NSW Council of Deans of Education Response to Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper

Who are the NSWCDE?

The [NSW Council of Deans of Education](#) is the peak body representing NSW Teacher Education Providers, University Education Faculties and Schools of Education. The NSWCDE leads the delivery and development of education programs, partnerships, and research. It acts as an advocate for pre-service and in-service teacher education and works cooperatively with key stakeholders. NSWCDE is the state affiliate of the Australian Council of Deans of Education for New South Wales.

Background and Context

The NSWCDE welcomes opportunities to extend the quality provision of pre-service and in-service education programs and research across all schooling sectors. We have strong partnerships with NSW schools in government, Catholic and independent sectors through the NSW Department of Education's Hub School program; our shared professional experience agreements across all school sectors; agreements with the NSW Teachers' Federation and Independent Education Union about payment for in-school supervisors across sectors; and collaborative research projects commissioned by the NSW Department of Education.

Summary of Recommendations

1) Reframe as *foundation studies* the *core curricula* referenced in Section 1.2 and throughout Reform Area 1; rename the section *classroom management* as *positive learning environments* and include foci on curriculum, relationships, and mental health; and reframe the enabling factors as specific foundation areas.

2) Modify Program Standard 4.2 and adopt NSW's approach to the study of Priority Elaboration Areas. No modification on TPAs to assess this foundation knowledge.

3) Core curriculum or 'Foundation Studies' should be assessed through accreditation processes, using sub-groups of experts to update evolving evidence.

4) Clarify which data will constitute a valid measure of the performance of an ITE program and ensure accurate data are used to measure attrition, retention, and graduate outcomes.

5) Use a more valid proxy for classroom readiness such as improvement in judgement consistency in externally moderated TPAs.

6) Remove unreasonable expectations of sustainable transition when ITE providers are not funded beyond graduation and too many other variables influence retention of teachers.

7) Use an improvement approach to performance measurement.

8) Support and identify high performing schools in diverse contexts for quality placements – Rural and remote, large regional, multicultural urban schools, hard to staff etc; and scale up and showcase successful professional experience and internship models in Australia.

9) Research on 'what the most optimal time for placements' is to support or negate the 80/60 day current requirements.

10) Nation-wide endorsement of the use of simulation and scenario-based technologies to prepare for successful practicums.

11) More systematic programs of support eg first year students as paid paraprofessionals [1-2 days per week] and final year internship as paid conditionally registered teachers

12) Transition and induction staff who are supernumerary to school staffing profiles in RRR and hard to staff schools.

13) Dedicated funding for professional experience that flows directly to Education.

14) Support flexible pathways into teaching across all jurisdictions. This may include a need to examine legislation in some states/territories related to the approval of novice teachers to work unsupervised in a classroom.

15) Support a variety of accelerated pathways through funding for development and for student bursaries.

16) Ensure smoother and more consistent Permission to Teach and Conditional Accreditation processes across jurisdictions.

Elaboration of Recommendations

Reform Area 1: Strengthen ITE programs to deliver effective, classroom ready graduates

Discussion questions

1. Evidence-based teaching practices
- Are there other evidence-based practices which should be prioritised in ITE programs?

Content

Education is inherently multidisciplinary, integrating foundation insights from educational psychology, sociology, philosophy, and history. The NSW Council of Deans of Education

acknowledges the importance of strong disciplinary grounding in human cognition, drawn from both educational psychology and the cognitive sciences[1]. There are also additional evidence-based practices that should be prioritised within ITE programs, however, including deep foundation knowledge of curriculum theory and practice, students' curriculum, social contexts, their diversity and belonging, and their relationships[2]. We specify some brief amendments here, noting our broader recommendation that specific foundation content be determined and regularly reviewed by a panel of educational experts with representation from each foundation discipline:

- In relation to the *brain and learning*, we note the strong and consistent empirical findings that emotional and motivational factors are also essential to learning and interact with cognitive processes to predict academic achievement, student belonging, and persistence[3,4].
- In relation to *classroom management,* we note the need for teachers to not just manage student disruption but to create environments that support students to thrive. We suggest this section be renamed *positive learning environments* and also include foci on relationships[5,6] and mental health.
- In relation to *enabling factors* we note the lack of specificity in terms of students' backgrounds, histories, and contexts and the influence of these sociological factors on learning. This foundation knowledge is important for addressing Australia's widening achievement gap. We also note the lack of philosophical or historical focus on who and what education is for.
- In relation to *First Nations peoples, cultures, and perspectives* we note the need for specific curriculum focus: not as an enabling factor but as an independent area[7,8].

One potential opportunity for better clarifying the role of social contexts and student diversity is to reposition enabling factors: bringing out each factor in turn and framing each as a specific foundation.

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[1] Mayer, R. E. (2001). What good is educational psychology? The case of cognition and instruction. *Educational Psychologist, 36,* 83-88.

