Initial Teacher Education Review

What is Core Content for ITE?

Findings

Teacher Planning

Professional Teacher

Classroom Management

Conclusion

Introduction

Current Situation: Education systems in Australia are facing some serious issues:

- Declining learning outcomes.
- High teacher attrition rate, notably 'Early career teachers'.
- Low teacher supply.

Perspective change: Any solution to these problems is to focus on teachers and the effectiveness of their preparation for teaching.

Importance of Teachers: Teachers are the most important people in the education system. Of all the variables, teacher effectiveness has the greatest influence on learning outcomes.

University Teacher Preparation: The current 'Review of Initial Teacher Education' is most timely as initial teacher preparation a key causal variable in solving the above problems.

Student learning outcomes - are the key indicator of the effectiveness of the system and teachers are the key determinate of these outcomes. Student learning outcomes are declining.

Teacher Priority: Solutions are required to place 'teachers' and the process of 'teaching' at the centre of reforms.

Identifying Core Content: The core content identified by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) and Quality Initial Teacher Education (QITE).

Education Research Solutions (ERS): ERS has conducted informal qualitative research while designing and delivering teacher planning programs for the past 21 years, involving many thousands of teachers. Also, programs have been designed and delivered for 12 universities to support ITE graduates during the final year prior to graduation.

ERS 'Initial Teacher Education' Course submission - has focused on:

- What is required for teacher planning?
- What does it take to be a teacher?   What is the teaching profession?
- How planning can assist with Classroom Management.

ERS has focused on the teacher planning issues for 'Initial teacher preparation' to address immediate teacher planning issues that includes such questions as:

- **What do I teach**
- **For whom**
- **Why**
- **When**
- **How**
- **With what**
- **So what**
- **How well**

Background

Background: This submission is provided by 'Education Research Solutions' (ERS), a company that was formed in 2002 with the goal of supporting teachers to deal with some key issues that had emerged as a result of the re-structuring of the Education Department – notably planning support.

Research Methodology: During the past 21 years ERS has undertaken 'informal qualitative research' into education systems across Australia and worked with over 10,000 teachers and 1000 schools and various professional / independent 'systems' including: teacher unions, principal associations, associations of independent schools, faith-based systems e.g. Catholic, Lutheran, Adventists. See Appendix for data on teacher involvement in the ERS 'Teachers Online Planning System' (TOPS).

The 'qualitative research' was not formally designed but is the product of thousands of hours of interactions with teachers. The consistent repetition of the issues that arose is the basis for some of the statements below. The current 21year process of contemplation and reflection has allowed ideas to incubate over time. These thoughts are then examined in relation to personal experience as a teacher and educational leader during the previous decades of professional life as a teacher, principal, superintendent and university lecturer.

ERS also worked with 12 universities in supporting final year graduates with lectures and workshops on the planning process to enable first year teachers to begin confidently based on well-prepare learning experiences for students.

Findings: The 'evidence-based findings' are offered with some reservations as they are not fully substantiated. However, their purpose is to assist in giving direction to the 'Review of Initial Teacher Education'. The intent is to assist in providing a practitioner's perspective in identifying current issues, together with solutions to the problems.

Teacher Perspective: The most pervading conclusion from the 21 years of reflection, is the importance of teachers in an education system. There are many variables that impact on student learning, but the single most important role is that of the teacher. Teachers are the key personnel in any education system and not recognising this axiom is at the heart of the problems today. Therefore, this submission is written largely from a teacher's perspective.

Summary: The following are some of the issues that have emerged from the ERS research:

- The complexity of the teacher planning process and the support required.
- Teacher professionalism. The varied roles of a teacher.
- Classroom management as part of the 'core content'.
- Conclusion – creation of a new University Degree for local teacher planning support

Teacher Planning Pre-requisite

Teacher Planning: The pre-requisite to effective teaching is effective teacher planning. Just as in any profession, the planning precedes the practice. Engineers produce plans prior to construction, Surgeons plan surgeries.   Teachers plan to teach.

