the issues to which we can bring our particular expertise.

We are surprised and deeply concerned at the paper's total silence on language and language-related issues. The paper's generic approach provides grounds for ignoring the nature and scale of Australia's *linguistic* diversity, which is subsumed in token references to "culture". There is no consideration of how ITE programs can or do address this diversity.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> [Australian Council of TESOL Associations – Australian Council of TESOL Associations](#)

<sup>2</sup> Our use of the terms "traditional" and "new" Indigenous languages is based on the following distinctions:

- Traditional Australian Indigenous languages are languages spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prior to colonisation, and the directly descended language varieties spoken today.
- New Australian Indigenous languages are languages formed since 1788 from language contact between speakers of traditional languages with speakers of English and/ or other languages. New languages have historical influences from their source languages, including English, but they are not automatically understood by Standard Australian English speakers.
- Aboriginal Englishes are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of speaking English which differ somewhat from Standard Australian English, but which Standard Australian English speakers can more or less understand. These are varieties of English just as American English is a variety of English.

The National Indigenous Languages Report (2020). Commonwealth of Australia, p. 9. [National Indigenous Languages Report | Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.](#)

<sup>3</sup> For example:

Bonness, D. J., Harvey, S., & Lysne, M. S. (2022). Teacher Language Awareness in Initial Teacher Education Policy: A Comparative Analysis of ITE Documents in Norway and New Zealand. *Languages*, 7(3), 208.



Discussion Paper seems to us to reflect a monolingual English-speaking mindset. From ACTA’s perspective, this mindset limits the relevance and efficacy of the proposed policy reforms for the preparation and supply of “classroom ready” teachers for Australian schools.

We are also concerned at the Paper’s complete silence on the *teacher educator* workforce in Australia, who are critical to successful implementation of any reforms in the sector. No data is provided on their employment status, recruitment and retention, expertise or teaching and research capabilities. No recognition is given to the impact of the COVID pandemic on teacher educators’ professional efficacy, wellbeing, adaptability or resilience.<sup>4</sup> This oversight implies that teacher educators have no stake or role in ITE reform and will be little more than its passive recipients.

The Discussion Paper lacks an overall vision. Its four nominated reform areas echo international policy agendas and prescriptions for improving ITE.<sup>5</sup> Its proposals rely on overseas models of narrowly focussed curriculum, centralised control and market driven performance measures in preference to a government commitment to quality assurance and strengthening internal accountability.<sup>6</sup> The Paper does not locate ITE outcomes within the chain of impacts that reflect societal values about the purposes of schooling or the sector’s teacher preparation outcomes that should lead to student learning outcomes.<sup>7</sup> It does not offer a Twenty First Century vision for ITE in Australia.

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- Gleeson, M. (2022). Is supporting the needs of emergent bilingual learners in mainstream classes a cultural or linguistic issue? How do policy, curricula, and secondary teacher education programmes in Australia and New Zealand compare?. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(8), 2962-2975.
- Harklau, L., & Ford, M. K. (2022). English learner education and teacher preparation in the US: an interpretive language education policy analysis. *Language and education*, 36(2), 137-151.
- Menard-Warwick, J. (2020). Teacher leadership for social change in bilingual and bicultural education, by Deborah K. Palmer: Bristol, UK, Multilingual Matters, 2018.
- <sup>4</sup> Rushton, E. A., Murtagh, L., Ball-Smith, C., Black, B., Dunlop, L., Gibbons, S., Ireland, K., Morse, R., Reading, C. & Scott, C. (2022). Reflecting on ‘classroom readiness’ in initial teacher education in a time of global pandemic from the perspectives of eight university providers from across England, UK. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 1-18.
- Hulme, M., Olsson-Rost, A., & O’Sullivan, R. (2022). Developing an online practicum in professional education: a case study from UK teacher education. In *Applied Degree Education and the Future of Learning* (pp. 253-271). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
- Trippstad, T. A., Gkofa, P., Yufu, S., Heffernan, A., Wescott, S., Maguire, M., & Towers, E. (2022). Policy, Teacher Education, and Covid-19: An International “Crisis” in Four Settings. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Teacher Education Research* (pp. 1-29). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Turner, K., & Garvis, S. (2023). Teacher Educator Wellbeing, Stress and Burnout: A Scoping Review. *Education Sciences*, 13(4), 351.
- <sup>5</sup> Brooks, C. (2022). The Uses and Abuses of “Quality” in Teacher Education Policy Making. In I. Menter (Ed.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Teacher Education Research*. Springer
- Helgetun, J. B., & Menter, I. (2022). From an age of measurement to an evidence era? Policy-making in teacher education in England. *Journal of Education Policy*, 37(1), 88-105.
- Lewis, W. D., & Young, T. V. (2013). The politics of accountability: Teacher education policy. *Educational policy*, 27(2), 190-216.
- Louden, W. (2008). 101 damnations: The persistence of criticism and the absence of evidence about teacher education in Australia. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, 14(4), 357-368.
- <sup>6</sup> Cochran-Smith, M., Carney, M. C., Keefe, E. S., Burton, S., Chang, W., Fernandez, M. B., Miller, A. F., Sanchez, J. G., & Baker, M. (2018). Reclaiming accountability in teacher education. Teachers College.
- Tatto, M. T. (2015). The role of research in the policy and practice of quality teacher education: An international review. *Oxford Review of Education* 41(2), 171-201.
- Zeichner, K. (2020). Preparing teachers as democratic professionals. *Action in Teacher Education*, 42(1), 38–48.
- <sup>7</sup> Melissa Barnes & Russell Cross (2020). Teacher education policy to improve teacher quality: Substantive reform or just another hurdle?, *Teachers and Teaching*, 26:3-4, 307-325, DOI: [10.1080/13540602.2020.1832061](https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2020.1832061)

ACTA's submission focuses on specific aspects of the four proposed Reform Areas that most concern us. To set the context, we begin by describing the learner cohorts on whose behalf we advocate.

## **2. Linguistic diversity in schools: a key consideration in reforming teacher education**

Linguistic diversity has fundamentally shaped the nature and character of Australian schools. It is a rare classroom that does not now contain at least some students who are in the process of learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), be they Indigenous, migrant or refugee background or international students.

The Paper's endorsement of evidence-based practice does not include evidence about these learners or consider its implications for teacher education reform. In fact, its generic rules these learners out of consideration.

This stance is partly legitimated by the paucity of national data on EAL/D learners in Australian schools. Lacking comprehensive data, advocacy for change has little traction. The policy silence continues in every educational domain, including higher education.

To address this omission, we outline the somewhat incomplete demographic picture that ACTA has been able to construct regarding First Nations, migrant and refugee, and international student English language learners. We believe that such demographic data should underpin and inform proposals for reforming teacher education in language diverse Australia.

### **Indigenous EAL/D learners**

For a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, English is an additional language or dialect. The 2021 census records that 9.5 per cent (77,000) of those identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders use an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language at home.<sup>8</sup> The majority of these speakers live in remote areas. In 2016, the Productivity Commission reported that 61.5 per cent of Indigenous people living in very remote areas spoke an Indigenous language at home.<sup>9</sup> Using 2016 Census data, the Commission's 2020 Report on Indigenous Disadvantage states that 11 per cent of Indigenous

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Bourke, T., & Ryan, M. (2022). How is impact defined in initial teacher education policy in Australia? *Teachers and Teaching*, 1-17

Cochran-Smith, M., Piazza, P., & Power, C. (2013, January). The politics of accountability: Assessing teacher education in the United States. In *The educational forum* (Vol. 77, No. 1, pp. 6-27). Taylor & Francis Group.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2006). Constructing outcomes in teacher education: Policy, practice and pitfalls. *Teacher Education: Curriculum and change*, 3, 218.

Diez, M. E. (2010). It is complicated: Unpacking the flow of teacher education's impact on student learning. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(5), 441-450.

Furlong, J., Cochran-Smith, M., & Brennan, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Policy and politics in teacher education: International perspectives*. Routledge.

Zeichner, K. M. (2017). *The struggle for the soul of teacher education*. Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> The most common language groups were: Other Australian Indigenous Languages (31.3%), Arnhem Land and Daly River Region languages (14.5%), Torres Strait Island languages (12.0%), Western Desert Languages (10.9%). Other languages used were: Yolngu Matha (8.5%), Arandic (7.4%), Cape York Peninsula Languages (7.0%), Northern Desert Fringe Area Languages (6.6%), Kimberley Area Languages (1.8%). [Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population summary | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](https://abs.gov.au/australia/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-population-summary)

<sup>9</sup> [Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2016 - Report \(pc.gov.au\)](https://pc.gov.au/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage-key-indicators-2016-report) p. A.24

language speakers said they did not speak English well or at all. This ranged from about 3-4 per cent in major cities and inner regional areas to 13 per cent in very remote areas.<sup>10</sup>

The number of these students in schools is not reported nationally. Based on 2016 ABS Census data, ACTA has estimated this figure as 27,329.<sup>11</sup> To our knowledge, no data exists on speakers of Indigenous languages in post-school, community or adult education.

The frequent references to First Nations “peoples, their cultures and perspectives” *never* mention languages or language education.<sup>12</sup> As just indicated, Indigenous languages are central to the daily life of a substantive portion of this population. Outcome 16 of the Closing the Gap Agreement sets the goal of making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages “strong, supported and flourishing”.<sup>13</sup> Without reference to this Outcome, “cultural responsiveness” in ITE programs lacks substance and, more significantly, continues to “other” Indigenous students and their communities.<sup>14</sup> How maintaining and promoting Indigenous languages supports EAL/D learning also needs to be made explicit.

### **Migrant and refugee EAL/D learners**

Immigration is a major driver of Australia’s population growth,<sup>15</sup> while international crises will continue to put pressure on Australia’s refugee and humanitarian intakes.<sup>16</sup> Net overseas migration to Australia rose from 232,800 in 2006/7 to 262,490 in 2016/17, an increase of 12.7 per cent, while the overseas born population grew from 4,063,954 in 2001 to 6,150, 051 in 2016, an increase of 151 per cent.<sup>17</sup> As the Australian Government ramps up its post-COVID migration intake, Australia’s net migration is set to be in the order of 400,000.<sup>18</sup>

In schools, ACTA has estimated that over 600,000 speakers of languages other than English currently need English language support.<sup>19</sup> ABS Census data indicate the number of school-aged respondents (0-19 years of age) who reported speaking ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’

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<sup>10</sup> [Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2020 - Report \(pc.gov.au\)](#), p. A5.