[2] Davies, P. (1999). What is evidence-based education? *British Journal of Educational Studies, 47,* 108-121.

[3] Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. *Child Development, 88*, 1156–1171.

[4] Martin, A., & Dowson, M. (2009). Interpersonal relationships, motivation, engagement, and achievement: Yields for theory, current issues, and educational practice. *Review of Educational Research, 79*, 327-365.

[5] Osher, D., Cantor, P., Berg, J., Steyer, L. & Rose, T. (2020). Drivers of human development: How relationships and context shape learning and development, *Applied Developmental Science, 24*, 6-36.

[6] McGrath, K., & Van Bergen, P. (2015). Who, when, why, and to what end? Students at risk of negative student-teacher relationships and their outcomes. *Educational Research Review, 14*, 1-17.

[7] Weuffen, S., Maxwell, J., & Lowe, K. (2022). Inclusive, color-blind and deficit: Understanding teachers' contradictory views of Aboriginal students' participation in education. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 50,* 89-110.

[8] Hogarth, M. (2022). An analysis of education academics' attitudes and preconceptions about Indigenous Knowledges in initial teacher education. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 51*.

Terminology

The NSW Council of Deans of Education recommends that the *core curricula* referenced in Section 1.2 and throughout Reform Area 1 be reframed as *foundation studies*, in recognition that a national core curriculum would risk stifling innovation, growth, and differentiation between ITE providers. The specification of common foundation studies, alongside existing accreditation requirements, will continue to provide ITE providers with opportunities to tailor their own core curricula to their specific teaching contexts and TEQSA-accredited degree structures while also reassuring external stakeholders of the strong evidence-base underpinning ITE in Australia.

Within the common foundation outlined in Reform Area 1, we also note an important distinction between:

1. Deep foundation knowledge about learners and their contexts, and
2. Foundational teaching practices that draw on this knowledge.

The evidence-based foundation outlined in Reform Area 1 is important for teacher expertise, but is not wholly about teaching practices (e.g. memory is not a teaching practice). This distinction is important, because – as noted in the recommendations – it is the deep foundation knowledge about learners and their contexts that will give teachers the capacity to diagnose sources of struggle, to know which foundation practices to employ in a given context, and to differentiate for different students in the class.

2. Amending Accreditation Standards and Procedures
   - How should the Accreditation Standards and Procedures best be amended to ensure all ITE students learn and can confidently use these practices?
   - Should the Accreditation Standards and Procedures be amended to require TPAs to assess these practices?

Amendments to the Accreditation Standards and Procedures provides an appropriate means of ensuring all ITE students can learn and confidently use the foundation content outlined in the TEEP report. However, it is imperative that in doing so we ensure that both the *Graduate Teaching Standard*s and *Accreditation Standards and Procedures* retain sufficient flexibility to allow providers to meet the diverse needs of Teacher Education Students.

To strike this balance, we recommend modifications to Program Standard 4.2 and an adoption of NSW's current approach to the study of Priority Elaboration Areas. However, we do not recommend that TPAs be modified to assess this foundation knowledge. We expand on these recommendations below.

Amending Program Standard 4.2

In response to Reform Area 1.1, we previously noted our recommendation that the proposed foundation studies be adapted to also include important concepts sociological, philosophical,

and historical concepts. This expanded 'Foundation' could then be incorporated in Program Standard 4.2.

In considering the volume of study needed for a common foundation studies block, it is important to also consider the subsequent content which builds on this foundation. All ITE curricula must also include the study of disciplinary content (KLAs) and the application of specific pedagogical approaches across these discipline areas. In NSW there is also a need to include curriculum space for specific Priority Area Elaborations. Allowing sufficient time for the application of foundation knowledge and its integration with practice is critical: ITE students will lose the value of a strong foundation if they do not know how and when it should apply.

Nationalise Priority Elaboration Areas

Current national program accreditation processes require providers to demonstrate where Graduate Teaching Standards are 'Taught, Practiced and Assessed' within each of their accredited programs. Given the high level of rigour already embedded in accreditation processes, program compliance should provide substantial assurances to all stakeholders.

To further emphasise and deepen program coverage of specific aspects of the Graduate Teaching Standards, we suggest adopting the New South Wales Educational Standards Authority's (NESA) approach. Within the New South Wales context, NESA already specifies additional 'Priority Area Elaborations' in:

- Classroom Management,
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education,
- Information and Communication Technologies,
- Literacy and Numeracy, Students with a Disability, and
- Teaching Students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD).

NESA has developed an additional matrix template ([Template 3A](#)) through which providers outline evidence from within program units and professional experience. Nationalising this process would provide a mechanism to allow providers to demonstrate coverage of Foundational Knowledge.