The process of translating curriculum into teaching expositions and then student learning experiences requires considerable skill and expertise. A prime obligation of universities is to understand this complex process and devote significant time and expertise to enabling ITE students to produce teaching plans - commencing on day one in their classroom.

Seamless Progression: Well-planned documents have specific formats and purposes e.g.
Programs – Teacher lesson plans - Schedules – Strategies – Learning experiences – Resources – Assessments – Reports – Evaluation

Teachers need an understanding of each stage in this 'Planning Document Flow'.   A specific design format is required to achieve the purpose of each stage in the teaching-learning process.

Support required by teachers in the 'Planning document flow'

Planning Stage	Purpose - Design	Document Type
Why we teach	• Rationale: purposeful rationale. Intended outcomes • Requirements: WA Curriculum: content descriptions (syllabus), achievement standards, progression points	Requirements • Tables • Checklists
What we teach	• Content. • Learning Skills / Processes. NAPLAN proficiencies (application)	Scope & Sequence
When we teach	• Scope (content) and Sequence (ordering – time allocation) • Programs – more specific content statements and ordering • Schedules – allocation of lessons / resources to date / time	Programs / Daily lessons Schedules
How we teach	• Learning experiences designed for the students. • Teaching strategies - Methods used to achieve goals. (pedagogy) • Differentiation: Individual Learning Plans / Staged group progress	Daily lesson plans General capabilities Differentiation IEPs
With What	• Resources provided to facilitate the learning: • Digital resources (online access) Physical resources (e.g. texts).	Student Resources Digital Access
So What	• Assessment exercises to gauge learning: FOR and OF learning • Diagnostic (where at), formative (feedback) summative (outcomes)	Assessments: FOR learning. Tests: OF learning Data
How Well	• Criteria (rubrics), standards (Achievement), • Summative tests. (End of program) Standardised tests. NAPLAN	Achievement Standards / Rubrics
For Whom	• 'Student Curriculum': stage of development • Differentiated programs. Individual Education Plans.	Individual Learn. Plans Staged progress

Recommendation: Establish support systems to assist teachers to answer the key questions:
- *Why we teach*: rationale for a chosen topic, the expected outcomes
- *What we teach*: content and the vehicle for the learning process. Syllabus
- *When we teach:* timing and progression of well-designed learning programs. Sequence
- *How we teach*: learning strategies and learning processes that engage students
- *With what:* resources and content to achieve the outcomes
- *So what:* outcomes
- *How Well:* standards.

Teacher Professionalism

What is Teacher Professionalism? It is difficult to define 'Teacher Professionalism', but it is worth considering the many aspects of teaching.

The following are some interesting dimensions of the role through the qualitative research:

- Teaching as a Profession: Accepting responsibilities to society, the system, and to the school to represent the profession in respectful ways. This includes being a role-model for students. A teacher professional also exercises judgements about the design of the learning programs that are appropriate for the students in their care.

- Teaching as planning: Understanding the curriculum requirements and translating them into learning experiences to achieve the expected outcomes. The plans include an awareness of individual differences and development of skills related to the learning process, that are sensitive to these individual differences.

- Teaching as a science in understanding and applying the research into how children learn in different contexts, and at different rates e.g. how the brain learns and retains.

- Teaching as labour: undertaking tasks required of teachers e.g. supervision duties, setting up classroom environment – displays, equipment, providing recreation – bus driving.

- Teaching as an Art: Not only does teaching require professional knowledge and skills, but a set of personal resources to make the thousands of decisions that are required each day that may be: unconventional, unpredictable, challenging.

- Teaching as judgements: Teaching requires an assessment and evaluation of progress, including the development and application of criteria to measure performance. An understanding of the difference between formative and summative assessment is required and applied.

- Teaching as communication: Collegial interactions in sharing ideas, relating to parents, mobilising support as appropriate.