<sup>11</sup> The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) submission to the 2020 Parliamentary Inquiry into Education in Remote and Complex Environments stated:

*a significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote schools are English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) learners: In 2014-15, around one-third (34 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 4-14 years spoke an Australian Indigenous language (including those who only spoke some words). This increases to two-thirds (66 per cent) in remote, compared with 26 per cent in non-remote areas.*

<sup>12</sup> Cf [Priorities Paper — First Languages Australia](#)

<sup>13</sup> [National Agreement on Closing the Gap | Closing the Gap](#) July 2020.

<sup>14</sup> For an authoritative exposition of the various roles Indigenous languages play in the lives and identity of First Nations people, including those who do not use these languages in daily life, see the National Indigenous Languages Report (2020). Commonwealth of Australia, p. 9. [National Indigenous Languages Report | Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts](#).

<sup>15</sup> Cully, M. & Pejoski, L. (2012) Australia unbound? Migration, openness and population futures. In *A Greater Australia: Population, policies and governance* Committee for Economic Development. p.70.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Commonwealth Government’s recent decision to accept an additional intake of Syrian refugee families and to increase the number of humanitarian places from 13,500 to 20,000.

<sup>17</sup> [https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/6377182/upload\\_binary/6377182.pdf](https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/6377182/upload_binary/6377182.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/skilled-workers-to-be-fast-tracked-into-australia-in-migration-overhaul-20230427-p5d3o8.html>;

[National Press Club address - Australia's Migration System \(homeaffairs.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> <https://tesol.org.au/how-many-english-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect-eal-d-learners-are-there-in-australian-schools/>

increased from 117,158 in 2006 to 190,462 in 2016, an increase of 62 per cent.<sup>20</sup> These students include:

- newly arrived students entering Australian schooling at any year from Kindergarten to Year 12
- Australian-born students in all years of schooling learning at different levels of English language proficiency
- humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers with little or no previous formal schooling
- migrant and international students with age-equivalent education
- Kriol and Dialect speaking Indigenous students with varying degrees of exposure to Standard English.<sup>21</sup>

Government immigration policy has a direct impact on the numbers of school students needing English language support. The last decade has seen their dramatic increase. Australia's current and proposed immigration intake will substantially increase the size of this student cohort over the coming decade (see Appendix A).

### **School aged international students**

By 2018, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, enrolments of international fee-paying students in Government, Catholic and Independent schools in Australia had grown to a total of 243,887. Of these, 128,998 were primary enrolments and 114,889 were secondary. Government school enrolments were 182,956 students or 75 per cent of the total.<sup>22</sup> As Australia's borders reopen and state and territory systems and government and independent schools resume their international student programs, it is likely that international student enrolments will soon return to levels similar to those before the pandemic.

### **The implications for learners, teachers and schools**

Research indicates that mainstream teachers nominate teaching EAL/D learners as a major concern.<sup>23</sup> It also highlights persistent graduate teacher reports of feeling least confident and prepared in teaching culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse learners, despite the "social justice" units in their ITE programs.<sup>24</sup> Reflecting the vagueness in the AITSL standards, where student diversity/inclusivity units exist in ITE programs, they are

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<sup>20</sup> ABS Censuses 2006, 2016

<sup>21</sup> The great majority of EAL/D learners are enrolled in state and territory government schools. In 2018-19, they comprised some 13,576 new arrivals, 334,389 EAL/D learners in mainstream classrooms, an estimated 27,329 Indigenous EAL/D learners, and 185,322 international students, totalling 560,616 EAL/D learners altogether. In the Catholic education sector, there were over 14,066 EAL/D learners in the mainstream, and 40,430 international students. Altogether, there were 601,046 EAL/D learners in Australian schools comprising some 15.4 per cent of the total student population. <https://tesol.org.au/how-many-english-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect-eal-d-learners-are-there-in-australian-schools/>

<sup>22</sup> Answer to Senate Estimates Question on Notice SQ19-130.

<sup>23</sup> Watkins, M., Lean, G., Noble, G., & Dunn, K. (2013). *Rethinking Multiculturalism Reassessing Multicultural Education*, UWS and NSW DEC: Sydney; Franco-Fuenmayor, Padron, & Waxman, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Mayer, Diane, Mary Dixon, Jodie Kline, Alex Kostogriz, Julianne Moss, Leonie Rowan, Bernadette Walker-Gibbs, and Simone White. (Eds.) (2017). *Studying the effectiveness of teacher education: Early career teachers in diverse settings*. Springer.

generalised, tokenistic and devoid of EAL/D and curriculum language content.<sup>25</sup> Optional extra professional development is left to teachers to access in their own time, mostly on-line and with little or no incentives or support.<sup>26</sup> Central EAL/D units in State and Territory education systems have attempted to fill this skill gap *post hoc*, by offering mainstream teachers occasional EAL/D professional development sessions and courses.<sup>27</sup> However, in the absence of mandatory EAL/D units in ITE, these courses are effectively doing the ‘heavy lifting’ in a continual, catch-up process.

Without robust, generalist, across-the-board ITE preparation in responding to EAL/D learners, teachers will remain ill-equipped to teach these students. Units that provide ITE students with a sound basis in teaching knowledge and strategies for EAL/D learners should be mandatory.<sup>28</sup> Currently, this requirement is not the norm.

We draw the Expert Panel’s attention to the report of the 2022 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Importance of Adult Literacy.<sup>29</sup> This report gave considerable attention to school education and the needs of school-aged children, especially in Chapter 3 and related Recommendations 8, 13 and 14 (dot point 5 in that Report.). The Discussion Paper appears oblivious to this Inquiry.

### **Recommendation 1**

The Commonwealth Government should establish the evidence base necessary for implementing effective teacher education reform by requiring the collection and public reporting of data on:

- (iii) the numbers of Indigenous, migrant and refugee background, and international student learners of English as an additional language or dialect in schools, accompanied by descriptions of the methodology used to determine these numbers
- (iv) the initial teacher education provision in place that is designed to meet the learning requirements of these populations.

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<sup>25</sup> Frequently when ITE students are directed to differentiate instruction for different learner cohorts, the main strategies they are offered are giving EAL learners more time and removing or simplifying content. The needs of learners of Standard Australian English as an additional dialect/variety (for example, in the Torres Strait or for Pacifica students) are never addressed. See ACTA submission to the QITE review at: <https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ACTA-final-submission-Quality-Initial-Teacher-Education-Review.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> In some jurisdictions, there are no providers of EAL/D professional learning. In others, central EAL/D education units have attempted to meet the ongoing need for EAL/D professional learning through EAL/D professional development courses for mainstream teachers, such as the South Australian ESL in the Mainstream course, the NSW Teaching English Language Learners (TELL) course and the inter-jurisdictional Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Hub. With the successive retirement and loss of experienced EAL/D leaders, the sustainability of school based EAL/D professional development is at risk.

<sup>27</sup> The following course packages are in use:

ESL in the Mainstream; (TELL); Tracks to Two-Way learning (Aboriginal Education); Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream classrooms (TESMC); ESL in the Early Years; Culturally Responsive Classrooms.

<sup>28</sup> Hammond, J. (2006). High challenge, high support: Integrating language and content instruction for diverse learners in an English literature classroom. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5, 4, pp. 269-283.

Foley, Y., Sangster, P., & Anderson, C. (2013). Examining EAL policy and practice in mainstream schools. *Language and Education*, 27(3), 191-206.

<sup>29</sup> [Don't take it as read – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://aph.gov.au)

## **Recommendation 2**

In regard to meeting the language education needs of First Nations students:

- (iii) the demographic data just recommended should use the descriptive categories in the National Indigenous Languages Report (2020) to distinguish between Indigenous languages (including creoles) and the different ways in which these languages are significant for First Nations communities and people<sup>30</sup>
- (iv) explicit attention should be given to:
  - d. preparation of teachers to serve communities where Indigenous languages are their daily mode of communication
  - e. the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate teacher education programs to increase the number of First Nations teachers working in Australian schools, and especially communities where Indigenous languages are the daily mode of communication
  - f. the provision of teacher education programs that increase the number of teachers with expertise in teaching EAL/D and Indigenous languages.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Commonwealth should, as part of the next National Schools Reform Agenda, require jurisdictions to maintain and publish an annual record of the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers and Assistant Teachers employed in their schools.

## **Recommendation 4**

To ensure all teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills for effectively teaching EAL/D learners, all ITE teacher candidates should be required to complete at least one mandatory unit on EAL/D teaching and learning in their initial teacher education program.

## **Recommendation 5**

AITSL's Australian Professional Teaching Standards should encompass supplementary standards frameworks for teaching EAL/D learners, drawing on ACTA's EAL/D Standards Elaborations and AITSL's Capability Framework for Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners.

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<sup>30</sup> See footnote 2.



### 3. Strengthen ITE programs to deliver effective classroom ready graduates

#### 3.1 Evidence-based practices in education

Central to the Discussion Paper's proposals is the application of 'evidence-based practice' to delineate ITE core content. Like so many proposals in the history of failed or discarded previous reforms, this solution is imported from elsewhere.<sup>31</sup>

Evidence-based practice originated in the field of medicine, where it has become the main paradigm in clinical practice and decision-making. Professional action is described using a *causal model of effective intervention*.<sup>32</sup> Applied to teaching:

*'evidence' is often exclusively considered in cognitive terms, that is, as knowledge and, more specifically, as **true knowledge**. Evidence is further narrowed down to scientific knowledge understood as knowledge generated through scientific research, namely experimental research, and more specifically, the randomised control trial, as this is considered to be the only reliable way in which valid scientific knowledge about 'what works' can be generated.*<sup>33</sup> (our emphasis)

Applied to teaching and learning, these assumptions about knowledge are problematic.

ACTA believes that any specification of ITE core content should not rely on this narrowly focused approach to educational research. Its "deficits" have been identified as follows.<sup>34</sup>

An inherent *knowledge deficit* lies in the gap between findings generated from controlled experimental research and how these findings can be utilised in classrooms. Research findings are always partial, provisional and probabilistic, grounded in stated or unstated theoretical preferences, and exceeded by the real world. Results from experimental and quasi-experimental research cannot be directly translated into classroom settings, even as rule- or recipe-based actions. Research findings must be subject to the tacit knowledge and professional judgement that is crucial to implementing, evaluating and developing the practice of teaching.<sup>35</sup>

An inherent *effectiveness deficit* lies in the simplistic linear model of a causal relationship between teacher interventions and their effects. Evidence for this relationship is discovered under 'closed system' conditions where complexity is reduced or eliminated, and key factors are abstracted, controlled and isolated precisely in order to identify (or disprove) that relationship. What is found to 'work' under these conditions takes no account of the complex,

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<sup>31</sup> Wiseman, A. W. (2010). The uses of evidence for educational policymaking: Global contexts and international trends. *Review of research in education*, 34(1), 1-24.