Teaching Performance Assessments

Since the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group's 2016 recommendations, ITE providers have worked with AITSL and Teacher Regulation Authorities to design, implement and evaluate Teaching Performance Assessments as a valid and reliable measure of classroom readiness. While the NSW Council of Deans of Education welcomes ongoing opportunities to refine the accreditation framework for TPAs, we do not recommend that the Accreditation Standards and Procedures be amended to require TPAs to also assess foundation content. Our concerns are as follows:

- TPAs assess classroom readiness, which needs to be understood within the context of the school and the focus Key Learning Area.

- TPAs need to retain sufficient flexibility to allow for their implementation across a wide-range settings. Aspects of the proposed foundation studies, as currently outlined, are too specific to be assessed across all TPA settings.
- TPA trend data cannot be compromised.
- ITE providers do not have jurisdictional authority to prescribe a particular set of pedagogies to schools. This means that ITE students would not have equal opportunity to demonstrate understanding or application of the specific teaching practices recommended.

3. Curriculum specific content

- What steps should be taken to ensure curriculum- specific ITE content embeds the evidence-based practices?

Making content visible

One concern emerging from the TEEP review relates to the visibility of existing evidence-based practices currently embedded in ITE programs. Although NESAs accreditation requirements in NSW already require ITE providers to specify where all Graduate Teaching Standards and Priority Area Elaborations are taught, practiced and assessed, such information may not be readily available to government or the public.

As above, the NSW Council of Deans of Education recommends that any prescribed foundation studies content be reported in a matrix template and accompany other appropriately framed accreditation documentation. We further recommend that Teacher Regulation Authorities be empowered to:

- Share templates publicly with State and Federal governments, employers, and other stakeholders.
- Prepare executive summaries of foundation content across all providers within the jurisdiction.

Mechanisms for reviewing foundation studies content

University course accreditation with TEQSA follows the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* and, following Threshold Standard 3.1.2, requires "*The content and learning activities of each course of study engage with advanced knowledge and inquiry consistent with the level of study and the expected learning outcomes, including*:

a. Current knowledge and scholarship in relevant academic disciplines.
b. Study of the underlying theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the academic disciplines or fields of education or research represented in the course, and
c. Emerging concepts that are informed by recent scholarship, current research findings and, where applicable, advances in practice."

These TEQSA requirements are well aligned with evidence-based practices in education. Emerging research findings shape and support understandings of learners and their contexts and offer directions for practice. For this reason, foundation or core content is unlikely to look the same in 20 years' time as it does today. Accreditation processes can include updates in evidence-based practices and accreditation panels can convene sub-groups of experts in these fields.

4. Ensuring consistent, robust delivery of evidence-based teaching practices

- What changes to the authorising environment are required to ensure consistent application of the Accreditation Standards and Procedures and implementation of core content in ITE programs?

In NSW, the Teacher Regulation Authority NESA enjoys a strong working relationship with the NSW Council of Deans of Education and with individual providers. Any changes to the authorising environment should work to reinforce NESA's successful work. Above, for example, we recommend an initiative to nationalise NESA's Priority Elaboration Areas. We welcome ongoing innovations and refinements that would pare some accreditation requirements back, while emphasising others that have emerged as more central to quality assurance processes. In the NSW Council of Deans of Education's opinion, such refinement is both possible and desirable.

Authorising Environment

Above, we recommend Program Standard 4.2 be amended to reflect any new 'foundation studies' and to implement an EFTSL-based requirement. Additional recommendations for change to the authorising environment are as follows:

- We recommend Program Standard 6 be refined to ensure that providers are reporting on targeted aspects of graduate readiness. We further recommend that this reporting be supported through centralised nation-wide data collection processes. Too little attention has been given nationally to the need for robust data regarding employer satisfaction and graduate accreditation. Western Australian colleagues report TRA-led processes that provide high-quality data to all stakeholders. We recommend the Western Australian model be adopted as a national approach.
- We recommend that the current TPA focus on classroom readiness and effective teaching cycles be maintained. Foundation studies should be assessed through the accreditation process, but not through TPAs. Providers should demonstrate appropriate coverage throughout units within degrees, with additional templates/matrices added such as those used for Priority Areas in NSW.

While professional experience placements in schools are important for supporting the integration of theory and practice, a broader conceptualisation of the place of work-integrated learning in Initial Teacher Education is needed to ensure Teacher Education Students can work effectively with a broad range of learners across diverse school settings. The NSW Council of Deans of Education recommend:

- That any accreditation specifications around foundational studies also allow sufficient time for practical experiences.
- That work is done with school systems and TRAs to ensure that authorising environments support Teacher Education Students to make well-supported transitions into beginning teaching. Conditional teaching accreditation and similar arrangements need to ensure in-school induction and mentoring processes are high-quality, and that workplace agreements support Teacher Education Students to successfully meet university requirements.

