

Transforming Education Australasia submission to the Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper

21st April 2023

Transforming Education Australasia (TEA) wishes to respond to the Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper, focussing mainly on Reform Area 1, with reference to Reform Areas 2 and 3.

Transforming Education Australasia (TEA) is an umbrella group whose purpose is to encourage conversations about ways of doing education in Australia. We embrace learner-centred, democratic, progressive, and alternative education throughout Australasia. Our group currently includes representatives of Montessori Australia (MA), Steiner Education Australia (SEA), Australasian Democratic Education Community (ADEC), Home Education Australia, Future Schools, and others.

Summary recommendations

- A strong recommendation for evidence-based practices to be included in ITE programs in relation to integrating art and social emotional pedagogies into the academic program as part of educating the whole child /young person. Changes in emotions, intentions, and attitudes as a result of an arts -based/social emotional focus in the ITE program also need to be seen as important learning outcomes for student teachers themselves. ITE programs need to support future teachers to be creative, open-minded and risk takers in preparation for an increasingly complex life and work environment. Embracing the arts and social-emotional learning as pedagogical tools employed across curricula and as integrated into the whole education experience, opens opportunities for diversity, creativity, genuine enquiry, and risk taking for both students and teachers alike.
- Ensuring student teachers build capacity for critical inquiry into teaching and learning practices, embracing ‘scholarship’ as part of professional identity.

- Practicum experiences include, as a key component, student teachers engaging in research based activities drawing on a more productive and coherent relationship between university learning and practicum-based learning.
- We do not agree with the proposal for performance measure linked to funding of ITE courses including retention, classroom readiness and employment outcomes. These factors can be mostly out of the control of the ITE providers and linked to the broader conditions, including the education policy environment, funding, socio-economic factors, and teachers with which the graduate teachers are working, etc.
- Encouragement of a diversity of practicum experiences in schools offering alternative educational programs and pedagogies such as Steiner and Montessori and democratic schooling amongst many other schooling options. For this to be effective, inclusion of content, theory, research, and practice of ACARA recognised curriculums such as Montessori, Steiner and theoretical and philosophical foundations of alternative education movements in general into the ITE program itself is essential.
- Paid internships have been part of essential components of professions such as law and medicine
Exploration of paid internships as a way to address challenges for students in long term placements needs to be considered.
- The ‘hub school’ opportunity as described in 3.4.3 needs inclusive representation of a broad range of schooling options including small schools, alternate pedagogies, etc.

Reform Area 1

General considerations and recommendations

Any ‘evidence -based’ practices which are prioritised need to be seen within a systemic framing. Instead of asking ‘what works’ we need to start asking, ‘how do we build systems that increase the likelihood that teachers will make intelligent and wise decisions in their work?’¹

Further, we know that research can potentially inform teaching practices by providing robust evidence about what has occurred in the past, but we need systems of support for teachers in making professional judgements about *which students need which support* in their unique context and when and why. ‘It is also clear that something never ‘works’ in the abstract sense but always in relation to a particular purpose or set of purposes’². It is imperative that teacher educators prepare future generations of teachers to work towards a more just and equitable society; and the reminder that, when faced with new pedagogical imperatives, teachers and teacher educators need to be learners themselves, modelling the ‘adaptive expertise’ we would wish to develop in our own student-teachers.³ Uncritical application of evidence -based practices without a teacher using informed professional judgement and critical reflection on practice , is nothing more than being a technician.⁴

- There are many examples of ITE programs globally⁵ that have incorporated research and development competencies into the ITE requirements to enable ‘scholarship’ as part of ongoing professional identity as student teachers incorporate reflection and critical inquiry in

¹; Ladwig, J. G. (2010). Beyond academic outcomes. *Review of Research in Education*, 34(1), 113-141; Ladwig, J. G. (2018). CRITIQUE: On the Limits to Evidence-Based Learning of Educational Science. *The Wiley handbook of teaching and learning*, 639-659.

² Biesta, G. (2015, p.80). What is education for? On good education, teacher judgement, and educational professionalism. *European Journal of Education*, 50(1), 75-87.

³ Mutton, T. (2020). Teacher education and Covid-19: responses and opportunities for new pedagogical initiatives. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(4), 439-441.

⁴ Christiansen, I. M., Österling, L., & Skog, K. (2021). Images of the desired teacher in practicum observation protocols. *Research Papers in Education*, 36(4), 439-460.