Mayer, D. (2021). The connections and disconnections between teacher education policy and research: reframing evidence. *Oxford Review of Education*, 47(1), 120-134.

<sup>32</sup> Biesta, G. (2007). Why "what works" won't work: Evidence-based practice and the democratic deficit in educational research. *Educational theory*, 57(1), 1-22.

<sup>33</sup> Biesta, G. J. (2010). Why 'what works' still won't work: From evidence-based education to value-based education. *Studies in philosophy and education*, 29, 491-503; p.494.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

Hammersley, M. (2005). The myth of research-based practice: The critical case of educational inquiry. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(4), 317-330.

Hammersley, M. (2009). What is evidence for evidence-based practice? In R. St. Clare (Ed.), *Education Science: Critical Perspectives* (pp.101-111) Rotterdam: Sense.

<sup>35</sup> This observation applies across the professions, including the practice of medicine.

open, recursive, social-semiotic systems of real-world classrooms, where the multiple interpretations and understandings of teacher-student exchanges interact with each other and the environment.

Decontextualised evidence for effective pedagogic interventions cannot therefore be directly applied to real classrooms. As every teacher knows, strategies that work for one class cannot be imported into another without being substantially recontextualised or reconfigured. An essential ingredient in the professional craft of teaching is evaluating the evidence about what has ‘worked’ somewhere and working out how and if it might be adapted to ‘work *here*’.

An inherent *application deficit* lies in the gap between a research site and where its findings are applied. As just argued, proposals for teaching that claim to be evidence-based require the same conditions for implementation that generated the evidence. Consequently, classrooms must be shaped and transformed so as to be conducive to implementing the teaching prescriptions that are claimed to follow from the evidence. Such prescriptions acquire inherent and normative power over teachers, because the claim to be based on evidence naturalises the knowledge generated as ‘scientific’, which constrains acting or thinking differently. A ‘regime of truth’ inherently re-forms and de-forms the professional practice and craft of teaching into a limited and limiting approach.

The adoption of teaching practices that are based on evidence is more than a technical enterprise. The evidence chosen is imbued with and subject to teacher value judgements about educational *ends* (i.e. worthwhile purposes and desirable outcomes), educational *means* (i.e. effectiveness and inclusivity), and educational *contexts* (i.e. actual classrooms and their diverse learners). Teachers construct and reconstruct what is said to ‘work’ through their value systems. Values are therefore constitutive of educational practices. Teaching practices are values based.

The deficits just outlined are exemplified in AERO’s generic, context-free methodology of finding evidence for teaching practices “that suit the largest range of learners possible” (p. 5). This majoritarian perspective rules out *any* consideration of EAL/D learners. It dismisses the extensive and long-established evidence on effective pedagogy for these learners, including learning literacy in an additional language, which distinguishes this pedagogy from that used for mother tongue English speakers – a crucial difference that both AERO and the Discussion Paper fail to acknowledge.<sup>36</sup>

EAL/D learners are but one minority group excluded by a majoritarian approach that favours statistical norms. ACTA believes that a fundamental premise in teacher education must be the understanding that *diversity itself* is the norm in Australian classrooms. ITE should provide a

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<sup>36</sup> Doughty, C. J., & Long, M. H. (Eds.). (2008). *The handbook of second language acquisition*. John Wiley & Sons.

Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (Eds.). (2013). *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition*. Routledge.

Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Christian, D., Saunders, W., & Saunders, B. (2006). *Educating English language learners: A synthesis of research evidence*. Cambridge University Press.

Harper, H., & Feez, S. (Eds.) (2021). *An EAL/D Handbook: Teaching and learning across the curriculum when English is an additional language or dialect*. Newtown, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association Australia (PETAA).

Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. Routledge.

Lightbown, P. & Spada, N. (2021). *How language are learned*. Oxford University Press. 5<sup>th</sup> edition

Mitchell, R., Myles, F., & Marsden, E. (2019). *Second language learning theories*. Routledge.



first step in building teachers' expertise in responding to this diversity, as outlined in Recommendations 1-4 above. From this perspective, ITE must be considered in the context of provision that is structured to support the development of teaching expertise throughout a teacher's professional career.

### ***Conclusion and Recommendations***

In sum, the nature, scope and value of a genuine teacher education knowledge base make the core content proposed in the Discussion Paper unfit as a mandatory ITE curriculum. The Paper privileges the place of 'evidence-based' educational research in ITE. It takes for granted the role such research might play in ITE reforms. This research has potential value only when considered alongside, and in the context of, the broader knowledge base of teacher education research, including into EAL/D learning and pedagogy.

If adopted, the proposed core content will restrict ITE curriculum offerings and eliminate others. It will not equip teacher graduates with the pedagogical knowledge and skills needed to navigate the diversity of Australian classrooms.

As outlined above, any specification of core content for ITE needs to:

- be underpinned by research-informed understandings of teacher cognition and development
- draw on a multi-disciplinary educational knowledge base
- integrate curricular knowledge and teaching subject content
- be informed by evidence and research into learning English as an additional language or dialect
- be responsive to the diversity of Australian classrooms.

In terms of an authorising environment for the above, ACTA believes a way forward is the establishment of a national quality assurance oversight body along the lines proposed by AITSL (p. 22). This body should be supported by an advisory group that includes educators, teacher educators and early career teachers. It would be tasked with the responsibility for ITE quality assurance through the development and promotion of national best practice standards for ITE core content and programs. It would support teacher educators' professional agency, which is essential to sustainable improvements in this sector.

### **Recommendation 6**

ITE core content should draw from the multi-disciplinary knowledge that underpins teacher education, curriculum and pedagogy, and recognize this knowledge as informing core content for ITE.

### **Recommendation 7**

ITE core content should be informed by knowledge about the development of novice teachers, and structured in accord with ITE best practice.

### **Recommendation 8**

ITE core content should include a focus on the role of language in learning, drawing from international and Australian language in education research into effective approaches to pedagogy to meet the diverse needs of students, including those from EAL/D backgrounds.

### **Recommendation 9**

Any proposed core content for ITE should acknowledge and respond to the fact that teaching is a complex, highly context-dependent activity which requires development of subject matter and related pedagogic expertise as part of a longer-term process of teacher development.

### **Recommendation 10**

A national quality assurance oversight body along the lines proposed by AITSL should be established to develop and promote best practice standards for ITE core content and programs, based on the broad multi-disciplinary knowledge base that underpins the field. The work of the body should be supported by an advisory group that includes educators, teacher educators and early career teachers.

## **3.2 Core Content**

### ***Content***

The core content proposed in the Discussion Paper depicts teaching and learning as a simple information transmission and retrieval process facilitated by input-output strategies. The “classroom” for which novice teachers must be “ready” is an imaginary homogeneous place where the transmission process can be enabled or disrupted by a limited checklist of “factors.”

This proposed core content ignores teacher education as a field of knowledge and practice that is informed by multiple disciplines and theories, and that a confident and effective teacher draws on a diverse array of knowledge and skills.<sup>37</sup> This array includes:

- subject-matter or disciplinary knowledge
- knowledge and skills that apply to the pedagogy of particular subject areas
- knowledge about learning processes generally and how these are age-related and play out in specific content and skill areas (cf. learning maths, languages, music, geography or history)
- appreciation and understanding of learner diversity and different educational contexts

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<sup>37</sup> Ball, D. L., Thames, M. H., & Phelps, G. (2008). Content knowledge for teaching: What makes it special? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(5), 389-407.

Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.

Koehler, M. J., & Mishra, P. (2009). *What is technological pedagogical content knowledge?* Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education, 9(1), 60-70.

Slavin, R. E. (2002). Evidence-based education policies: Transforming educational practice and research. *Educational Researcher*, 31(7), 15-21.

- technological knowledge and skills
- empathy and interpersonal and communication skills
- a commitment to reflective practice and professional growth.

The content above is underpinned by and draws on educational psychology, sociology, philosophy, literary and cultural studies, learning science and educational linguistics, to name only some disciplinary areas.<sup>38</sup> Although ITE programs should be practice-focussed, their content must be informed by *teacher educators*' deep understanding of the long and rich history of contributions, questions and controversies in educational theories and disciplines that have contributed to both what should be taught and how.<sup>39</sup>

The content nominated as “core” in the Discussion Paper is impoverished and not without controversy (see Specific Issues section below). The Paper has nothing to say about what *teacher educators* should know and draw from, and how this knowledge should shape ITE core content.

### **Process**

Despite espousing evidence-based teaching practice, the Discussion Paper fails to reference the teacher development research that underpins the *practice* of ITE.<sup>40</sup> It adopts, without question, the outcomes-focused assumption that *what* is taught can be specified without considering *how* people learn. In this case, its content specification takes no account of the *transition processes* by which novice teachers might become “classroom ready” or how the proposed core content might relate to (or depend on) the mentoring that is essential to this transition.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Bernstein, B. 2000. *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique* (Revised edition). Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Maton, K., Hood, S., Shay, S. (2016). *Knowledge-building: Educational studies in Legitimation Code Theory*. Abingdon: Routledge.

<sup>39</sup> We refer to the great contributors to educational thinking such as Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsky, Dewey, Friere.

<sup>40</sup> Evans, L. (2002). What is teacher development?. *Oxford review of education*, 28(1), 123-137.

Tsui, A. B. (2011). Teacher education and teacher development. In *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 21-39). Routledge.

Cobb, D. J. (2020). Initial teacher education and the development of teacher identity (chapter)

Goodwyn, A., Manuel, J., Roberts, R., Scherff, L., Sawyer, W., Durrant, C., & Zancanella, D. (Eds.).

(2022). *International Perspectives on English Teacher Development: From Initial Teacher Education to Highly Accomplished Professional*. Taylor & Francis.

Matschek-Jauk, M., & Reicher, H. (2021). Social and emotional learning as part of professional development in initial teacher education. In *International Approaches to Promoting Social and Emotional Learning in Schools* (pp. 90-108). Routledge.

MacPhail, A., Seleznyov, S., O'Donnell, C., & Czerniawski, G. (2022). Supporting the Continuum of Teacher Education Through Policy and Practice: The Inter-Relationships Between Initial, Induction, and Continuing Professional Development. In *Reconstructing the Work of Teacher Educators: Finding Spaces in Policy Through Agentic Approaches—Insights from a Research Collective* (pp. 135-154). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Mcnamara, O., Webb, R., & Brundrett, M. (2012). Primary teachers: Initial teacher education, continuing professional development and school leadership development. In *The Cambridge Primary Review Research Surveys* (pp. 669-721). Routledge.