Reform Area 1 Recommendations

1) Reframe as *foundation studies* the *core curricula* referenced in Section 1.2 and throughout Reform Area 1; rename the section *classroom management* as *positive learning environments* and include foci on curriculum, relationships, and mental health; and reframe the enabling factors as specific foundation areas.

2) Modify Program Standard 4.2 and adopt NSW's approach to the study of Priority Elaboration Areas. No modification on TPAs to assess this foundation knowledge.

3) Core curriculum or 'Foundation Studies' should be assessed through accreditation processes.

Reform Area 2: Strengthen the link between performance and funding of initial teacher education

No funding model could adequately capture the complexity and quality of an ITE program. Any metrics used in such a system could only be based on the improvements in candidates rather than the quality of the candidates emerging. As we have learnt from the government's *My School* platform, it is erroneous to judge the merit of an educational institution based on outcomes – a school that takes students who have suffered great adversities and enables them to contribute positively to society has achieved far more than a school that takes exceptional students and only enables them to achieve good results. Any measure of a ITE program quality would need to be based on the improvement that the program engendered in students. However, unlike NAPLAN results that can be objectively measured using multiple choice questions and the like, measuring improvement in teaching quality is far more subjective. It would require ITE students to complete an initial assessment of their teaching quality, based on a nationally deployed instrument, which is unrealistic, not least because of the impact any such evaluation activity on school children. In summary, there are too many subjectivities to effectively measure improvement in teaching quality, and allocating funding based on anything other than improvement would be unfair.

1. ITE performance measures
   - Are there additional indicators that should be considered?

     i. Diversity of programs offered by HEI and the target audience should be considered. Small private providers, regional providers, metropolitan providers, and multi-jurisdictional providers all have different target cohorts and programs should meet those different needs.
     ii. Program flexibility could be considered: for example, to enable students to select areas of high need (e.g. STEM) after the first year of their program; or opportunities for low stakes experiences in schools early in the degree to address retention.

   - To what extent should the performance measures form the core part of the evidence requirements in provider's 'Plans for Demonstrating Impact' required in the Accreditation Standards and Procedures?

The TEEP Discussion paper proposes four measures of performance, Selection, Retention, Classroom Readiness and Transition. Each of these measures need to be carefully considered, for the following reasons:

- Selection (i.e. First Nations, regional and remote locations, and low socio-economic backgrounds, high ATAR students, STEM students) confuses the quality of the ITE course with the quality of the students, and says nothing about the quality of what takes place in an institution as part of teacher education student development. If high ATAR students choose a sandstone university based on institutional reputation, or regional students choose a local regional university based on convenience, it says nothing about the quality of the ITE program being offered.
- These indicators are inputs and are not related to the quality or performance of the ITE program.
- Adjust the language "high quality" to include "high quality and high potential" as students entering ITE have varying educational opportunities and support afforded to them.
- Retention and attrition may vary based on factors not at all related to the quality of the program. For instance, students may have external circumstances that lead to their attrition, for instance domestic circumstances or revised life aspirations. Attrition is more likely for students from more disadvantaged backgrounds, so penalising ITE programs based on attrition would be socially inequitable.

First-year attrition

It is stated "First-year attrition is a reflection of the selection of suitable ITE students, and the support provided in their first year". The formula for the calculation is based on (see page 32), "The attrition rate for 2019 is the proportion of students who commenced and ITE program in 2019 who neither complete an ITE program in 2019 and 2020 nor return to an ITE program 2020". For students who commence and take a leave of absence are they counted as attrited?

If so, this would give a higher attrition rate. How do attrition rates compare with overseas ITE program and other profession-based degrees?

Six-year dropout rate

It is unclear whether this indicator refers to "non-completion rates" or "dropout rates."

The discussion paper mentions a completion rate of 48% from 2015 (on page 33), but Figure 2.6 shows a significantly lower dropout rate over the same period.

Assuming that the proposed indicator is a dropout rate, it should be noted that a six-year dropout rate does not account for part-time candidature.

Many more part-time students are enrolling in ITE than ever before. From 2017-21, part-time domestic ITE students increased by 6%, while full-time domestic ITE students declined by 1%.[9] Many part-time ITE students have family responsibilities and work in schools, partly in response to workforce shortages.

A four-year undergraduate degree can take eight or more years to complete part-time, so a six-year dropout rate misrepresents part-time students who may be progressing satisfactorily by their sixth year. Useful actions could be funded to address national dropout rates:

- Measures to determine why students drop out.
- Programs/policies to reengage students.

Classroom readiness

Classroom readiness does relate to the core intention of ITE programs so is a reasonable attribute to focus upon, however, it is problematic to accurately measure the improvement in classroom readiness. It is infeasible to objectively measure the classroom readiness of ITE students because it would require pre-testing students on all areas of classroom practice at the outset of their program. As well, any such system would be open to gaming, for instance, with subjective measures of initial performance set lower to increase the apparent gains by the completion of the program. Improvement in judgement consistency in externally moderated TPAs is a better indicator that the program is producing classroom ready graduates rather than some students' subjective perception of their own readiness or satisfaction with their course.