⁵ European Union. (2018). *The European Higher Education Area in 2018: Bologna Process Implementation Report*. European Education and Culture Executive Agency. European Union, Publication Office.

their teaching and learning practices.⁶ It is crucial that building skills and capacities for critical inquiry occurs during their initial teacher education experience with the main opportunity to do this in the period of practicum as evidenced in recent international research studies^{7, 8}. In addition, rich application of research into teaching practices must involve, for example, ongoing university /school partnerships involving two-way collaboration. It is not enough to mandate ‘best practice’/ evidence -based teaching and learning practices (such as practices related to the brain and learning) without such partnerships.⁹

- We strongly recommend evidence-based practices included in ITE programs in relation to integrating arts into the academic program. The evidence base is strong for strengthening school students’ cognitive capacity by a more explicit focus on complementing and entwining it with the practical, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions of learning. Further, arts integration into the academic curriculum enhances student learning outcomes, engagement and well-being as a large body of research confirms.¹⁰ When ad hoc programs such as well-being

⁶ Jenset, I. S., K. Klette, and K. Hammerness. 2018. “Grounding Teacher Education in Practice Around the World: An Examination of Teacher Education Coursework in Teacher Education Programs in Finland, Norway, and the United States.” *Journal of Teacher Education* 69 (2): 184–197. doi:10. 1177/0022487117728248.

⁷ Goldshaft, B., Sjølie, E., & Johannesen, M. (2022). Student teachers’ research and development (R&D) practice: constraining and supporting practice architectures. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*.

⁸ Niemi, H., and A. Nevgi. 2014. “Research Studies and Active Learning Promoting Professional Competences in Finnish Teacher Education.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 43: 131–142. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2014.07.006.

⁹ For example, Queensland University Partners School program <https://learning-lab.uq.edu.au/partner-schools-program>

¹⁰ Lee, B. K., Enciso, P., & Brown, M. R. (2020). The effect of drama-based pedagogies on K-12 literacy-related outcomes: A meta-analysis of 30 years of research. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 21(30). Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.26209/ijea21n30>
; Barton, G., Baguley, M., & MacDonald, A. (2013). Seeing the bigger picture: investigating the state of the arts in teacher education programs in Australia. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(7), 75-90; Martin, A., Mansour, M., Anderson, M., Gibson, R., & Leim, G. (2013). The role of arts participation in students' academic and non-academic outcomes: A longitudinal study of school, home and community factors. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 709-727.

programs, conflict resolution, restorative practices, behaviour support programs are treated as ‘add-ons’ they create ‘a jumbled school house.’^{11 12}

- The development of a student teacher’s own capacities to engage students emotionally and build relationships with learners, including development of a student teacher’s own creative capacity as well as other aspects of inner development, opens teachers to multiple ways of communicating, teaching, and engaging students in learning.¹³
- The ACARA recognised Australian Steiner Curriculum and Montessori Curriculum are prime examples of integrated curriculums which integrate arts-based/ social emotional pedagogies. ITE programs need to recognise these internationally recognised alternative pedagogies and their place in the Australian educational landscape, particularly as ‘there is a pressing need for new measures of educational (academic) and social (non-academic) impacts of schooling’. This is not recognised in any way in the Expert Panel Discussion Paper¹⁴. Alternative pedagogies such as Steiner and Montessori ‘provide the possibility for delivering on this [broader impacts of schooling] agenda, as it critically questions the existing grammar of schooling while simultaneously makes empirical claims around doing something different’¹⁵.

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Reform area 2

Key considerations and recommendations:

¹¹ Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students’ social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child development*, 82(1), 405-432.

¹² Jones, S. M., McGarrah, M. W., & Kahn, J. (2019). Social and emotional learning: A principled science of human development in context. *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), 129-143.

¹³ Møller-Skau, M., & Lindstøl, F. (2022). Arts-based teaching and learning in teacher education: “Crystallising” student teachers’ learning outcomes through a systematic literature review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 109, 103545.

¹⁴ Eacott, S., & Wainer, C. (2023). Schooling on the margins: the problems and possibilities of Montessori schools in Australia. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 1-16.

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Carey, M. D., Davidow, S., & Williams, P. (2022). Re-imagining narrative writing and assessment: a post-NAPLAN craft-based rubric for creative writing. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 45(1), 33-48; Haralambous, B. & Carey, M. (2021). *Australian Steiner Graduate Outcomes Research Project Report*. Chatswood: SEA.

There are many factors contributing to graduate teachers' early career experiences in schools, independent of the quality of ITE. These are well documented in the National Workforce Action Plan¹⁷. It is teaching conditions, resourcing, government policy which impact, not only the quality of a ITE student's collective experience of ITE but also the high level of teacher attrition, burnout, etc. as evidenced in many research studies and reports.¹⁸

We therefore do not agree with the proposal for performance measure linked to funding of ITE courses including retention, classroom readiness and employment outcomes. These factors can be mostly out of the control of the ITE providers and linked to the broader conditions, as mentioned above, in which the graduate teachers are working¹⁹. In addition, there needs to be realistic expectations of what ITE programs can provide. There needs to be appropriately funded ongoing mentorship at the school level along with induction programs offered for all early career teachers, whether in full time, part time or casual employment.