<sup>41</sup> The paper fails to see the implications of its own description of novice learners for novices learning to become teachers:

The Paper gives no indication of how ITE should be structured to take account of “the complex voyage of self and professional discovery” embarked on by a person enrolling in an initial teacher education program.<sup>42</sup> The practice and process of “teaching teachers” – the fundamental *pedagogy* of teacher education itself – and its implications for core content are not addressed.

The Discussion Paper bypasses research on teacher cognition that drives the development of effective teaching and shapes the professional dispositions that make it possible.<sup>43</sup> The extensive literature on pedagogic content knowledge, including language pedagogic content knowledge, places the exercise and development of teacher professional judgement and meta-reflection at the core of teacher development and effective teaching.<sup>44</sup> ITE needs to encourage novice teachers to develop this professional judgement and their practice by exploring and questioning what is claimed to “work” through their own reflexive engagement with both practice and theory.<sup>47</sup> We find no room in Reform Area 1 for questioning, trial and error, experimentation, learning and growth.

The Discussion Paper’s proposed core content is also silent about the fundamental role of language in learning and education, including for those learning English as an additional language or dialect. There is no recognition of the rich stream of Australian and international research in these fields.<sup>45</sup> Teachers need to understand the linguistic complexities and

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*Preparing to teach school-aged students is to prepare to teach novice learners, that is, learners who experience information as new. This is an important distinction for teachers to understand and address, as the brain of a ‘novice’ processes information differently from the brain of an ‘expert’, even when they are exposed to the same information. Things that novices see as separate pieces of information, experts see as an organised set of facts (or a schema). ... Understanding how a student’s brain moves from being a novice to an expert when learning new information will support teachers to tailor and target instruction appropriately.* (p. 9; our emphases)

The “separate pieces of information” presented in Figure 1.1 might be interpretable by experienced teachers but this schema is an impoverished abstraction of the content needed to induct beginning teachers to the teaching profession.

<sup>42</sup> Masters, Y., & Freak, A. (2015). Grappling with Multiplicity: A Framework for Teacher Formation. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(12). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n12.2>

<sup>43</sup> Adams, P. E., & Krockover, G. H. (1997). Beginning science teacher cognition and its origins in the preservice secondary science teacher program. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching: The Official Journal of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching*, 34(6), 633-653.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language teaching*, 36(2), 81-109.

Li, L. (2019). Teacher cognition and teacher expertise. In *The Routledge handbook of English language teacher education* (pp. 335-349). Routledge.

Krulatz, A., Christison, M., Lorenz, E., & Sevinç, Y. (2022). The impact of teacher professional development on teacher cognition and multilingual teaching practices. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 1-17.

<sup>44</sup> Abd Rahman, F., & Scaife, J. A. (2012). Pre Service Teachers’ Development of Pedagogic Content Knowledge: A Multifaceted Case Study. *Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 20(3), 615-634.

Ramchand, M. (2022). Pedagogic content knowledge of science: A framework for practice and construct for understanding teacher preparation. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, 19(2), 281-303

Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.

Evens, M., Elen, J., & Depaepe, F. (2016). Pedagogical content knowledge in the context of foreign and second language teaching: A review of the research literature. *Porta Linguarum: Revista internacional de didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras*, (26), 187-200.

<sup>45</sup> Dare, B., & Polias, J. (2022). Lessons learnt applying a systemic functional model to teaching and learning in school contexts over the last thirty years: a personal account. *Language, Context and Text*, 4(1), 2-25

Derewianka, B. & Jones, P. T. (2023). *Teaching Language in Context* (3rd edition). Melbourne: Oxford University Press

demands of the English-medium curriculum and the particular English language scaffolding that can assist diverse learners to successfully participate and achieve in Australian classrooms.

### *Specific Issues*

#### THE BRAIN AND LEARNING

The paper's elevation of brain science as the key to understanding learning is problematic. Equally troubling is the separation of the "brain" from context, understood in Reform Area 1 simply as a list of "enabling factors" in processing the information sent to long term memory. This section conflates the fields of brain science, cognitive science and educational psychology. The evidence promoted excludes other valuable understandings of cognition, for example, embodied cognition,<sup>46</sup> cognition as socially situated (situated cognition)<sup>47</sup> and culturally located (cultural psychology).<sup>48</sup> Cognitive Load Theory, prioritised in the proposed core content, is itself not without challenge and further development.<sup>49</sup>

#### EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

The Paper's recommendations highlight various pedagogic practices, such as explicit modelling and scaffolding, as a core ITE learnings. These practices are misrepresented as enacting Cognitive Load Theory principles and ignores their basis in sociocultural research

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- Halliday, M. A. K. (2007). *Language and Education* (Volume 9 in the *Collected Works of M.A.K. Halliday*; edited by J.J. Webster). London & New York: Continuum.
- Humphrey, S. (2016). *Academic Literacies in the Middle Years: A Framework for Enhancing Teacher Knowledge and Student Achievement*. Routledge
- Martin, J. R. (2009). Genre and language learning: A social semiotic perspective. *Linguistics and Education*, 20, 10-21.
- Rose, D., & Martin, J. R. (2012). *Learning to write, Reading to Learn: Genre, Knowledge and Pedagogy in the Sydney School*. Equinox
- Schleppegrell, M. (2004). *The Language of Schooling: A Functional Linguistics Perspective*. Erlbaum.
- Schleppegrell, M., & Christie, F. (2018). Linguistic features of writing development. In Bazerman, C. et al. (Eds.) *The Lifespan Development of Writing* (pp. 111-150). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- <sup>46</sup> Mavilidi, M. F., Ouwehand, K., Schmidt, M., Pesce, C., Tomporowski, P. D., Okely, A., & Paas, F. (2021). Embodiment as a pedagogical tool to enhance learning. In S.A. Stolz (Ed.), *The Body, Embodiment, and Education* (pp. 183-203). Routledge.
- Shapiro, L., & Stolz, S. A. (2019). Embodied cognition and its significance for education. *Theory and Research in Education*, 17(1), 19-39
- Wakefield, E.M., & Goldin-Meadow, S. (2021). How gesture helps learning. In S.A. Stolz (Ed.), *The Body, Embodiment, and Education* (pp. 183-203). Routledge
- <sup>47</sup> Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. 1989, 18 (1), 32-42.
- Roth, W. M., & Jornet, A. (2013). Situated cognition. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, 4(5), 463-478.
- Robbins, P., & Aydede, M. (Eds.). (2008). *The Cambridge handbook of situated cognition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, E. R., & Semin, G. R. (2004). Socially Situated Cognition: Cognition in its Social Context. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 36, pp. 53-117
- <sup>48</sup> Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Harvard university press.
- Heiphetz, L., & Oishi, S. (2022). Viewing development through the lens of culture: Integrating developmental and cultural psychology to better understand cognition and behavior. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 17(1), 62-77.
- Kitayama, S., & Cohen, D. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of cultural psychology*
- <sup>49</sup> (Schnotz, W., & Kürschner, C. (2007). A reconsideration of cognitive load theory. *Educational psychology review*, 19, 469-508.

on cognitive apprenticeship.<sup>50</sup> The recommended practices are also presented as stand-alone procedures independent of learning theories and subject matter content. While of value, these practices mean little to ITE students unless they are embedded in specific subject matter content, disciplinary literacy and contexts for learning.<sup>51</sup>

An example is the Paper's advocacy for the explicit and systematic teaching of reading and writing across the content areas. Novice teachers need see how explicit and systematic instruction takes *specific* shape in their own area of teaching, especially as their students transition from the early stages of 'learning to read' and encounter the increasingly complex 'reading to learn' and writing demands of the middle/upper primary and secondary school curriculum.<sup>52</sup> The disembodied pedagogic practices listed in Figure 1.1 need to be understood and developed by novice teachers through an explicit focus on subject matter and its related language as they prepare actual lessons for culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (see footnotes 45, 50, 52, 54 for relevant research).

Reflecting its majoritarian perspective, the only pedagogic response to diversity in the classroom proposed in the Discussion Paper are multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) or 'response to intervention' (pp. 14-15). This remedial 'reverse triage' model extrapolates from an approach specifically developed to diagnose students with learning difficulties, and misapplies it as a pedagogy for all students seen to be struggling with traditional teacher-fronted, whole class instructional formats.<sup>53</sup> It is wholly inappropriate for EAL/D learners because it relegates these learners to Tier 2 and 3 support only *after* and *if* a teacher realises that these learners are struggling within whole class Tier 1 instruction. It is the antithesis of research-informed best practice pedagogy for EAL/D learners, which front-end loads

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<sup>50</sup> Collins, A., Brown, J. S., & Holum, A. (1991). Cognitive apprenticeship: Making thinking visible. *American educator*, 15(3), 6-11.

Collins, A., Brown, J. S., & Newman, S. E. (2018). Cognitive apprenticeship: Teaching the crafts of reading, writing, and mathematics. In Resnick, L. (Ed.). *Knowing, learning, and instruction Essays in honor of Robert Glaser*. (pp. 453-494). Routledge.

<sup>51</sup> Christie, F. and Macken-Horarik, M. (2011). Disciplinarity and school subject English. In F. Christie and K. Maton (Ed.). *Disciplinarity: Functional linguistic and sociological perspectives* (pp. 175 – 196). Continuum.

Fang, Z. & Schleppegrell, M. (2010). Disciplinary literacies across the content areas: supporting secondary reading through functional language analysis. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 53(7), 587-597.

Goldman, S. R., Britt, M. A., Brown, W., Cribb, G., George, M., Greenleaf, C., Lee, C. D., Shanahan, C. & Project READi. (2016). Disciplinary literacies and learning to read for understanding: A conceptual framework for disciplinary literacy. *Educational Psychologist*, 51(2), 219-246.

McConachie, S. M., & Petrosky, A. R. (2009). *Content matters: A disciplinary literacy approach to improving student learning*. John Wiley & Sons.

Shanahan, T., & Shanahan, C. (2012). What is disciplinary literacy and why does it matter?. *Topics in language disorders*, 32(1), 7-18.

<sup>52</sup> Christie, F., & Derewianka, B. (2010). *School discourse: Learning to write across the years of schooling*. A&C Black.

Weekes, T. (2022). A review of the literature around literacy transitions. In P.T. Jones, E. Matruglio & C. Edwards-Groves (Eds.). *Transition and Continuity in School Literacy Development* (pp.15-28), London: Bloomsbury

<sup>53</sup> Burns, M. K., & Symington, T. (2002). A meta-analysis of prereferral intervention teams: Student and systemic outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology*, 40(5), 437-447; Burns, M. K., Appleton, J. J., & Stehouwer, J. D. (2005). Meta-analytic review of responsiveness-to-intervention research: Examining field-based and research-implemented models. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 23(4), 381-394.