Another potential measure for graduate teacher classroom readiness is their direct employer's views of their performance once they graduate. The discussion paper suggests that direct supervisors' views on graduating students via the QILT Employer Satisfaction Survey (ESS) are inadequate because of its small sample size. However, Western Australia has a successful strategy whereby a survey instrument gathers views from schools about the readiness of

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[9] Commonwealth Department of Education, *Higher Education Statistics, Section 8 Special courses*, Table 8.4 from 2017-21.

graduates from specific institutions, and these nuanced data are used formatively by ITE providers to improve programs.

With the implementation of Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal, there is an opportunity for respondents to nominate their current employer. Although the employer may change over the three-year period of the GOS-L, further ESS could be gathered.

Transition

The proposed indicators for this category are:

a. Graduate employment outcomes: The proportion of teaching graduates employed upon graduation.
b. Sustainability of employment: The proportion of graduates registered and employed at the end of the second-year post-graduation.
c. Employment in areas of highest workforce need: The proportion of graduates employed in regional and remote, low SES locations, and in STEM subjects.

Of the three indicators, only the first one is under the control of ITE providers. Therefore, the last two measures should not be used to evaluate ITE providers.

While an institution's impact on its students' employability is a valid measure, the other two indicators depend on decisions made by individual teachers and their employers, which are beyond the control of ITE providers. These activities are also unfunded for ITE providers to provide.

For instance, sustainability of employment often depends on the type of school in which a beginning teacher works, rather than their potential effectiveness as a teacher. A graduating ITE student who works in a hard-to-staff school (e.g., a low SES or regional or remote school) will be more likely to leave the profession early in their career than one who begins in a high SES metropolitan school, all else being equal.

A more fundamental problem is that ITE is not funded to support students' transition to employment. Universities are resourced to support students until graduation, but post-employment support should be provided by employers and accreditation agencies.

For example, from 2020-22, the proportion of early career teachers who underwent a formal induction process decreased from 65% to 59%.[10] Employers should be providing induction to 100% of new employees, rather than having it decrease from already inadequate levels. ITE providers are not responsible for this situation.

We also note that the TEEP Discussion Paper states "It is not preferred by the Panel to aggregate the indicators into a single performance measure" p. 27). However, allocating

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[10] AITSL, Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) Key Metrics Dashboard Release, 29 March 2023.

funding based on combinations of any metrics would effectively form a single measure (per capita) of perceived program quality.

2. Public reporting
   - Should the Australian Teacher Workforce Data collection be the basis for reporting and publicising the performance measures?
   - Are there other approaches for reporting the performance measures?

It is reasonable to publish data about different institutional measures – it is public information. However, the danger comes from using that data as a coarse proxy for performance of one institution compared to another. There is a range of factors that influence the measures that are being reported, including geographical location of the institution and percentage of student enrolment in ITE courses at an institution.

Data presented should be course specific as aggregated data may hide higher performing courses and mask poorer performing courses. To consider the data and make valid judgements contextual thresholds should be considered rather than national averages. As previously stated, an improvement approach is strongly advocated.

3. Public transparency
   - If made publicly available, are these performance measures sufficient to drive quality improvement in ITE?

Public reporting of data relating to ITE is already available through ATWD and QILT. It is important, however, to ensure that these data are accurately reported, and there is clarity around what the data are measuring, for example, completion rates at a point in time vs retention rates of a course.

4. Transition funding to support performance improvement
   - How could transition funding be used to set higher education providers on a path to improving the quality of their programs?

Transition funding would find immediate application to support ITE program quality. As outlined in the TEEP review, transition funding could be used for developing core content resources, enabling inter-university collaboration, professional learning of ITE staff, improved student support, and much needed research into ITE and successful transition to and retention in the profession. Additionally, funding could be used to provide greater mentorship to students during their ITE programs, contributing to less attrition, greater classroom readiness, and potentially more resilience once in the profession.

The NSW Council of Deans of Education has successfully completed research projects related to professional experience for the NSW Department of Education. These projects have involved university and school personnel implementing and evaluating strategies to improve

collaborations between universities and schools that improve teacher education students' experiences transitioning into the profession.

5. Excellence pool for higher quality programs:
   - How could a system of reward funding be best designed to support high performing ITE programs and encourage them to increase their enrolments?
   - Are there any risks to such an approach and if so, how should they be addressed?

Reward funding for high performing ITE programs is akin to providing the highest performing schools additional funding based on their results. Under such a system, ITE providers may be actively penalised for taking on disadvantaged students, or for working with less resources. If we want to improve Initial Teacher Education, funding should be allocated on a need basis, for instance, where resources and expertise are most required.