- Teaching as performance: Teaching is a performance art. Teachers are dramatists. The ability to engage students and motivate them to participate in a learning experience is an aspect of the role of the teacher. Each lesson begins with 'motivation' of students, and this is often achieved through initial teacher performance.

Respecting the Role of the Teacher: ERS has reflected on the sad realization that the regard for the teacher has declined across sectors of society. The departments of education have placed teachers at the lower end of the 'respect profile'. With the introduction of the 'Independent Public Schools' policy, of all the stakeholders – teachers ranked last. The impact of this tendency to disrespect teachers is evident in the classroom.

Reality of Teaching - *Classroom Management*

Reality: While university students are building their personal belief systems, the reality is that they will face challenges in managing a class of 15-25 students. This reality needs to be reinforced and the skills and strategies required are to be developed throughout the ITE courses.

Attrition Rates: Classroom management difficulties are a leading cause of teacher stress and burnout, that leads to teacher attrition.

ITE Program Responsibilities: The ITE Core Content for classroom management has many commendable features and implementation of the recommendations will be very helpful. ERS found that some ITE students blame their teacher preparation programs for failing to adequately prepare them for classroom management. Current units in various universities show a lack of attention to classroom management in many teacher preparation programs. Beginning teachers face a reality shock in the classroom when their teacher education programs focus mainly on the theoretical side of classroom management, while not providing practical strategies.

Importance: The effectiveness of a student learning program depends significantly upon the percentage of lesson-time that students are engaged in the learning process. Behaviour management must be a priority in ITE programs and be a pervading aspect of course delivery across the units, and featured in ITE student evaluation.

Learning Environments: Classroom management is vital for creating an environment that minimises disruptions, maximises instruction time, and encourages students to engage in learning. Classroom management is most effective when teachers use preventative strategies to encourage on task learning environments when students are motivated to learn. Teacher planning is the most important element of these preventative strategies. However, the limited time devoted to teacher lesson planning in some universities deprives ITE students from creating an effective learning environment.

Student Engagement Through Planning: ERS has provided well-designed lesson plans as a tool in behaviour management. A key outcome of the ERS 'qualitative research' is *that well planned lessons improve student engagement, minimise behaviour problems and lead to better learning outcomes.* Classroom management through good planning is to be regarded as an important aspect of improving student learning as opposed to just controlling behaviour.

Motivation: An initial requirement of a good lesson plan is 'motivation'. Generally, this is achieved through an initial 'goal setting' process. The ERS 'Curriculum Organiser' lesson plans format includes clearly stated goals. Furthermore, at the end of the lesson students are then asked to reflect on the extent to which they achieved the goal. Students then come to appreciate that learning is purposeful and that they can have pride in their 'goal achievement'.

Prime Stance: The first and most important stance is that teachers are in charge of the students in the classroom. This is not a negotiated position – it is fundamental.
It Is the responsibility of the teacher to 'Classroom Manage' the classroom. Teachers need to be able to state, with confidence - *'I am in charge of this classroom!'*

Empowering Teachers: Rather than teachers being a 're-active' mode it is more effective for teachers to be empowered to pro-actively teach behavioural rules and expectations. Students actually do appreciate clear expectations and are keen to meet these expectations. Most students are disappointed when a few disruptive students interfere with their learning. The 'responsive style' of behaviour management immediately puts the teacher at a disadvantage.

Therefore, It is essential that ITE graduates be given the strategies, techniques and 'belief' to be in control of the students in their classrooms during the ITE course.

There are a number or classroom management programs that are outlined in the ITE Discussion Paper that are to be commended including:

- Establishing clear rules and routines. Explain, negotiate, display. Be accountable for.
- Goal setting to be an integral part of each lesson
- Build a progressive behaviour management plan and enable students to have a clear understanding of consequences. Introduce student 'contracts'.

Professional Practice: ITE students can benefit significantly from de-brief sessions on classroom management. Students can explain their dilemmas and can then receive advice on strategies to deal with similar situations.