Michell, M., & Sharpe, T. (2005). Collective instructional scaffolding in English as a second language classrooms. *Prospect*, 20(1), 31-58.

integrated and inclusive language support through explicit and systematic modelling and scaffolding in situated learning tasks.<sup>54</sup>

#### CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

This section in the Discussion Paper has clear focus on ‘survival’ strategies for managing student behaviour. While these strategies have merit, they will fail if applied formulaically without an understanding of wider social contexts and how student behaviours are crucially shaped by such things as teacher-student relationships, peer group and classroom dynamics, family and community life, and their motivation and engagement.<sup>55</sup>

#### ENABLING FACTORS FOR LEARNING

This area presents as a somewhat miscellaneous grouping of sociocultural considerations that imply their residual and sequestered place in core ITE content. The absence of research evidence and the reliance on education policy documents is noticeable. There is a wealth of relevant research that could have been referenced here, most notably the ‘funds of knowledge’ literature highly applicable to all four subcomponents of the area.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Athanases, S. (2012). Maintaining High Challenge and High Support for Diverse Learners. *Leadership*, 42(1),18.

Derewianka, B. (2014). Supporting students in the move from spoken to written language. In A. Mahbob & L. Barratt (eds.) *Englishes in multilingual contexts*. Netherlands: Springer, pp. 165-181.

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Parkin, B., & Harper, H. (2019). *Teaching with Intent 2: Literature-based literacy teaching and learning*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association Australia.

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Walqui, A. (2006). Scaffolding instruction for English language learners: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9, 2, pp. 159-180.

<sup>55</sup> Christenson, S., Reschly, A. L., & Wylie, C. (2012). *Handbook of research on student engagement* (Vol. 840). New York: Springer.F

Evertson, C. M., & Weinstein, C. S. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues*. Routledge.

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Yamin, T. S., Neber, H., Linke, S. K., Hall, N. C., Goetz, T., Taxer, J. L., & Neber, H. (2012). *The Handbook of Emotion, Motivation, and Self-Regulation in Learning and Instruction*.

<sup>56</sup> Banegas, D. L. (2022). Teacher educators’ funds of knowledge for the preparation of future teachers. *RELC Journal*, 53(3), 686-702.

González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Routledge.

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Szech, L. (2021). How the Funds of Knowledge Theory Shifted Teachers' Dominant Narratives of Family Involvement. *School Community Journal*, 31(1), 149-170.

## 4. Strengthening the link between performance and funding for teacher education

Given time and resource constraints, ACTA's response to the proposals in Reform Area 2 focuses on specific points, recommendations and other particular concerns.

### 4.1 Standardised performance measures

ACTA supports the collection of standardised performance data for ITE, depending on the nature of the data collected. The indicators proposed in the Discussion Paper are inadequate from ACTA's perspective, because – in line with the whole Paper – they exclude consideration of the linguistic diversity that characterises Australian classrooms. It confines attention to the currently designated “priority equity cohorts” in the National Schools Reform Agreement, which is, in fact, under review.<sup>57</sup>

ACTA strongly opposes resourcing based on performance data. As we elaborate in section 4.2 below, perverse incentives are inevitable and inherent in any such funding model. Contrary to the hopes expressed in the Discussion Paper (p. 27), a holistic application of performance measures will not mitigate this problem.

#### *Selection*

ACTA supports collection of ITE data on selection but questions the Discussion Paper's specification of what constitutes diversity.

Confining data on selection to “recognised equity cohorts” continues the silence regarding First Nations, migrant and refugee background speakers of languages other than English. Recruiting these language speakers into ITE programs will develop needed workforce skills, promote equity and provide role models for young people in Australian schools (Discussion Paper, p. 26).<sup>58</sup> We support the Discussion Paper's reference to the statement by Gruppetta et al. (2018, p. 3) that:

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers can help meet student and community needs and provide culturally responsive educational experiences that “authentically connect schools with local First Nations communities to promote educational opportunity and respect for cultural ways of knowing, being and doing” (p. 30).*

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Tazewell, S. (2022). Using a funds of knowledge approach to engage diverse cohorts through active and personally relevant learning. In *Strategies for Supporting Inclusion and Diversity in the Academy: Higher Education, Aspiration and Inequality* (pp. 247-266). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

<sup>57</sup> See ACTA submissions on why the NSRA should include EAL/D learners:

[Submission 37 - Australian Council of TESOL Associations \(ACTA\) - National School Reform Agreement - Commissioned study \(pc.gov.au\)](#)

[Submission DR124 - Australian Council of TESOL Associations \(ACTA\) - National School Reform Agreement - Commissioned study \(pc.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>58</sup> We note that it is impossible to provide evidence that this group is disadvantaged and under-represented because, to our knowledge, data is not collected on participation of First Nations, migrant and refugee background students from language backgrounds other than English – much less EAL/D learners – in higher education. See ACTA submission to the Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan at:

<https://tesol.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ACTA-submission-National-Teacher-Workforce-Action-Plan-final.pdf>



This description has particular force in regard to First Nations teachers who speak Indigenous languages but also applies to migrant and refugee speakers of languages other than English. A failure to include speakers of other languages as a selection indicator perpetuates the limitations in the current NSRA designation of “recognised equity groups.

We support reference to teacher shortages in specific areas as a criterion for selecting ITE students. However, the criteria underlying the Discussion Paper list (p. 31) should not be taken at face value. Currently, a vicious cycle exists in regard to the provision and employment of both EAL/D and languages teachers in schools. There is no demand for qualified EAL/D and languages teachers because school principals do not choose to employ these teachers.<sup>59</sup> One reason given is that they cannot be found. (See section 6.2 for further details on this supply/demand bottleneck.)

The lack of demand for ITE graduates equipped meet the needs of EAL/D learners is caused in large part by the absence of explicit EAL/D requirements in national teaching standards or state/territory accreditation.<sup>60</sup> This policy silence persists, despite the fact that, now and for the foreseeable future, no primary or secondary graduate teacher can expect to teach in an Australian classroom that does not include some and often many students with EAL/D learning needs.

### ***Retention***

ACTA supports collection of nationally consistent data on retention. However, this data is uninterpretable if not supported by qualitative data on the reasons why students leave ITE programs at both the first-year and six-year level.

Our own experience supports the Discussion Paper’s identification of contributing factors to student retention rates as external enrolments and proportion of staff employed full-time (p. 33). However, the “proportion of senior academic staff” may be irrelevant to retaining ITE students. In our experience, these staff are the most removed from practical engagement with classrooms and are likely to prioritise research and publications above attention to meeting these students’ needs.

ACTA submits that data on retention should include **explicit reporting on support** for ITE students, and specifically culturally and linguistically appropriate English and Academic Skills support for First Nations, and migrant and refugee background students. ACTA’s submission to the Australian Higher Education Accord applies in force to ITE programs:

*To ensure all potential students can succeed in their chosen area of study at higher education, suitably qualified Academic Language and Learning staff in universities and TAFE are required. These positions have been consistently downgraded, casualised or outsourced in universities over the last decade. EAL/D learners benefit from the expertise provided by*

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<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of how one line budgets and school-based autonomy is undermining equity goals in education, see Amanda Keddie, Katrina MacDonald, Jill Blackmore, Jane Wilkinson, Brad Gobby, Richard Niesche, Scott Eacott & Caroline Mahoney (2022). The constitution of school autonomy in Australian public education: areas of paradox for social justice, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 25:1, 106-123, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1781934>

<sup>60</sup> AITSL’s *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* do not identify the specific knowledge and skills required for teaching EAL/D learners by specialist or non-specialist teachers.

*academic language and learning staff with EAL/D teacher qualifications.  
This expertise is generally no longer available in universities.*

Academic skills support backed by the requisite funding is needed to progress the aspirational statements in the Discussion Paper and other policy documents.

In regard to increasing the supply of First Nations teachers from remote areas, please see Appendix B for an account of the issues that cause these teachers to withdraw or fail to qualify in ITE programs. Recommendation 11 is directed specifically to the training and retention of these teachers.

### **Recommendation 11**

As part of any teacher education initiative in the next *National School Reform Agreement*, the Commonwealth should provide support to jurisdictions in planning, resourcing, improving, upgrading and evaluating one or more purpose-designed Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education programs that build on the experience of the Northern Territory RATE trial (see Appendix B).

ITE program(s) for remote Indigenous teachers should:

- (i) contain appropriate content for experienced Assistant Teachers in remote schools, which respects and builds on their knowledge as speakers of Aboriginal languages and their status as cultural custodians in their communities
- (ii) offer qualifications at levels that are directly tied to jurisdictions' salary scales
- (iii) ensure adequate support for enrolled Assistant Teachers to develop their academic English skills
- (iv) be delivered by teacher educators who are:
  - a. employed onsite in the remote schools participating in the program
  - b. qualified, experienced and competent in EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy in remote contexts
- (v) be progressively extended to other communities with relatively large populations; these communities could be designated as "hubs" for more comprehensive coverage
- (vi) include the following stakeholders in developing and accrediting the Program(s):
  - a. employing authorities
  - b. specialist training providers (e.g. Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute)
  - c. accreditation authorities (the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership/AITSL, the Australian Qualifications Authority/ASQA, and State/Territory Teachers Registration Boards).

### ***Classroom readiness***

ACTA supports use of student satisfaction and graduate/exit surveys as a valid and reliable indicator of classroom “readiness” (p. 33). We find this approach better grounded than that in Discussion Paper section 1 because it comes closer to revealing actual ITE student needs. We also believe these surveys should be repeated for teachers in their second or third year of teaching, because these teachers are able to reflect more knowledgeably on what might better have supported their “classroom readiness”.

We commend the Discussion Paper for recognising the importance of policies directed to co-designing ITE programs with school-based teacher educators, promoting co-teaching by school-based teacher educators and higher-education based teacher educators, and strengthening mentoring approaches (p. 35). These policies have implications for funding that goes beyond ITE: see Recommendation 12 below.

We endorse the caution regarding the perverse incentives that attach to using pass rate data as a performance indicator (p. 35). Our experience in the VET sector has made us acutely aware of the perverse incentives that attach to using students’ results in this way.

### ***Transition***

ACTA supports the collection of the data listed as indicators for ITE transition outcomes. We do not support using these data *to measure ITE program performance* because they are subject to forces that are beyond ITE program and provider control. “Employment upon graduation” must be interpreted with reference to the current teacher labour market in specific localities. It is within recent memory that ITE graduates could not find employment as teachers. Those committed to teaching were forced to wait years as casual and relief teachers before gaining secure employment.