Reward funding could be allocated to those providers that do the 'heavy lifting' in producing large numbers of graduates for the profession. Similarly, those providers that graduate higher numbers of teachers from diverse backgrounds for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, EALD, and rural cohorts could be rewarded.

Reform Area 2 Recommendations

1) Clarify which data will constitute a valid measure of the performance of an ITE program and ensure accurate data are used to measure attrition, retention, and graduate outcomes.

2) Use a more valid proxy for classroom readiness such as improvement in judgement consistency in externally moderated TPAs.

3) Remove unreasonable expectations of sustainable transition when ITE providers are not funded beyond graduation and too many other variables influence retention of teachers.

4) Use an improvement approach to performance measurement.

Reform Area 3: Improving the quality of practical experience in teaching

Overview

We note that the review does not accommodate or discuss the current arrangement for preservice teachers' conditional accreditation opportunities. In NSW, conditional accreditation is available to preservice teachers in their final year of ITE, and prior to their final professional placement. Conditional accreditation allows students to engage in employment in schools while completing their studies. The procedure is as follows:

- NESA assesses and approves conditional accreditation.
- The ITE student receives offers for part time or full-time teaching position.
- NESA approves reduced time for final experience placement.
- The provider evaluates the ITE student's applications for reduced time for final placements case-by-case, including procedures such as an interview with the ITE student.

Going forward, to improve the quality of professional experience, while at the same time accommodating current workforce demands for more teachers, the value and impact of conditional accreditation should be incorporated into how professional experience is managed and undertaken.

The idea shared in the Discussion Paper of the medical programs that progressively increase clinical practice and decrease classroom learning is an interesting idea to consider. However, it is difficult to see the feasibility of this approach in the current NSW and National ITE climate, which mandates volumes of prescribed learning content. This content must be covered, and much of it is unlikely to be able to be shifted into learning during professional practice. In addition, much of the clinical practice undertaken during medical programs is not in placement; rather, it is in simulation, case study, scenario learning, practicing on fellow students and so forth, at least in the earlier years of programs. Simulation is already part of many ITE programs, and it may be appropriate for further investigation of what is already on offer, before looking to other disciplines for guidance.

NSW providers foster effective collaborative provider-school partnerships by making explicit the roles and responsibilities for all parties, including school and university staff, connecting ITE teaching theory with practice as well as staying abreast of mentor teachers' classroom practice through the quality assurance feedback loops.

However, collaborative partnerships alone cannot bridge the gaps between theory and practice, produce high-quality professional experience for students and support schools in facilitating ITE student development. Having partnerships is necessary, but not sufficient, in these endeavours. One way in which providers can value add to the collaborative partnership is by formalising interactions based on explicit models for collaboration. For instance, the

CANNAS model (du Plessis, 2017[11]) recommends focusing interactions on Connectedness (between providers and schools), Awareness (of workforce demand and the changing educational and school landscape), Needs Analyses, Negotiation, Action, and Support.

The NT Teaching Schools Program is a valuable model and contribution to the consideration of effective provider-school partnerships. However, the NT context is such that it has significantly fewer ITE providers than more populous states such as NSW (CDU is the only NT accredited provider, although it is possible that providers based in other States (especially Flinders in SA) may also seek to place students in the NT). The program would work very well in a context in which there is limited (or no) competition for professional experience placements. However, in NSW there are many providers and the demand for professional experience placements is always in danger of overwhelming supply. The NSW Hub School Program does seek to provide a similar model at scale, but the problem of supply (let alone supply of quality placements) remains vexing.

Notwithstanding the efforts individual providers go to in curating pedagogically sound programs in terms of professional learning and developing classroom-ready teachers, we acknowledge the necessity of properly sequenced professional learning experiences. We are curious about the focus on practical skills recommended by the Discussion paper authors and wonder how professional experience might possibly be undertaken *without* practical skills at the fore. On the other hand, we acknowledge the attendant focus on behaviour/classroom management and teaching diverse learners; we note that these areas are already championed as fundamental in NSW ITE programs, and the priority area content mandated by NESA, including classroom management, teaching EAL/D learners and stand-alone units of study in teaching students with special educational needs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education.

The current NSW entrance requirements (and associated alternatives) get in the way of an early (i.e., first year) professional experience, although this has been noted in other discussion fora. In sum, at this stage NSW requires prospective ITE students to have three HSC Band 5s including one in English, with an alternative of the completion of a first year of discipline studies in non-ITE. Most providers and programs respond to this entrance caveat with a first year in the ITE program of discipline-only units, precluding professional experience from the first year of the program.

