

Edith Cowan University welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper.

Preamble

ECU is a significant provider of initial teacher education programs and is committed to continuing to improve the quality of teachers and teaching in schools.

Our submission responds to the four reform areas and highlights some unique contextual features of WA that are important in the broader discussion.

A general observation throughout this report is that there is emphasis on primary and secondary contexts, yet no specific mention of Early Learning contexts. Western Australia in particular has combined Early Childhood and Primary courses which this discussion paper has not acknowledged. While the evidence-based practices presented in the discussion paper are not fitting for all primary and secondary students, they are definitely inappropriate for early childhood children. Ineffectual early practices will result in an increase of poor attention, lack of creativity and diminished social skills in later years.

A further observation is that much of the evidence provided in this report is not the most current, or relies on reports, rather than empirical research or rigorous systematic meta-analysis.

WA Department of Education annual surveys of graduates and principals

In responding to the four focus areas we would like to draw the panel's attention to annual reports provided to WA universities by the Department of Education WA (DEWA). Each year DEWA surveys all graduate teachers and their Principals and provides institutional and overall reports to each WA university. The findings of the reports are discussed with representatives from the DEWA and both the quantitative and qualitative data are used at the institutional level for ongoing programme improvement. Not only is this data invaluable but it provides an opportunity for WA ITE providers and the DEWA to work collaboratively to improve teacher education and support for graduate teachers as they transition to the profession.

These surveys of graduates and principals are unique to WA and provide an evidence base for the quality of ITE programs in WA. We strongly recommend that this approach be adopted more widely.

Principal survey

The surveys conducted ask Principals to respond to items related to the following -

- Graduate impact (on student learning, student wellbeing, and the school community)
- Graduate retention (would retain graduate if they could)
- Graduate performance (in relation to the 37 APSTs)
- Literacy and numeracy skills of graduates
- Graduate key capabilities (awareness of demands of teaching, flexibility, adaptability, organization and planning skills, conscientiousness, self-efficacy, resilience, willingness to learn, communication skills, motivation to teach)
- Graduate employment factors
- School support for graduates (induction, allowances, peer networks, access to resources, performance management and development opportunities, classroom observation and feedback)
- Suggestions to improving graduate employment

Figure 1 below provides further context about the survey methodology and response rates.

Figure 1: *Principal Perceptions of First Year Graduates Survey Report 2022: About this report*¹

The Department of Education of Western Australia (the Department) annually surveys principals to seek their views about the performance of first year graduate teachers, their preparedness to teach, and transition into teaching in public schools. The conditions associated with the selected sample of first year graduates include: they must have worked at the same school for no fewer than 10 pay periods from January 2022; and not have been selected in the sample of first year graduates from the previous year.

The survey was sent to principals of first year graduates on 8 August 2022; responses closed on 4 September 2022. There were 434 (78%) responses.

Principals were advised if they had limited interaction with the graduate teacher, they could delegate to the appropriate staff member(s), for example, deputy principals or heads of learning area to complete the survey. For reporting purposes, the term 'respondents' will be used.

Sampling took into consideration representation of first year graduates from all Western Australian universities, and that the principals/delegates had supervised the graduates for a reasonable period of time in order to be able to comment on their progress. To minimise survey fatigue, principals were asked to complete the survey for either one or two graduates.

As questions were not mandatory in the survey, the information shown in this report is based only on the responses received to the question being presented. Due to rounding, some percentages shown in this report may not add to 100%.

Graduate survey

The Graduate survey asks respondents their views on the following –

- University experience (satisfaction with preparation to be classroom ready, literacy and numeracy curriculum in ITE, TPA)
- Professional experience (mentor teacher feedback and support, preparation for teaching position)
- Employment (teaching level, teaching out of area)
- Graduate teacher experience (achievement of APST, resources, areas for support, health and wellbeing, intentions to stay in the profession).

Figure 2 below provides further context about the survey methodology and response rates.

¹ Department of Education, Western Australia (2022) *Principal Perceptions of First Year Graduates Survey Report 2022*, p. 6.