Transition needs to be seen primarily as the responsibility of school education systems and authorities. As highlighted in Australia’s key longitudinal study of early career teachers in diverse settings, teachers need three to five years to become maximally effective but school workplace conditions are crucial.<sup>61</sup> The issues impeding successful transition were identified as:

- insecure employment through appointment on short-term contracts
- inadequate mentoring and induction support
- lack of access to ongoing professional learning as a concomitant of short-term employment and inadequate mentoring
- teaching out-of-area and placement in the most challenging classrooms
- unwelcoming staffroom micro-politics and cultures, which isolate and position new teachers as “cultural immigrants”.

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<sup>61</sup> Mayer, D., Dixon, M., Kline, J., Kostogriz, A., Moss, J., Rowan, L., Walker-Gibbs, B., & White, S. (2017). Studying the effectiveness of teacher education: Early career teachers in diverse settings. Springer.

These issues were crucial shaping early career teachers' efficacy and satisfaction, their perceptions of the adequacy of their ITE preparation, and in their decisions to stay or leave the profession.<sup>62</sup>

In regard to employment in remote Indigenous schools, problems occur when beginning teachers from metropolitan areas are recruited and even offered incentives by government, Catholic and independent education authorities, and are then placed in these schools without the necessary preparation or orientation by these authorities. ITE providers who do not offer specialised teacher preparation for these environments should not be incentivised to encourage their graduates to seek this kind of employment.<sup>63</sup>

In short, calls for closer integration of teacher preparation, induction and ongoing mentoring are meaningless in the absence of a workplace policy for graduate teachers.

### **Recommendation 12**

Early career teacher transition and associated workforce policies should be the responsibility of education systems. An initiative in the next *National School Reform Agreement* should be additional funding to build school leadership and support system capability to provide sustained mentoring and induction for new teachers in their first five years.

### ***Publishing performance***

ACTA draws the Panel's attention to an unintended result of uncapping of university student places. That has resulted in elite universities increasing their student numbers, while undermining enrolments in other universities that previously offered quality niche programs, including in languages and teacher education to meet specific learning needs. A result has been, for example, that teacher education programs in regions with a high demand for specialist EAL/D teachers have been unable to sustain TESOL courses.

ACTA would support publishing provider performance information *only* on condition that publication included a breakdown of performance for specific program areas. From our own experience, we are aware of programs for EAL/D teachers (and in other areas) that are (or were) high quality performers in relation to the proposed indicators but this would be obscured by the poor performance of other areas in the same teacher education faculty.

## **4.2 Linking funding to quality**

The Discussion Paper states that:

*While ITE accreditation creates an enforceable set of minimum standards, it does not sufficiently incentivise providers to improve beyond this. (p.18)*

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, [Graduate Certificate in TESOL and Foreign Language Teaching \(FLT\) \(EDC301\) - University of Canberra](#) Graduate Certificate in TESOL and Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) (EDC301) - University of Canberra. Under "career opportunities" is listed "Teaching English as an additional language or dialect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples". Nothing in this course prepares teachers for teaching in First Nations communities. We realise that this award is not from an ITE program (which reflects issues we raise in section 4 below). However, the point about creating false expectations stands.

This statement and the section that follows assumes that external, monetised incentives will motivate ITE providers to improve their programs. This approach in the VET sector has clearly demonstrated that, rather than improving quality, monetised incentives in education will undermine it. Their dominant effect is gaming and, in consequence, expensive, intrusive and excessive external audits multiply. These audits massively divert energy and attention away from improving programs and towards satisfying audit compliance requirements that ultimately do not assure real quality.

The proposal to tie performance measures to funding appears to us to be a short-sighted response to current national budgetary constraints. The proposed market-oriented approach to achieving ITE productivity gains (“doing more for less”) ignores the fundamental conditions that are adversely affecting quality in higher education, including ITE, following years of the under-resourcing that COVID has brought to crisis point.

Reforming funding for teacher education in general, and ITE in particular, must address the current situation where teacher education is under-valued *within* universities. Teacher education faculties have no control over their funding allocations, which are easy targets when university managements seek to find cost savings and resources to maintain areas with higher priority and profile.<sup>64</sup> Current funding arrangements effectively incentivise universities to use the Commonwealth grants attracted by ITE enrolments to cross-subsidise other areas. The result is that staffing for teacher education has been eroded to the point where a heavily casualised, underpaid and reduced workforce now delivers ITE programs within tight budgetary constraints.

Any funding reforms to improve ITE must first address this issue through transparent, dedicated, ‘ring-fenced’ base funding of teacher education within universities as part of the Government’s *Universities Accord*.

The only way ITE funding can be directed to improving quality performance without creating perverse incentives is if it is specific-purpose for ITE, and attached to requirements for transparency and reporting on improvements based on school/faculty-based improvement plans for designated time periods.

This approach is identified in the Discussion Paper as “Option B: Transition funding to support performance improvement” (p. 46). As acknowledged, this approach has been found to be effective in delivering transparent and sustainable improvements in ITE. As well as ensuring transparency and accountability, this approach is effective in addressing the particular contexts, needs and starting points of the universities’ ITE program.

### **Recommendation 13**

Teacher education performance measures should be developed in consultation with higher education providers to provide a picture of the overall performance of the sector. These measures should not be linked to resourcing for individual providers. The data should be disaggregated by specific programs and program areas to give an indication of provider responsiveness to both local and national priorities and

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<sup>64</sup> The past three decades have seen Education faculties absorbed within larger university faculties. Only two of the 12 Board Members of the Australian Council of Deans of Education head stand-alone Faculties of Education that control their financial resources.

circumstances. These performance reporting requirements should be incorporated within the *Universities Accord*.

#### **Recommendation 14**

Commonwealth higher education base funding for ITE should be allocated to universities as identified, dedicated, ‘ring-fenced’ funding to teacher education faculties and be accompanied by public reporting requirements on the use of this funding to support and improve ITE programs. These requirements should be included in the Government’s *Universities Accord*.

#### **Recommendation 15**

In addition to base funding for ITE, the Commonwealth Government should allocate specific-purpose transition funding to support ITE schools/faculties to improve their ITE programs based on their published improvement plans, with quality of implementation to be evaluated and reported against both plan-specific and sector-wide performance measures. These requirements should also be included in the Government’s *Universities Accord*.

### **5. Improving the quality of practical experience in teaching**

There is wide consensus on the value of school practice experiences, the characteristics of high quality placements, and the need for sustained placements to allow both.

Improving the quality of practical teaching experience requires:

- 1) providing novice teachers with quality experiences in teaching culturally, linguistically, socio-economically, cognitively and physically diverse students
- 2) supporting school capacity and availability to provide capable and consistent teacher mentoring in partnership with ITE providers.

To provide diverse practice experiences, teacher education providers attempt to place students in different school contexts for their practice teaching. However, this strategy requires a sufficiently large pool of diverse schools, which is not always available.

As outlined in section 2, student teachers frequently identify student diversity as an aspect of teaching they feel least capable or prepared for.<sup>65</sup> The converse is also true: such diversity poses less of a ‘culture shock’ for teachers whose school experience placements or subsequent employment are similar to the school contexts they experienced as school students. These findings highlight the need for all teachers to experience practice placements in culture and language diverse schools.

A major barrier to quality teacher placements is the lack of schools willing and able to provide capable teacher mentoring. The Discussion Paper recognises the varying capability of schools in providing quality practice experiences and places its faith in system level and partnership agreements and national frameworks to address this supply problem.

System and partnership agreements notwithstanding, the reality is that schools consider practice teaching placements as yet another imposition on already overloaded teaching staff.

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<sup>65</sup> Mayer, D., Dixon, M., Kline, J., Kostogriz, A., Moss, J., Rowan, L., Walker-Gibbs, B., & White, S. (2017). *Studying the effectiveness of teacher education: Early career teachers in diverse settings*. Springer.

The variable quality of teacher placements is often due to school management decisions that ‘share’ mentoring responsibilities among staff whose capabilities and willingness vary. Student teachers matched with less capable or unwilling supervisors easily become casualties of this ‘system.’

Fundamental reform is required to change school-university relations from a ‘request and favour’ relationship to one of a genuine partnership. Providing quality teaching practice placements should be formally recognised and adequately resourced as part of schools’ responsibility for transitioning novice teachers.<sup>66</sup>

We draw the Expert Panel’s attention to an ITE project that adopted a ‘community of practice’ approach in implementing an alternative to the traditional individualised master-apprentice school placement.<sup>67</sup> Three-way reciprocal mentoring was fostered between student teacher peers, and school and university mentor teams. By engaging all participants in collaborative planning, teaching and lesson observation, the mentoring load was distributed among stakeholders and the teacher mentoring capabilities of school staff were enhanced.<sup>68</sup> The community of practice model has particular application and value for both class and EAL/D teacher preparation, where collaborative planning and teaching is a key mode of EAL/D delivery and specialist EAL/D expertise is scarce.

### **Recommendation 16**

Reforms to improve the quality of practical experience in teaching should be directed to supporting the establishment and development of partner networks between ITE providers and schools recognised for their excellence in teaching in diverse student cohorts.

### **Recommendation 17**

AERO should investigate, trial and document quality practice experience models that support pre-service teachers and their mentors in culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse school settings, including a community of practice approach that fosters reciprocal mentoring and collaborative professional communication between pre-service teacher peers, school mentor and university mentor teams.

### **Recommendation 18**

Responsibility for teaching practice placements should be located with education authorities as part of schools’ teacher transition responsibilities, and supported by resources to build transition and mentoring capabilities and leadership. Additional funding and performance reporting measures for teaching practice placements should be included as part of the teacher education reform initiative in the next *National School Reform Agreement*.

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<sup>66</sup> MacPhail, A., Seleznyov, S., O’Donnell, C., & Czerniawski, G. (2022). Supporting the Continuum of Teacher Education Through Policy and Practice: The Inter-Relationships Between Initial, Induction, and Continuing Professional Development. In *Reconstructing the Work of Teacher Educators: Finding Spaces in Policy Through Agentic Approaches—Insights from a Research Collective* (pp. 135-154). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

<sup>67</sup> Grima-Farrell, C., Loughland, T., & Nguyen, H. T. M. (2019). Theory to Practice in Teacher Education: The critical challenge of translation. Springer Nature.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

## 6. Improve postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants

Based on some ACTA members' considerable experience in this area, we can identify two important sources for mid-career entrants to teaching:

- 1) Overseas qualified teachers from non-English speaking countries
- 2) Australians returning from overseas who have taught English in non-English speaking countries but who are not qualified to teach in Australian schools.