We admire the case study presented, of University of Notre Dame in WA, UND's emphasis on professional experience and the WA Education sector's capacity to provide 160 professional experience days to every student in the BEd. However, we note that the WA context, again, is one of relatively few ITE providers and perhaps relatively few ITE students compared with NSW. The ability to increase professional experience days is dependent on supply of professional placements. Further, significantly more days in programs devoted to professional experience must be to some extent at the expense of days of non-placement learning. If significantly more

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[11] du Plessis, A. E. (2017). "Cannas—School Leadership Model". In Out-of-Field Teaching Practices. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. Retrieved Apr 5, 2023, from https://brill.com/view/book/9789463009539/BP000010.xml

placement days were to be mandated, the volume of prescribed content (and any additional prescribed content suggested by the Discussion paper) would need to be reconsidered.

On the other hand, there are technological affordances that may provide solutions. Online professional experience (Whannel et al., 2019[12]) and virtual professional experience are two ways in which professional practice can be experienced without placing additional burdens on schools or replacing non-placement learning. Also, we guarantee that specific standards are addressed in these online/virtual experiences which may not occur in an observation practicum.

The online professional experience is a significant initiative which addresses both the acute and specific challenge of providing professional experience in RRR contexts, the issue of lack of placement positions, and also the challenge of delivering high quality professional experience.

In addition, the online professional experience reduces the professional experience burden on our partnership schools. In the first place, providing one professional experience online for means that we need to find one less in-school placement for our students. Also, ensuring a high quality initial professional experience is the foundation of more successful second and successive professional experiences.

Discussion Questions

1. Develop more comprehensive system level agreements between school sectors and higher education providers?

NSW has at its disposal system level agreements with the NSW Department of Education. Further, some providers have similar, system level agreement with Queensland Department of Education and/or, with regards to the non-Government school sector, agreements with Catholic Schools Offices or other non-Government sector systems of schools.

With regards to the benefits of more comprehensive system level agreements articulated in the Discussion paper, the benefits include:

- Agreed roles and responsibilities – agreements between individual providers and the NSW Department of Education (particularly the roles and responsibilities contained within) would be relatively consistent across all providers – NSW Department of Education agreements. As a result, roles and responsibilities would already be quite consistent in their articulation between different providers and schools.
- Standardised reporting and assessment templates – providers usually have internal consistency in reporting and assessment templates. But perhaps the Discussion paper is highlighting the possibility of consistency at the system level. For instance, perhaps all providers in NSW could use the same reporting and assessment templates for

[12] Whannell, R., Lamb, J., Cornish, L., Bartlett-Taylor, T., & Wolodko, B. (2019). An evaluation of the use of an online demonstration school. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, *44*(8), 102-119.

professional experience. We do not see this as feasible, as each provider has very different approaches to what and how professional experience is assessed.

- A streamlined process for matching placement supply and demand – this would be welcomed, although would have drawbacks (e.g., possibly bottlenecks in supply given the sheer volume of demand) and limitations (e.g., this is likely to be (Government) sector specific, so would be a useful complement to what is undertaken by providers, but probably not sufficient).
- Whole of profession approach to policy and legislative processes to ensure consistency and understanding of the lifelong process eg Education Act, Teachers Act, AITSL, only have one mention of schools assuming any responsibility to support preservice teachers. If staff move from schools to Education Department, they are under different work conditions. The system allows for non-educators to lead Education.
- Mutual recognition is important within the profession. The example of interstate teachers moving into NSW and incurring difficulty to work in a period of teacher shortages is one such anomaly.

2. Set a national framework on high-quality practical experience, building on jurisdictional practices

We put forward the notion of technology-mediated, online professional experience as part of national guidelines, in order to capitalise on the clear benefits of this approach to observation professional experiences.

- We could utilise the ACDE Steering Committee for Professional Experience which includes all university professional experience leaders to lead and support a national agenda in this space.
- In NSW we have a framework for professional practice embedded in our professional teaching standards and ITE accreditation and procedures.
- The Internship Model of WACUTS and MIMS from WA can also be examples to consider.

3. Encourage centres of excellence, such as hub schools, to build and share expertise

We acknowledge the benefits of exposing students in their professional experiences to diverse learners and regional and remote contexts. We draw on the work of Hanly and Heinz (2022[13]), who confirm the pedagogical benefits of the extended placement in two different school settings for student teachers' professional learning. However, they also highlight how several factors, including the existence (or absence) of school support structures, school culture, peer networks, paid or unpaid additional workload and financial pressures impacted on student

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[13] Hanly, C., & Heinz, M. (2022). Extended School Placement in Initial Teacher Education: Factors Impacting Professional Learning, Agency and Sense of Belonging. *European Journal of Educational Research*, *11*(4), 2373–2386. https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.11.4.2373

teachers' capabilities to develop their skills and professional agency, their sense of belonging and, in some cases, their physical and mental health.

For many rural providers (especially those who offer online learning), students live in areas across NSW (and other States), including rural, regional, and remote areas and metropolitan. As a result, most students studying with rural providers would have to travel considerable distance to attend a professional placement in one of a handful of schools. Further, the logistics of travel and accommodation for students of rural providers is considerably more complicated compared with metropolitan providers. For instance, a bus may be procured to take all students from a Sydney university to the school. This is not an option for all students from a rural university with geographically dispersed students studying at a distance. On the other hand, online professional learning is a viable option for rural providers to give similar, high-quality experiences while reducing the cost (invariably worn by students) of creating and/or mandating RRR placement.