Incorporating Classroom Management into ITE Units: Classroom management can be included in a number of ITE units.

- Student engagement through purposeful planning is a proactive way of minimising behavioural issues. The units on 'Curriculum Design and Teacher Planning' are relevant. Goal setting and motivation are proven techniques that are available within the ERS 'Curriculum Organiser' courses.

- Units on pedagogy can also include a component on behaviour management. Each teaching / learning strategy may have an inherent discussion on behaviour management. For example, 'Cooperative Learning' strategies are designed to evoke social pressures within the group to conform and contribute to the learning of all group members. Group pressure is a powerful modifying influence on student behaviour.

- The units on 'psychological foundations for learning' create opportunities to introduce 'behaviour management' techniques. For example, the behavioural triggers for poor behaviour and how they can be modified.

ITE studies are best served when classroom management is aligned with strategies that enhance student learning outcomes.

School Policy: ITE students are encouraged to learn about school policy in relation to behaviour management. e.g. Schools often have procedures that encourage students to review their own behaviours and then arrive at personal contracts to modify own behaviours.

OECD Reports: The OECD reports reveal some alarming statistics. Australia ranks 70th out of 77 on the 'disciplinary climate index', that measures disruption and disorder in the classrooms. A review of disruptive behaviour in classrooms is urgently required, and it has to begin with ITE programs. Disorderly classrooms are a major causal factor in the declining student learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Core Content for Initial Teacher Education: The Summary of the proposed 'Core Content' for ITE courses has some worthy statements. However, as with any education debate the key concerns for the ERS submission is to find the balance between valued dichotomies.

Dichotomies - Finding the Balance: As new ideas emerge there is a tendency to over-emphasize the current theory at the expense of previous proven approaches. Our challenge with ITE programs is to find the balance:

- **Planning and Pedagogy:** The most serious shortcoming in ITE courses is insufficient time devoted to 'planning the learning programs'. Teachers must be supported in the process of converting curriculum into teacher plans and student learning experiences. ERS foiund that ITE graduates tend to have limited capacity in curriculum design and teaching programs and lesson plans. These processes require highly specialized abilities that are difficult to develop. Therefore, specialised curriculum and teacher planning courses are to be designed. In the meantime planning support is to be available to ITE gradates to enable them to teach confidently and effectively.

- **Theory and practice:** Yes, it is valuable to know the brain learns and retains information, and retrieves and applies knowledge. It would be also valuable for ITE graduates to undertake their own action research based on classroom experiences to discover 'what works'. This could be a KPI adopted during their 'Professional Practice' and discussed during the debriefing sessions.

- **Explicit Teaching Vs Negotiated learning:** There are significant benefits for a teacher-centred learning program, while also affording the students to have the opportunity to negotiate their learning program. The current trend towards 'Explicit Direct Instruction' is noted in the 'Core Content'. ERS has found that students do appreciate and benefit from clear instruction from professional educators to achieve well-defined goals. But finding the balance with 'Student Centred Learning' is a current challenge. It is also worthy to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and to be involved in the planning, performance and outcomes of the learning process.

- **Pro-active Vs Re-active Classroom Management Approaches:** Currently 'Classroom Management' is given a low priority in ITE courses. However, the summary of 'Core Content' has clearly stated some important features of effective classroom management. It is pleasing to note the trend towards 'pro-active' approaches, that give the teacher the respect and authority to manage their classrooms. Classroom management is so important that it is a worthy inclusion into a number of ITE units.

> **Recommendation:** Recognise that lack of **teacher planning** support is a central cause of many related issues related to teacher attrition and declining student learning outcomes.
>
> Universities may design a new degree to provide specialist expertise that could support schools and education systems to assist with: Curriculum design, Teacher planning and assessment, Research and data collection and analysis at the school level to determine 'what works' and to share it with colleagues to reduce workloads and improve outcomes.

