

19 April 2023

Teacher Education Expert Panel
Department of Education

The Graduate School of Education welcomes the focus in the *Teacher Education Expert Panel* discussion paper on building the respect and reputation of the profession, encouraging more people to become teachers, better preparing teachers for the classroom, and ensuring evidence-informed practices. We further recognise that teacher education includes pre-service teachers as well as teachers working in the profession. We acknowledge the importance of this opportunity to offer our feedback on the discussion paper.

We appreciate that the primary intention of the discussion paper is to stimulate discussion and feedback across the profession and wider community. As a provider of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs with significant expertise and professional experience in the preparation and support of pre-service teachers (PSTs) we have excellent rates of retention and success, and our graduates contribute to the current and future workforce needs in the state of Western Australia and elsewhere.

It is disappointing that the discussion paper offers no new perspectives on what constitutes quality teacher education. Further, there is little or no recognition of the impacts of the TEMAG reforms or whether there has been a discernible difference to ITE programs. More significantly, it is puzzling that yet more changes to ITE programs are the proposed solution to workforce issues such as insecure contracts, increasing workloads, high administration, retention, burnout, significant behaviour issues and teacher salaries. No evidence is presented that strengthening ITE programs will address these or any workforce issues or that the four key foci are evidence-informed. It is not clear either as to whether an evaluation of current ITE programs has occurred and what gaps, if any, have been identified and whether this evidence underpins the proposed recommendations. We encourage employing bodies to gather data on graduate teachers and principals to better understand and evidence the challenges teachers face in their first five years. Currently these data are gathered annually in WA and used to inform program improvements.

Our feedback is as follows and linked with the key findings:

Strengthening ITE programs to deliver confident, effective, classroom-ready graduates

1. Recognise that ITE programs prepare graduates to be profession-ready; that is ready to enter the classroom.
2. Reconsider the over-regulation of ITE programs that can have the unintended consequences that these programs are less responsive to contextual and local issues.
3. Review the AITSL standards and ensure these are 'fit for purpose' and accurately reflect the diverse professional learning needs of all teachers, including PSTs.
4. Consider how graduates can be better supported across their first two years as teachers by both schools and ITE providers.

Strengthen the link between performance and funding of ITE programs

1. Linking performance and funding may lead to perverse outcomes, such as all students passing their programs of study, or providers selecting those based on predictors of success.
2. Retention: students who do not feel that teaching is a career option ought to be encouraged to exit an ITE program and ITE providers should not pass students who are not academically able to meet the requirements or deemed not suitable to be teachers based on the professional placements.

Improve the quality of practical experience in teaching

1. Schools and teachers should be given status and recognition for their work as mentors of PSTs, and ongoing professional development of teaching staff.
2. Link teacher re-registration with their roles as effective mentors of PSTs.
3. Offer coaching and mentoring for teachers working with PSTs to increase their effectiveness.
4. Ensure a level of consistency in professional placements across states and territories to streamline expectations for schools and teachers and to increase consistency and quality application of the required standards.
5. Reconsider the levels of funding for professional placement; offer stipends for PSTs, and additional support for schools and ITE providers to undertake cross-institutional teaching.

Improve postgraduate programs to attract mid-career entrants

1. Provide Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for those entering an ITE course, including postgraduate programs who have demonstrated relevant teaching experience.
2. Offer financial incentives for career-change graduates such as a stipend during professional placements.

In closing, we appreciate the briefings and consultation sessions that have been conducted and the opportunity to contribute to what is, without doubt, a complex task.



Professor Tanya Fitzgerald
Dean and Head of School
Graduate School of Education
The University of Western Australia