Figure 2: First Year Graduate Survey Report 2022 About this report²

The Department of Education of Western Australia (the Department) annually surveys principals to seek their views about the performance of first year graduate teachers, their preparedness to teach, and transition into teaching in public schools. The conditions associated with the selected sample of first year graduates include: they must have worked at the same school for no fewer than 10 pay periods from January 2022; and not have been selected in the sample of first year graduates from the previous year.

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

We are fully supportive of the need for teacher education programs to deliver confident, effective, classroom ready graduates.

- The suggested core reflects **areas already addressed in ITE** and as noted in the discussion paper aligned with the APST. We would recommend strengthening of the relevant standards to reflect a greater emphasis on elements such as cognitive science, effective pedagogical practices, classroom management and enabling factors and in for program accreditation to report where these are taught, practiced and assessed.
- **Caution should be exercised around mandating particular pedagogical approaches**, acknowledging that learning is complex and effective approaches should be reflective of learners' developmental and cultural contexts. Teachers are highly skilled in making professional judgements about effective pedagogy based on learner needs and understanding a range of nuanced strategies to differentiate and meet individual student needs. Teacher education students therefore need to understand a **range of pedagogical approaches** that can be applied in appropriate contexts to maximise student learning.
- The emphasis on the brain and learning in the core **should not neglect other vital aspects of learner development such as social, emotional and psychomotor development**. It is important that teachers are cognizant of important research regarding development of the whole child/person/learner and that should not be compromised in any changes recommended.

² Department of Education, Western Australia (2022) First Year Graduate Survey Report 2022, p. 6.

- With reference to the DEWA survey of graduates, in 2022 the 588 graduates who completed the survey identified the following 4 areas for support.

Figure 3: Graduate teachers 2022 top four areas requiring support³

- The top four areas where support was required by graduate teachers included:
 - Development of professional portfolio of evidence and achieving full registration.
 - Teaching students with diverse needs (e.g. special needs, multicultural background, gifted).
 - Career progression and job security (e.g., how to gain a permanent position).
 - Approaches to differentiated learning.

This would suggest that the proposed ‘core’ is being addressed satisfactorily in WA universities. Further, **81% indicated they were ‘very satisfied/satisfied’ with their university experience in preparing them to be classroom ready**⁴.

- The DEWA Principal Survey reported that **94%** of respondents agreed that their graduate had a **positive impact on student learning**, another indicator that ITE programs in WA are delivering quality graduates.
- Authorizing environment: We would support the development of a ‘National Quality Assurance of ITE Oversight Body’ but would argue against adding additional layers of accreditation requirements for providers.

Area 2. Strengthening the link between performance and funding of ITE

We are supportive of measures that provide accurate, robust and defensible indicators of ITE quality.

- The suggested sources of evidence in this section are proxies for quality rather than robust and defensible indicators.
- In contrast, the data provided to universities by DEWA provides a more comprehensive picture of ITE quality as reported by Graduates and Principals. The quote below illustrates how this data goes beyond QILT (or similar satisfaction measures) to provide more nuanced information specifically relevant to ITE.

*Graduates were asked to comment on how satisfied they were with their university in preparing them to be classroom ready. The majority of respondents (81%) reported that they had an excellent real world experience and felt well prepared as a result of having knowledgeable tutors and ample practicums.*⁵

- In determining appropriate measures, distinction should be made between input and output measures. Output measures such as graduate surveys and TPA performance and stronger indicators of ITE quality than input measures.
- TPAs can be used to provide greater evidence of ITE quality and graduate classroom readiness. The QTPA for example includes four components that provide evidence of classroom readiness, with three being completed by PSTs during their final PEx. These include (A) the development of a Personal Teaching Statement aligned with the APST, (B) the planning and implementation of a sequence of learning experiences based on an initial student assessment, and (C) the evaluation

³ Department of Education, Western Australia (2022) First Year Graduate Survey Report 2022, p. 7.

⁴ Department of Education, Western Australia (2022) First Year Graduate Survey Report 2022, p. 10.