APPENDIX

Teacher Response to 'Curriculum Organiser' Support

Verification: Below is statistical data on support that was provided through the SSTUWA to access the ERS program 'Curriculum Organiser', that was re-named TOPS.

<u>NOTE</u>: The SSTUWA in effect became the defacto 'system' for supporting teachers.

TOPS refers to the '**Teachers Online Planning System**'

Education Research Solutions

Members that responded '**Yes**'
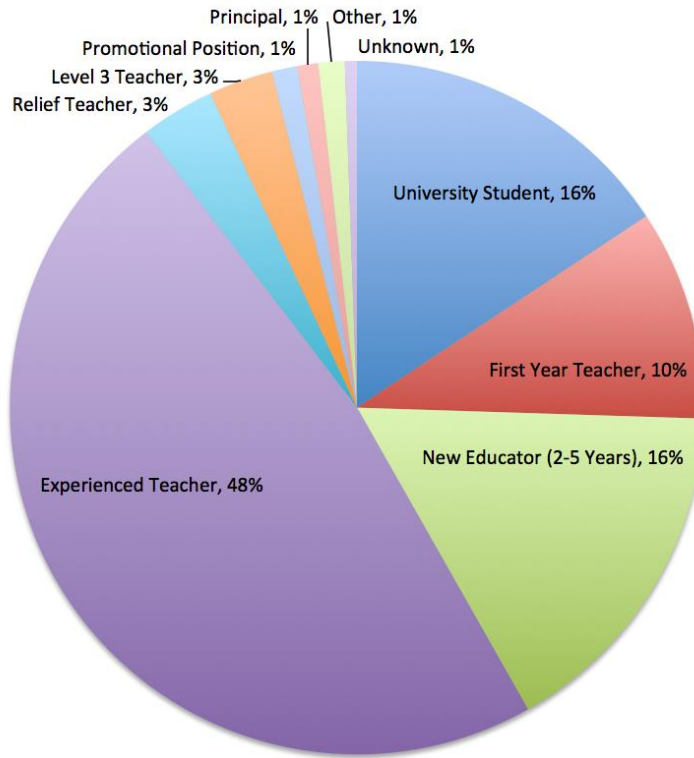
SSTUWA TOPS Survey

Survey Question: "*Did TOPS **significantly influence** your decision to become a member of and/or remain a member of the SSTUWA?*"   ***YES***

Position	Primary	Secondary	Total
Current Students	148	118	166
Previous Students	435	81	516
First Year Teacher	332	55	387
New Educator	338	68	406
Experienced Teacher	500	95	595
Level 3 Teacher	28	7	35
Promotional Position	10	9	19
Principal	15	2	17
Relief Teacher	76	26	102
Other	15	8	23
	1897	**369**	**2266**

Cumulative TOPS Registration Demographics 2009 to 2016

	Primary	Secondary	Totals
University Student	1071	124	1195
First Year Teacher	694	148	842
New Educator (2-5 Years)	1115	203	1318
Experienced Teacher	3285	602	3887
Relief Teacher	236	76	312
Level 3 Teacher	199	66	265
Promotional Position	80	91	171
Principal	78	13	91
Other	84	26	110
Unknown	37	25	62
Total	**6879**	**1374**	**8253**

Breakdown of Primary TOPS Members

- Principal, 1%
- Other, 1%
- Promotional Position, 1%
- Unknown, 1%
- Level 3 Teacher, 3%
- Relief Teacher, 3%
- University Student, 16%
- First Year Teacher, 10%
- Experienced Teacher, 48%
- New Educator (2-5 Years), 16%

Breakdown of Secondary TOPS Members

- Other, 2%
- Unknown, 2%
- Principal, 1%
- Promotional Position, 7%
- University Student, 9%
- Level 3 Teacher, 5%
- First Year Teacher, 9%
- Relief Teacher, 6%
- New Educator (2-5 Years), 15%
- Experienced Teacher, 44%