Based on our experience, we also believe that the costs generally outweigh the benefits of programs seeking to induct people from most other professions into teaching. Socialisation in professions where interaction is largely with adults (peers or clients) create behavioural expectations that can be difficult to adjust to the behaviours and culture of many Australian classrooms. Resources to increase the teaching workforce from other professions should therefore be carefully targeted to ensure admission of only those who are highly motivated and well-suited.

ACTA believes that the resources allocated to attracting mid-career entrants into teaching would be more effectively used to provide fee and teaching relief to support existing teachers in gaining postgraduate qualifications that are recognised in career paths. Coupled with reforms to teacher workloads, this support and encouragement would stem the tide of teacher resignations and may obviate the need to recruit from other professions.

The issue of post-graduate teacher education has special resonance for those seeking qualifications to teach EAL/D, as we elaborate in section 6.2 below in regard to Australians returning from overseas.

### 6.1 Overseas qualified teachers

Improving teacher diversity has been a key policy focus in North America and Europe but has not figured in Australia reports.<sup>69</sup> It has been estimated that a pool of approximately 7,000 migrants and humanitarian entrants with teaching qualifications gained mostly in overseas non-English speaking countries seek but cannot gain entry to teaching in Australian schools.<sup>70</sup> With good preparation and mentoring, these teachers have the potential to contribute to what is currently a predominantly English monolingual teaching force, better reflecting the linguistic and cultural diversity of the student population.

Unlike many of the potential additions to the teacher workforce considered in Discussion Paper Reform Area 4, most overseas qualified teachers require few incentives to join the Australian teaching workforce. What they need is removal of the substantive barriers they

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<sup>69</sup> Schroth S.T., Helfer J.A. (2018) Lack of Diversity in the American Teaching Force. In: *Developing Teacher Diversity in Early Childhood and Elementary Education*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.  
[https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59180-7\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59180-7_1)

<sup>70</sup> Cruickshank, K., Ellsmore, M. & Brownlee, P. (2018) *Skills in Question*, SICLE: Sydney University.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/14749041211048983>.

This study found that 80% of volunteer teachers in Community Language schools wanted to become mainstream teachers, including 15% with their first experience of teaching in these schools. 55% were teachers from overseas and 45% had teaching qualifications. In many countries a Bachelor's degree is a sufficient requirement to become a teacher.



face, and support in overcoming what cannot be removed. The barriers described in section 4.4 of the Discussion Paper apply with particular force to this group.

### ***Qualifications assessment/upgrading***

The first step towards utilising this potential teacher workforce would be to assist individuals and accreditation authorities in determining the equivalence of overseas qualifications in relation to Australian requirements. State and territory teacher accreditation authorities are underfunded to do this complex, time-consuming and low priority work. Overseas-trained teachers face a major information gap. Institutional websites are an impenetrable barrier rather than a support. A major step would be to fund teacher accreditation authorities to provide face-to-face information and careers advice for this group, coupled with requirements to report on this work.

Many overseas-trained teachers must upgrade their qualifications to meet Australian requirements. Overseas-trained professionals, including with STEM qualifications, could be utilised on completing a Master of Teaching preservice qualification in Australia.

The “bespoke programs” described in the Discussion Paper (section 4.3) are especially relevant to those whose overseas teaching qualifications are not recognised. This group already knows how to teach. They need unit waivers within ITE qualifications that recognise their prior qualifications and teaching experience, and bridging programs or units that include:

- (i) high-level, special purpose English language tuition
- (ii) content on Australian society and institutions
- (iii) expert mentoring.

### ***English***

To teach in Australian schools, a teacher’s English proficiency must be high. In ACTA members’ experience, novice teachers who speak English as an additional language can be undermined by racism and criticism from students, fellow teachers and parents if their English is perceived as inaccurate or out of touch with local usage.<sup>71</sup>

The required standard for teacher accreditation is an average 7.5 IELTS Band (or equivalent), with 8 as the minimum in listening and speaking.<sup>72</sup> Many who do not meet these requirements spend large amounts of money on English tuition and sitting and re-sitting these tests.

Special-purpose ‘English for Teaching in Australian Schools’ tuition is needed to assist these teachers to gain the colloquial, formal and academic English that will enable them to flourish in Australian classrooms. Tertiary institutions are unlikely to offer such courses unless funded to do so.

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<sup>71</sup> Little has changed since the following was published:  
Lewin-Poole, S., Moore, H., & Simkin, K. (1978). So who wants bilingual teachers? *Babel*, April 1978, 14(1), 17–23. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/aeipt.202101>; also in [the Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, 1977, 1, 1, 2-9](#). [So who wants bilingual teachers?: \(benjamins.com\)](#).

<sup>72</sup> [Policy on the English Language Proficiency of Teachers for Provisional or Conditional Accreditation \(educationstandards.nsw.edu.au\)](#)  
[English language competency | Victorian Institute of Teaching \(vit.vic.edu.au\)](#)  
[English language eligibility for teacher registration Qld | QCT](#)

Irrespective of qualifications recognition and English proficiency, many prospective teachers from overseas require or would be greatly assisted by appropriately tailored bridging units or employer induction programs to assist them to adjust to Australian classrooms.

A good use of the transition fund described as Option B in the Discussion Paper section 2.6.2 would be to fund at least one university in each State or Territory to develop teacher education programs for overseas trained teachers and professionals, including items (i) - (iii) above, that lead to the Master of Teaching award.

### **Recommendation 19**

The Teacher Education Expert Panel should set in train a task force to:

- (iv) gain accurate data on:
  - a. the numbers of migrants and humanitarian entrants who hold teaching and relevant professional qualifications from their home countries
  - b. their English proficiency level.
- (v) recommend on types and levels of training that would qualify these teachers to teach in Australian schools, specifically:
  - a. support to undertake English language courses in TAFE or tertiary settings that bring learners to IELTS level 7.5 or equivalent
  - b. pathways to bespoke Master of Teaching programs, consisting of:
    - academic preparation/ academic English
    - specific support for the first half of the program
    - flexibility that takes into account family/ work responsibilities.
- (vi) determine priorities for providing support to:
  - a. teacher education institutions to offer bespoke teacher education programs for overseas qualified speakers of English as an additional language.
  - b. prospective teachers with appropriate overseas qualifications to receive fee support for English language tests and English language tuition, on the basis of agreed criteria re their suitability for teaching in Australian schools.

### **Recommendation 20**

Grants should be made to teacher accreditation authorities to assist overseas qualified people seeking to become teachers in Australia by:

- (iii) upgrading their websites to provide easily accessible information on degree and English language requirements
- (iv) providing careers advice and other assistance regarding qualifications.

## 6.2 Australians returning from overseas

Anecdotal evidence consistently indicates that EAL/D teachers have often come to this specialism via teaching English in overseas non-English speaking countries.

Many young people, having gained their Bachelor's degree in Australia, set off to travel and, even accidentally, find employment teaching English in countries where the demand is insatiable and being a native English speaker is the only requirement. They often enjoy this experience and return to Australia highly motivated to gain specialist knowledge and qualifications in teaching EAL/D.

In the days when ITE programs included a separate methodology strand in "Teaching English as a Second Language", this offered a sure route to employment for expatriate returnees without teaching qualifications. Those with Australian ITE qualifications took up places in specialist TESOL postgraduate certificates, diplomas and Masters degrees.

Programming in teacher education institutions is inevitably governed by demand. As indicated in section 4.1, schools no longer seek out qualified EAL/D teachers, so TESL/TESOL method in ITE has now almost entirely disappeared, either discontinued or melded into generic units on literacy, social justice or "cultural responsiveness". The lack of demand has followed from the one-line budget allocations to schools that were instituted by States and Territory Education Departments over at least the past decade.<sup>73</sup> Budgetary pressures on schools now foreground other priorities. Silence on EAL/D teacher standards and accreditation allows schools to allocate responsibilities for EAL/D learners to mainstream teachers and/or anyone willing or pressured to take up this role.

Until 2020, the lack of local demand for TESOL qualified teachers was of no consequence to teacher education institutions. Staff with expertise in training EAL teachers were diverted to meet the seemingly endless and highly lucrative Asian requirements for on- and off-shore English teacher training. That income cross-subsidised less profitable areas in teacher education faculties, providing welcome relief from the cuts to base funding described in section 4.2. With the COVID pandemic border closures, revenue from international fee-paying English language teachers has disappeared, together with most TESOL programs and the staff that taught them.

Some of the barriers to engaging mid-career cohorts listed in the Discussion Paper (section 4.2) also apply to increasing the supply of qualified EAL/D teachers: the cost of postgraduate training, competing commitments, the status of EAL/D teachers ("anyone who speaks English can teach it"), and a lack of recognition of prior experience. High quality overseas TESOL teaching certificates and diplomas are also unrecognised.<sup>74</sup>

However, until State and Territory education authorities and those setting qualifications and teacher accreditation standards require teachers with ITE and postgraduate TESOL

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<sup>73</sup> [ACTA-final-submission-Quality-Initial-Teacher-Education-Review.pdf \(tesol.org.au\)](#)

See also the Introduction to [Roadmap-for-English-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect-in-schools-ACTA-May-2022.pdf \(tesol.org.au\)](#)

<sup>74</sup> The training provided in these courses is vastly superior to some offered in Australian teacher education programs. See, for example: [Teaching qualifications and courses | Cambridge English](#). Greater flexibility is needed to provide appropriate bridging units that would permit upgrading.

qualifications that meet the EAL/D learning needs described in section 2, these programs will never return.

### **Recommendation 21**

The Teacher Education Expert Panel should explicitly specify meeting EAL/D learning needs as a priority area in initial and post-graduate teacher education, and recommend to relevant authorities (State and Territory education authorities, teacher accreditation bodies and AITSL) on the need to create employment and career pathways for TESOL qualified teachers in regard to:

- (i) appointment to permanent positions with responsibilities for teaching EAL/D
- (ii) becoming Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers in teaching EAL/D
- (iii) creating an EAL/D leadership career pathway by developing EAL/D Elaborations for the AITSL Australian Professional Standard for Principals and Leadership Profiles.

### **Recommendation 22**

The Teacher Education Expert Panel should recommend that the forthcoming National Schools Reform Agreement develops a national model of teacher supply and demand that includes EAL/D teachers, specifically with reference to:

- (i) data gaps in the supply, demand, retention, and attrition of TESOL-qualified teachers
- (ii) regular public reporting and projections based on:
  - a. EAL/D learner population data arising from Australia's migration program and its increasing linguistic diversity
  - b. system staffing data and resourcing plans
  - c. provision for specialist EAL/D teaching
  - d. TESOL-qualified graduates (ITE and postgraduate)
- (iii) EAL/D teacher recruitment and retention strategies.