Centres of Excellence, Demonstration Schools, and Hub Schools all offer great opportunity to expose our students to high quality placements in a diverse range of settings.

Excellent mentors should be factored into our placement processes. Utilise current principals and teachers of the year winners in each state to have a year from their school commitments to support PSTs and schools. An annual conference for PSTs in addition to time spent supporting schools that were not Centres of excellence would be beneficial to the profession.

The key aspect here is that the excellence occurs through the partnership between the university and the schools, it is not the university or school alone but the connection and opportunity that the partnership affords. Any recognised centre of excellence should be required to publicise, publish, and share their expertise locally, nationally, and beyond.

4. Provide targeted support for students with competing commitments, learning needs, and in areas of workforce need

   - More students in less schools and professional learning sessions completed in schools (NEXUS model from Victoria).
   - Hub model in NSW.
   - A high-quality supernumerary teacher in each region to be paid to support PST and new teachers in RRR areas.

5. Integrating theory and practice:
   - How can practical experience be better integrated with the academic component of ITE programs to support ITE student learning and preparedness to teach?

Initiatives such as PREXConnex strengthen the connection between theory and practice (Adlington et al, 2022[14]). This is particularly important for students who study part-time, like

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[14] Adlington, R., Charteris, J., & Nye, A. (2023). Formative performance assessment in preservice teacher education – working through the black boxes. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2022.2162848

many students of rural providers, where the time gap can be considerable between learning theory in units of study and applying the theory during professional experience.

6. Role of schools in supporting practical experience
   - More systematic expectations of schools to provide quality placements.
   - Build placements into workforce planning strategies.
   - Build on existing partnership arrangements.
   - Fund professional experience appropriately and don't rely on funding pools that are not dedicated to education.

We agree that professional experience as it stands is a costly exercise, and we express concern that it is not currently adequately funded. Any consideration of improvements that would necessarily cost more money would have to be done with full fiscal implications in mind. Indeed, a good starting point would be to provide adequate funding for what is already undertaken in the professional experience space.

Reform Area 3 Recommendations

1) Support and identify high performing schools in diverse contexts for quality placements – rural and remote, large regional, multicultural urban schools, hard to staff etc; and scale up and showcase successful professional experience and internship models in Australia.

2) Research on 'what the most optimal time for placements' is to support or negate the 80/60 day current requirements.

3) Nation-wide endorsement of the use of simulation and scenario-based technologies to prepare for successful practicums.

4) More systematic programs of support eg first year students as paid paraprofessionals [1-2 days per week] and final year internship as paid conditionally registered teachers

5) Transition and induction staff who are supernumerary to school staffing profiles in RRR and hard to staff schools.

6) Dedicated funding for professional experience that flows directly to Education.

Reform Area 4: Improve postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants

Discussion questions

- How can master's degrees be structured so that mid-career entrants can assume roles in the classroom within 12-18 months instead of two years?
- What changes to regulatory arrangements are needed to enable this?
- Would a framework for assessing the success of mid- career programs assist in sharing lessons learned in designing mid-career programs?
- Is their sufficient flexibility in providers delivery of ITE to cater to the circumstances of mid-career entrants?

We need a variety of program types – intensive accelerated programs do not suit all entrants. While some mid-career changers want intensive, accelerated programs and employment-based programs there are some who prefer two-year programs they can complete part-time because this better suit their learning style, or they have family or community responsibilities and/or work.

Some ITE providers already offer fast tracked programs at master's level. These are intensified in structure and are popular with people who have explored other career paths. This diversity in offerings is important for different needs of prospective students in varying contexts. We question why greater consistency is needed for flexible and/or accelerated master's programs (p.63). There are very successful programs in place and providers would be reluctant to standardise these. Each university is distinctive in its offerings for its context and demographic profile. In addition, as self-accrediting institutions, universities can choose the types of programs to offer.

Continuation of conditional accreditation is a draw card for many entering Master of Teaching programs – explore how professional experience can be recognised/integrated more where teachers are conditionally accredited and teaching in schools.

A framework for assessing and sharing lessons learned about programs would help, but not as a mechanism to monitor the quality of individual university programs. The aims and the uses of the framework would need to be transparent and explicit.

Reform Area 4 Recommendations

1) Support flexible pathways into teaching across all jurisdictions. This may include a need to examine legislation in some states/territories related to the approval of novice teachers to work unsupervised in a classroom.

2) Support a variety of accelerated pathways through funding for development and for student bursaries.

3) Ensure smoother and more consistent Permission to Teach and Conditional Accreditation processes across jurisdictions.