

HALT Association NSW Response to Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper

As the only non-sector specific association for existing Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (HALTs) in NSW, we are well placed to provide insights and feedback on this work.

A key focus of our work is advocating for HALT and identifying how these teachers can support initial teacher education students and programs to better equip the future of the profession.

The HALT Association NSW **notes** the *Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper* and provides the following in response to the discussion questions provided.

Discussion Question 1: There is an opportunity to ensure all teachers learn in ITE the evidence-based practices which improve student learning. In addition, there is an opportunity for graduate teachers to be assessed on these practices as part of their final year assessment (known as the Teaching Performance Assessment) so that they develop and practice their skills in these areas.

To what extent would this strengthen ITE to deliver confident, effective, classroom ready graduates?

This approach would develop greater confidence among ITE students and graduates to approach their first years in the profession with the assurance that they have been provided with best practice in lesson design and delivery. This approach may also better equip graduates with classroom management strategies which is known to contribute to burnout and high early exit rates from the profession.

There is an opportunity for HALTs to play a key role in working with ITE providers and students to increase understanding of what evidence-based practices look like in different contexts. It would also be beneficial for current expert practitioners such as HALTs to play a key role in assessing ITE practice against Teaching Performance Assessments.

Discussion Question 2: There is an opportunity to strengthen the focus on improving performance in ITE by setting standardised performance measures for higher education providers and reporting publicly against them. There is also an opportunity to strengthen the link between performance and funding through the provision of financial incentives to encourage higher education providers to strive for excellence.

To what extent would these opportunities provide a strengthened focus on improving the performance of ITE programs?

Benchmarking performance can raise quality assurance and place higher education providers in a stronger position, particularly in terms of preparing ITE teachers, but also making providers more accountable against certain standards that could be applied across the tertiary sector.

There is great scope in this area for higher education providers to use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to benchmark their performance against what they are preparing ITE teachers for, but also providing a mechanism for anchoring ITE teachers in best practice aligned with standards to deliver quality outcomes.

As HALTs are the custodians of the standards they could play a key role in advising on use of the standards to strengthen ITE programs.

Discussion Question 3: There is an opportunity to improve the quality of practical experience in teaching through:

- developing more comprehensive system level agreements between school systems and higher education providers to improve the coordination and quality of placements
- developing national guidelines for high-quality practical experience
- supporting particular schools to specialise in delivering high quality placements who can share their expertise, and
- providing targeted support for ITE students with competing commitments, additional needs or studying in areas of workforce need to complete their placements.

To what extent would these opportunities improve the quality of practical experience?

The opportunity for triangulation of delivery and output through these means provides a stronger practical experience opportunity for ITE teachers. Practical experience is one of the most important preparation areas for ITE teachers and by articulating these various areas provides greater credibility and accountability for tertiary providers, but also in the quality of experience of ITE teachers.

In this work, there is an opportunity to ensure that ITE students are strategically placed with our most effective teachers, including our HALTs. We recognise the important role that quality practical experience plays in the education of ITE students so we would want to ensure that these pre-service teachers are partnered with expert practitioners. In this context, HALTs should be considered the ideal candidates to supervise pre-service teachers as they have the demonstrated expertise that should be shared with ITE students.

Discussion Question 4: There is an opportunity to attracting mid-career entrants into ITE by:

- enabling mid-career entrants to enter the classroom sooner as part of their degree
- developing evidence and provide guidance on the features of effective programs to attract mid-career entrants, and
- improving the flexibility of available postgraduate ITE programs to support mid-career entrants in managing competing commitments.

To what extent would these opportunities improve postgraduate programs to attract mid-career entrants?

The incentivisation of making teaching more attractive and accessible to mid-career entrants cannot be underestimated. Therefore, potential for accelerating mid-career entrants to qualifying, providing programs for these entrants that are quality-assured and that take into account post-graduate avenues are all factors that could potentially make prospective mid-career entrants consider teaching more attractive because of the pathways offered to these entrants. In the context of potential teacher shortages, these approaches cannot be underestimated.

HALTs can play in supporting mid-career entrants into the profession and enhance their retention. HALTs could potentially mentor, coach and/or supervise relevant teachers to ensure they are provided with the necessary skills and experiences so they can enter the classroom sooner as part of their degree.

Contact

The HALT Association NSW would welcome the opportunity to continue to provide feedback on this work throughout its development.

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