## **7. Conclusion**

ITE reform is long overdue. However, ACTA believes that the Expert Panel has disregarded central issues that should guide ITE reform. Its proposals to strengthen ITE programs, link funding to performance, improve ITE practical experience, and encourage mid-career entrants into teaching appear oblivious to some key factors that should set the direction of ITE reform in Australia, specifically:

- the increasingly multilingual and multicultural classrooms that ITE graduates will inevitably encounter in Australia today and for the foreseeable future
- the role of Indigenous languages and English language learning in the education of First Nation students, especially in remote and regional areas

- the erosion of specialist expertise in teacher education to support training mainstream and specialist teachers to respond to the needs of learners of English as an additional language or dialect, and the conditions facilitating this erosion, including teaching qualification requirements and standards specifications
- opportunities for recruiting teachers from the large untapped pool of people from migrant and humanitarian entrant backgrounds with overseas teaching and other qualifications who are highly motivated to qualify as mainstream school teachers
- current resourcing and governance processes that undermine Higher Education's ability to deliver quality ITE programs that prepare graduates to teach effectively in Australia's multilingual, multicultural classrooms.

We are disappointed in the Paper's derivative proposals that espouse an impoverished view of ITE curriculum and compliance-oriented prescriptions for a marketized system of teacher education that is susceptible to gaming.

Australia has a new Commonwealth Government that promised a different vision to guide genuine reform. ACTA hopes that the Expert Panel's final report will give deeper consideration to the implications and potential of this promise, and that our recommendations will assist the Panel in this task.

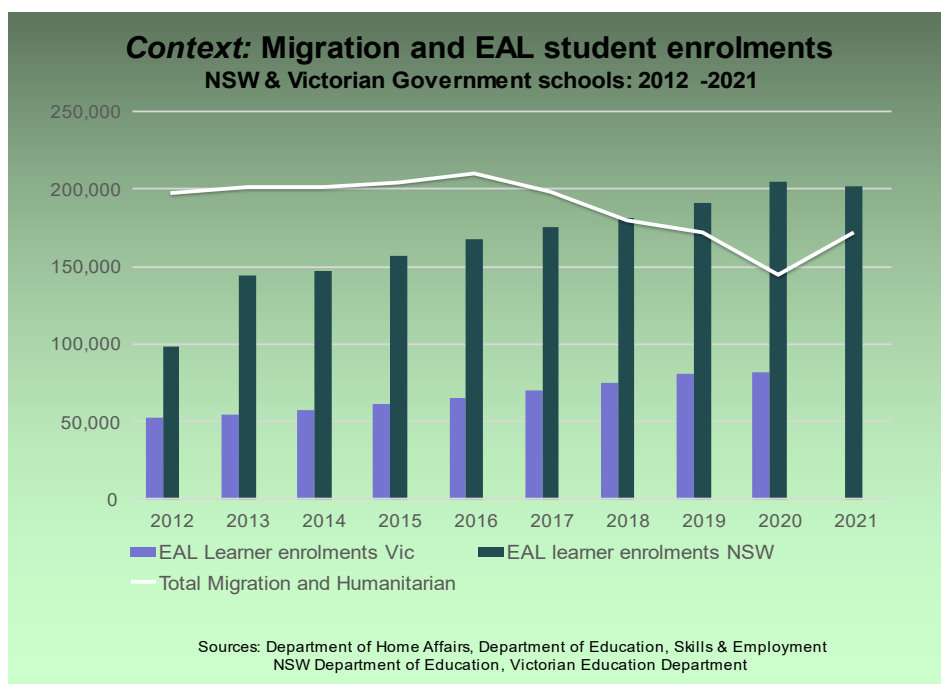
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## Appendix A: Increasing numbers of EAL/D learners in schools

The dramatic growth in the number of EAL/D learners is evident in the two government education systems with the largest enrolments of these learners. The NSW Department of Education reported a 114 per cent increase in the number of EAL/D learners (from 91,706 to 196,669) between 2009 and 2019,<sup>75</sup> while the Victorian Department of Education and Training reported 69 per cent growth in EAL/D learners (from 47,625 to 80,516) over the same period.<sup>76</sup>

Table 1 below documents this trend. The high overall immigration intakes of around 200,000 between 2012 and 2016, comprising family, skills and humanitarian streams, led to sustained increases of EAL learners in NSW (approximately 170,000) and Victoria (approximately 55,000) respectively. These increases continued to 2020 despite the significant decline in overall immigration and the COVID nadir in 2020. This undiminished EAL learner growth can be attributed to the number of years it takes for these learners to develop academic English and their ongoing need for specialist EAL assistance during this period.

**Table 1: Migration and EAL student enrolments NSW and Victorian Government Schools 2012-2021**



The ramping up of immigration intakes beyond pre-pandemic levels means that the numbers of newly arrived and continuing EAL/D learners will continue to grow beyond the current 200,000 (NSW) and 75,000 (Victoria) over the life of the next National School Reform Agreement. For example, trend growth in the number of EAL/D learners in NSW is projected to grow to approximately 300,000 in the next four years.

<sup>75</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training 2009 Annual Report at: [document.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/document/pdf); NSW Department of Education and Training data bulletin\_Schools: English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learners 2015 to 2019 (nsw.gov.au)

<sup>76</sup> Victorian Department of Education 2009 EAL Annual Report at: [eslreport09.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/eslreport09.pdf); Victorian Department of Education 2019 EAL Annual Report at: [2019-eal-report.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/2019-eal-report.pdf)

The distribution and concentration of EAL/D learners in Australian schools coincides with systemic educational inequity. Many metropolitan schools in areas of high migrant density in capital cities have large numbers of EAL/D learners as a proportion of the total school population. In many of these ‘disadvantaged’ schools, EAL/D learners make up the *majority* of student enrolments but, without specialised English language teaching support, are effectively taught as if they were native English speakers.

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## **Appendix B:**

### **Increasing the supply of First Nations teachers in remote schools: a case study from the Northern Territory**

The status and availability of qualified Aboriginal staff in remote schools has been significantly undermined by the loss of targeted and appropriate training and qualification opportunities. Until 2012 Batchelor Institute in the NT offered an undergraduate teacher education program that was specifically designed to provide recognised qualifications for Aboriginal teachers to teach in remote schools. 75% of Batchelor's teacher education graduates worked in bilingual schools, mostly in the Northern Territory. In the late 80s, these schools provided first language instruction to over 50% of remote NT Indigenous students.<sup>77</sup> In 2012, that program was merged with the mainstream Bachelor of Education program at Charles Darwin University (CDU). The lack of English language support for remote students and the inappropriate content contained in CDU's mainstream program, including a lack of EAL/D and bilingual pedagogy content, caused students transferring from Batchelor to CDU to realise that the course was not appropriate and consequently the majority ceased their studies.<sup>78</sup>

The progressive defunding of bilingual programs from the late 1990s onwards has also undermined the perceived need for qualified Aboriginal teachers and, correspondingly, a reduction in positions.

In 2020 targeted provision for training and qualifying Aboriginal teachers in the Northern Territory was confined to the pilot Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) Program, which was offered to Aboriginal Assistant Teachers (ATs) in four remote schools to assist them to become fully qualified teachers.<sup>79</sup>

The initial iteration of the program was unsatisfactory because:

- fly-in staffing was inflexible in regard to timetabling and student availability
- the content assumed no prior experience in teaching, remote schools or cultural knowledge
- the content did not include teaching EAL/D or bilingual pedagogy
- insufficient support in developing academic English skills was offered to the Assistant Teachers

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<sup>77</sup> Lee, P. Fasoli, L. Ford, L. Stephenson, P. & McInerney, D. 2014, Indigenous Kids and Schooling in the Northern Territory: An introductory overview and brief history of Aboriginal Education in the Northern Territory, Batchelor Press Retrieved from: <http://www.batchelorpress.com/docs/open/iks/indigenous-kids-schooling-nt.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> The comment below came in response to a draft of this section:

*Simply using the mainstream teacher ed. course will not work. It's important for faculty working with these teachers to have the experience of working in remote schools, otherwise they hear but do not understand why the current Bachelor of Education course is NOT SUITABLE. The content has been designed for mainstream classrooms and disregards the strengths and learning needs of Aboriginal teachers.... I am thoroughly depressed about existing pathways.*

<sup>79</sup> The ATs are enrolled in an Undergraduate Certificate which consists of four units from the CDU Bachelor of Education course:

[Undergraduate Certificate Remote Educators \(NRED01 - 2021\) | Charles Darwin University \(cdu.edu.au\).](#)  
See also [Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education \(RATE\) Pilot Program - Department of Education](#)



A second iteration in 2021 adopted an initial recommendation that the co-ordinator located on each community take on more of the teaching role. However, apart from this, no other changes were made, and the curriculum remained largely as irrelevant as it was in 2020.

Because of the mismatch of the course content, the level of academic skills required and the relevance to the local teaching conditions, many of the students who had enrolled in the ‘trial’ period (Feb – July 2021) were counselled out of the RATE program and were encouraged to enrol into the VET Certificate program at Batchelor Institute.

Having lost its Higher Education undergraduate accreditation in 2012, Batchelor Institute now offers Certificates III, IV for Assistant Teachers in the Vocational Education and Training Sector and a Diploma of Educational Support. These awards are governed by ASQA requirements. While individual trainers make adjustments based on their professional experience, these courses are largely unsuitable for Aboriginal Assistant Teachers from remote communities because they include only limited content on bilingual and EAL/D pedagogy, and do not provide explicit English language support. Lacking relevant content and support, the Certificates are not a genuine pathway into full teaching qualifications for Assistant Teachers.

In the NT, the number of *permanent* Assistant Teacher positions has been reduced. Assistant Teachers are now increasingly employed as casuals by local school councils. They have relatively few entitlements and their employment is insecure. With budget cuts to remote schools, many casual Indigenous school staff have lost positions.

It is important to note that Assistant Aboriginal Teachers are not teachers’ aides or education support workers. In remote schools where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are used, these teachers have unique and specific teaching responsibilities. Aboriginal teachers and Assistant Teachers are crucial in mediating classroom learning and wider school experiences for students with minimal/no English because they are local, can explain things in the language the children speak and can mediate and explain the Western cultural practices of the classroom. Reduced Aboriginal staffing has limited schools’ ability to address these students’ needs. The loss of Indigenous staffing positions in schools has also deprived adults in remote communities of a pathway and incentive to further study and to develop their literacy skills.<sup>80</sup> This loss also sends a message to communities that their languages and culture lack value.

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<sup>80</sup> See also [Submission 52 - Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting \(IECM\) - National School Reform Agreement - Commissioned study \(pc.gov.au\)](#) p. 12