

## **Submission in Response to the Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper**

Prepared 18 April 2023, by the Steering Group, NADLATE (Network of Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching and Learning in Education).

### Steering Group Members:

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### ***Preamble***

NADLATE is a national network with 54 current members comprising Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching in Education from across Australian universities. NADLATE is one of six networks that operate in specialist domains within the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE), and a key focus for NADLATE is the quality of the design and content of our ITE courses, especially with respect to accreditation. We welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the panel's suggestions for ITE. While there are a range of practical and positive suggestions within the Reform Areas, we note areas for refinement or reshaping, as identified under each of the four focus areas. We have given more attention to the Reform Areas which align most closely with our network's focus on learning and teaching.

We raise a general comment that the language in the discussion paper uses deficit language and could be better framed from a strength-based approach that recognises the many elements that are currently being effectively addressed. This does not mean that we wish to dilute the message but there needs to be more acknowledgement of the high quality ITE programs that already exist.

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

#### 1.2 Core Curriculum

- The four identified areas have value, but are overly prescriptive, and narrow in their focus. As mandated key teaching practices, they may exclude some high-quality teaching and learning approaches within the many varied disciplinary contexts in which we operate. Inclusion of the suggested explicit content within existing accreditation standards may add value, but we should be careful to acknowledge that there are many alternate theories of learning in specific contexts, and we should not be focusing on just a narrowly mandated core that does not recognise difference. It is important that Teacher Education Students understand research that underpins a range of theories of learning as this enables them to choose the right approaches for their learners and the learning objectives.
- In regard to the brain and learning, we note the need for additional coverage in this area, but stress that this is not in itself a pedagogical approach. Teacher Education Students need to learn about cognitive load, for example, within the broader context of planning, instruction and assessment.
- Within classroom management we highlight the need for teachers to be able to create environments that support students to thrive. The focus here should be expanded beyond management to creating supportive environments, to highlight the need for Teacher

Education Students to critique different approaches and recognise that one size doesn't fit all learners.

- In relation to enabling factors we argue for the need to provide stronger coverage of student backgrounds, histories and contexts. There is currently a lack of sociological, historical and philosophical framings in this area. In this respect, it is most concerning that First Nation's Knowledge as an enabler for learning. We believe this knowledge and practice should be embedded in programmes, and could be achieved through strengthening the Teaching Standards 1.4 and 2.4 which currently identify Indigenous Knowledge and practices.

Given the points identified above, we believe the best way of incorporating the core content identified in the report would be through a "**Foundation Knowledge**" statement within **Program Standard 4.2**, which would then allow for the inclusion of the wider consideration of research-informed, evidence-based and evolving learning approaches.

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

In general, we support the collection of consistent, national data that is appropriate and fit for purpose. However, much of the proposed data is not an effective measure of the output of quality ITE programmes, and is at best a proxy measure, for example selection/entry data, and first year retention, which are not reflective of quality ITE delivery.

Selection:

- ATAR: Prioritising high ATAR students will come at a cost to the proportion of low SES and indigenous students. Furthermore, the proportion of students being admitted to teacher education programs (and in fact all university programs) via ATAR is constantly decreasing, and so does not represent the best means of selection as a measure of performance.

Retention:

- Publicising first year attrition as a negative measure of quality will disincentivise professional experience being included early and often in ITE courses.
- We note that 6-year completion rates are not the same as 'drop-out' rates and these measures should not be confused. Students will complete degrees, at a part-time rate, for a variety of reasons, and support for these students is essential to ensure a diverse teaching workforce. We note that standard part-time completion of a UG ITE course is 8 years, not 6.
- While LANTITE is not considered within the Discussion Paper, we note this has negatively impacted retention, without clear evidence that it benefits ultimate classroom readiness.

Classroom readiness:

- Using employer satisfaction data obtained through the national survey as a measure of classroom readiness is problematic due to the very low response rates.
- We note that the Western Australian *First Year Graduate Survey Report and Principal Perceptions of First Year Graduates Survey Report*, has emerged as a field-leading strategy for assessing transition to the workforce and would encourage the panel to review steps to nationalise such systematic data collection measures.
- We already have an effective measure of classroom readiness at the end of an ITE students' training, in the form of TPA's. However, ITE student classroom readiness is also considerably

affected by the transition from university to school, and the support they receive when they move into schools, and this does not appear to be adequately recognised in the discussion document, which focuses on ITE providers?

Transition Funding:

- Transition Funding is essential to support providers in both developing, and collecting of appropriate data and mechanisms for demonstrating quality. There has been a long history of new mandated changes with no support.

General comment: we are somewhat sceptical about the extent to which making performance data publicly available will incentivise improvements in ITE. League tables in other contexts have been proved to be counter-productive; they may instead frustrate or alienate ITE providers and encourage them to regard each other as competitors more than colleagues in the service of a valuable profession.

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

We have consulted with our partner network in respect of this Reform Area, the National Associate Deans of Professional Experience (NADPE), as this is their primary focus. NADLATE believes that partnerships between providers and schools are crucial for high-quality programs, and they support efforts to improve the quality of practical teaching experience. The group highly supports increased funding to support high-quality placements and acknowledges the importance of mentor teachers. We also recognise that limited time is currently allocated to mentoring at present.

- System-level agreements, that recognise State differences, are essential to ensure sufficient, high-quality, professional experience places
- Additional Funding is required to support initiatives to improve in-school coordination and mentoring. Teacher mentors need support if they are to evaluate classroom readiness.
- There needs to be clearer guidelines as to how classroom readiness is assessed by Teacher Mentors, and funding and support for schools to support training and adequate support for teacher mentors.
- Amendments to the regulatory environment to support universities to combine university-based learning, with both work-integrated learning, and formal professional experience placements. For example: conflict of interest requirements regarding PEX in places of employment; requirements in NSW that students have achieved three Band 5s in their HSC.

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

Providers are continuing to work on a range of flexible, graduate-entry ITE degrees. While accelerated degrees have received significant attention, we highlight the need for a variety of flexible degrees to cater for the diversity within ITE student cohorts.

- Further research to systematically examine the factors that contribute to graduate student experience and success, both in ITE programs and beyond. New policy directions must be based on sound and rigorous evidence;
- Program accreditation requirements that affirm the need to balance quality with duration, with all degrees required to ensure all Teacher Education Students have requisite foundation knowledge about students, their contexts, and the teaching approaches that extend from this knowledge.