⁵ Department of Education, Western Australia (2022) First Year Graduate Survey Report 2022, p. 10.

of the learning gained by the students in PSTs Professional Experience class as a result of their teaching sequence. These tasks are aligned with work that was already completed on Professional Experience but for the QTPA, the PST is then required to participate in (D) an oral presentation where they present to a panel that includes academics and Principals.

- **Caution should be exercised when using attrition data as a proxy for quality.** It is well known that there are a range of reasons for attrition in teacher education and where the reason is that the student has decided teaching is not a profession they would like to pursue this is not a reflection on the quality of the program. If attrition data is to be used, the reasons for attrition should also be included.

Area 3. Improving the quality of practical experience in teaching

Professional Experience is an area where ITE students have the greatest variation of experiences.

- The DEWA Graduate survey 2022, reports that **91% of graduates ‘strongly agreed/agreed’ that they received helpful feedback** from their classroom based mentor/supervising teacher, and **90% ‘strongly agreed/agreed’ they were ‘well supported’** by their classroom based mentor/supervising teacher.⁶ While these % are encouraging, the range of experiences is highlighted by the comments below.

My professional experience placement was amazing, my mentor is definitely someone that I will look up to moving on into my professional career.

Most of my mentors/supervisors were extremely helpful in guiding me on the right track, provided me concrete ways to improve and instilled good teaching values. However, some of my experience with a few mentors/supervisors were not constructive and detracted from me improving somewhat.

I had the distinct impression she did not want me in the classroom. She offered minimal guidance moved the goalposts and made the experience one of the worst of my life.

The quality of the professional experience supervision is often beyond the control of ITE providers, and we strongly recommend that there are requirements for classroom based mentors.

- **Rural and regional placements are vital for building the RRR workforce.**
In WA the numbers of students wanting a rural or remote professional experience has increased over the past years, however there are two major barriers – costs and accommodation. DEWA, CEWA and AISWA have funding support programs, however more funding is required to provide more placements and in particular accommodation.
WA Principals report that graduates are often not prepared for RRR schools because of lack of opportunity for RRR placement.

⁶ Department of Education, Western Australia (2022) First Year Graduate Survey Report 2022. p. 23

- Practical experiences in schools typically focus on formal professional experience whereas informal opportunities can be equally powerful and provide an opportunity for ITE students to support schools. For example, at ECU -

[Partners in Literacy and Numeracy \(PLaN\) WA](#) has been purposefully designed as a co-curricular program by ECU's School of Education to better prepare beginning teachers with the practical skills needed to be classroom ready. PLaN WA has been underpinned by a service-learning approach, where ITE students can combine learning with meaningful community service, in a real classroom environment. PLaN has been designed both to support school-aged students' literacy and numeracy levels, both fundamental capabilities for children's educational achievement and to offer ECU's ITE students additional opportunities to enhance their professional understandings and practice of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Graduate Teacher Level). PLaN WA is a co-curricular program and therefore not a formal requirement of the ECU Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses. There are now 42 public schools (24 primary and 18 high schools) and one early learning centre involved in this program. The PLaN WA program has now delivered over 6320 hours of service to support literacy and numeracy needs across WA K-12 education sector since 2019. This co-curricular program is available to ITE students throughout their entire academic program. A unique aspect of the PLaN WA model is that each school/centre has autonomy in terms of how they deploy the PLaN member to support the various literacy and numeracy strategies operating at their site. This affords the PLaN members additional opportunities to experience a range of literacy and numeracy strategies, activities, resources, and learning programs serving to enrich their future practice beyond the requirements of formally assessed P.Ex

Area 4. Improving postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants

Mid career numbers in ITE have suffered since the closure of one year preparation Graduate Diploma programs, due to loss of income for a longer period of time.

- We do not support a reintroduction of the Graduate Diploma of Education as the M Teach provides a more rigorous and comprehensive preparation for a teaching career.
- We do **support the development of employment pathways** in postgraduate programs and ways that enable mid-career entrants to work in schools while they complete their degree.



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