Given the significant shortage of teachers, punitive responses, which also increase bureaucratic 'tick the box' accountability, such as withdrawal of funding if perceptions of quality in ITE programs are not met, are likely to have unintended consequences. There needs to be a more systemic understanding of funding and resourcing needed to support pre service teachers to be as 'optimally prepared as possible before entering the classroom' (as distinct from 'classroom ready') with the knowledge that ongoing, specialised mentoring and professional learning will ensure continued

¹⁷[file:///C:/Users/Virginia%20Moller/Downloads/The%20National%20Teacher%20Workforce%20Action%20Group Report ACC%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Virginia%20Moller/Downloads/The%20National%20Teacher%20Workforce%20Action%20Group%20Report%20ACC%20(1).pdf)

¹⁸ Blake, D. (2023, March 30). Good question: did the Teaching Panel even look at what's available now? *EduResearch Matters* <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=16353>; Longmuir, F., Gallo Cordoba, B., Phillips, M., Allen, K. A., & Moharami, M. (2022). *Australian Teachers' Perceptions of their Work in 2022*.

¹⁹ See for example Eacott, S., et al., (2022). *Building education systems for equity and inclusion*. Sydney, NSW: Gonski Institute for Education.

professional growth and development. No teacher can be totally classroom ready as all teachers, as professionals, are constantly developing and transforming teaching and learning practices over time²⁰.

- It is a fact that the education policy framework in Australia has resulted in systems of compliance where, for example, teachers' own professional teacher judgement is subsumed by ever increasing requirements to meet key performance indicators/evidence of standards to ensure job stability. It is to the detriment of a student teacher's own personal development and development of critical thinking capacities, that the history, sociology and philosophy of education, the history of curriculum design have been marginalised in favour of 'what works' teaching techniques.²¹

Conclusion /Summary

The submission from Transforming Education Australia has, with supporting research evidence, recommended the inclusion of evidence-based teaching and learning practices in relation to integrating art and social emotional pedagogies into the academic program as part of educating the whole child /young person. TEA also supports inclusion into the ITE programs theoretically robust course components through which teachers build critical enquiry towards embracing 'scholarship' as part of professional identity. Practicum experiences with strong support from university / school partnerships with trained in-school mentors, support student teachers to engage in meaningful action research whilst on practicum.

TEA strongly supports encouragement of a diversity of practicum experiences in schools offering alternative educational programs and pedagogies such as Steiner and Montessori amongst many other schooling options. For this to be effective, inclusion of, for example, content, theory, research and

²⁰ du Plessis, A. E., Cullinan, M., Gramotnev, G., Gramotnev, D. K., Hoang, N. T., Mertens, L., ... & Schmidt, A. (2020). The multilayered effects of initial teacher education programs on the beginning teacher workforce and workplace: Perceptions of beginning teachers and their school leaders. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 99, 101488.

²¹ Ladwig, J.(2019)

practice of ACARA recognised curriculums such as Montessori and Steiner into the ITE program itself is essential.

Focussing even more than is presently the case on performance measures with punitive outcomes for universities, which may result in even less choice for students wishing to enrol in teacher education degrees, is a retrograde step. Increasing the compliance burden for ITE providers is counterproductive and misses the point about needing to take a systemic approach to issues of teacher shortage / 'teacher quality', teacher burnout and retention issues, which are beyond a mere focus on tightening the reins for ITE programs.

Teachers are leaving because they cannot teach as teaching professionals anymore. Teachers will stay in teaching if they have flexibility, agency, support and access to the tools and processes that support teaching, not accounting. We need to stop blaming teachers, ITE programs, principals and schools and begin to think and act systemically to address failures of the system itself. If teachers are required to implement evidence based practices, then it is crucial this is matched with evidence based education policy²². The recent National Productivity Commission National School Reform Agreement Report²³ is highly critical of the government's own National Measurement Framework, where very little data is aligned to the national education goals, very little accountability for the realisation of those goals , especially equity outcomes , and there is little data to support the assertion that teacher/teaching quality is an issue. Transforming Education Australasia can only fully support the assertion from Wilson: 'We need more ...transparent reporting and critical system analysis to identify the structural problem at the heart of our current woes. We need an education system designed for purpose that can pursue the educational goals [Alice Springs Mparntwe Education Declaration] we have agreed to.

²² Lupton, R., & Hayes, D. (2021). Great Mistakes in Education Policy. 8 Welfare states: spending, policies and outcomes, 15.

²³ <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/school-agreement/report/school-agreement.pdf>

And we need upward as well as downward accountability in order to serve students, citizens and society'.²⁴

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²⁴ Wilson, R. (2023, February). It's a watershed report but it's hidden behind the headlines. *EduResearch Matters*. <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=15908>