

## Submission to the Expert Panel on ITE

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This submission specifically addresses four areas: teaching methodologies; responsibility for teaching literacy and numeracy; and curriculum issues. It concludes with a brief comment on the proposal to recruit mid-career people from other professions to teaching.

Page | 1

### 1. Teaching methodologies

It is pleasing to note the Expert Panel's focus on direct instruction, the case for which has been made convincingly. As a former secondary, post-secondary and university teacher, I can attest to the value of this approach. Equally, I can attest to the value of other approaches. If my professional practice had consisted of only one methodology, I would have been failing my students. Thus, the Discussion Paper is worrying as other approaches to teaching have not been given equal analysis. The implication is that direct instruction is the only valid way of teaching. This is clearly not so as less directive and more interactive and constructive approaches are valid for particular cohorts of students at particular times, depending on context, curriculum intentions and students' needs. A one-size-fits-all-approach is very limited and runs the risk of boring students to the point of de-motivation. Teachers who understand different methodologies will be able to select, and at times combine, the most appropriate ways of teaching.

### 2. Responsibility for teaching literacy and numeracy

The Discussion Paper suggests that all teachers become teachers of literacy and numeracy, that they have 'a foundational understanding of literacy and numeracy teaching strategies and their application.' Given the complexity of teaching literacy and numeracy, a 'foundational' level of understanding might be inadequate.

To be expert in teaching literacy and numeracy is essential for all primary school teachers. Secondary teachers, however, are a different matter. Why would teachers, many reportedly already overloaded, welcome the addition of another content area to their existing specialist area/s? Even teachers of language-centric subjects such as English and History should ideally be focussed on higher level skills needed for effective communication in

developing and refuting arguments, rather than on remediating students' literacy and numeracy problems.

An alternative approach would be to have teams of literacy and numeracy teaching experts located within schools and/or within central specialist units. In the latter case, these specialists could visit schools as necessary and teach students with literacy and numeracy needs, leaving specialists in other subjects free to teach in the disciplines they have been trained in.

On a personal note, as a former secondary teacher of English, French, History and Citizenship Education, if I had also been expected to teach numeracy, I would have chosen a different career for two reasons: my dislike of maths and (relatedly) my lack of aptitude for the subject. Don't expect the drama teacher to be thrilled at the prospect of teaching numeracy or the science teacher to welcome new literacy teaching responsibilities.

### 3. Curriculum issues

At a minimum, a sound ITE curriculum needs to consist of the acquisition of relevant knowledge and its application, prac teaching, reflective practice, behaviour management skills and self-care.

#### Knowledge

As the dissemination, analysis and creation of knowledge are at the heart of teaching, the core of a robust teaching program must be knowledge

A useful curricular organiser would be Shulman's (1987) three-part categorisation of the knowledge required by teachers: content-specific knowledge, pedagogical (educational) knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (a combination of the other two knowledge types).

Trainees with a sound understanding of these knowledge types will be able to choose and apply (combinations of) different approaches (information transmission, interactive, and constructivist) to best meet the needs of different classes, different subject matter and different curricular goals.

Integrated with the study of knowledge, trainees would also study the major theoretical, ideological and philosophical positions that have shaped education through history and across cultures. Teachers' learning and development need to continue beyond initial formal training into continuing professional development (CPD) programs that have been integrated into the curricula. CPD also needs to be responsive to locally emerging issues and to be about pedagogy not administrative matters.

### Prac teaching

Prac teaching is a crucial part of teacher education and different models have been suggested in the Discussion Paper. My observation would be that, after thorough preparation, trainees should be given such experience as early as possible in their training. Factoring the maximum number of prac sessions into the curriculum will allow trainees to apply theory to practice. Also, given current attrition rates, it would be wise for people to find out, as early as possible, if the classroom environment suits them temperamentally.

### Reflective practice

Developing teachers who are thoughtful, reflective, self-evaluating and self-improving needs to be a priority in teacher training. The work of Donald Schon (1983) and others is relevant here. Schon's framework can provide a structured process for teachers to conduct their own classroom-based action research activities which, in design, can vary from quite informal to more structured. These activities are a direct and valuable way not only of teachers improving their own practice but of gathering classroom-specific information which, if shared with other classes and schools, can provide useful data.

### Behaviour management skills

In addition to the theoretical issues canvassed above, teacher trainees need to become competent in behaviour management, as acknowledged in the Discussion Paper.

The Discussion Paper suggests that teachers learn about classroom management by setting rules and routines, having proactive practices, and learning how to manage students' behaviour. Rules and routines have always been part of teachers' practice, whether explicit or implied and the emphasis on being proactive is sensible. However, it is unlikely that these approaches will succeed unless there are proper consequences for student transgressions and clear 'compacts' between schools and parents, with the latter understanding the boundaries of their involvement in their children's education. The best teaching strategies, the most conscientious teachers, the most engaging resources and the most thoroughly prepared lessons will be a waste of time without an accompanying culture of all-round respect, clear rules and, very importantly, applied consequences.

### Self-care

It is necessary for teachers to understand their legal rights and responsibilities and also to develop communication strategies and problem-solving skills, in dealing not only with students but also with parents. In a related vein, the

curriculum could include a topic on self-care (psychological and professional). Unless reports of school-based violence diminish, the inclusion of such topics seems to be a sad necessity.

[A brief comment on mid-career entrants](#)

This is a complex matter and it will be instructive to follow the progress of this initiative. My observation would be that all entrants to teaching need the same extensive knowledge and skills, irrespective of their pathway into the profession. There appears to be an expectation that people from other careers could be assumed to be immediately content-ready and need to acquire only pedagogical and content pedagogical knowledge (along with behavioural management skills and self-care strategies. However, I would be cautious about expecting industry knowledge to automatically translate to the kind of content knowledge required in school curricula. A rigorous pre-entry content test might be wise.

## References

Schon, D.A. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York. Basic Books.

Shulman, L.S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1-22.

## Author information

Terrie Ferman, PhD, worked in universities, the public service, the TAFE sector and high schools in Australia and overseas as a lecturer, learning designer, curriculum designer, professional developer and teacher. Her publications and conference papers cover continuing professional development, the integration of technology into university curriculum design, and second language teaching.

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