

SUBMISSION COVER SHEET



Independent Education Union of Australia Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

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OF AUSTRALIA

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Submission to Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review.

The IEUA represents 75,000 teachers, principals, support staff and ancillary staff in non-government education institutions across Australia, including early childhood centres, kindergartens, schools, and post-secondary colleges. The IEUA consistently engages in education debate at both State and National levels.

Summary

Part A- Attracting and selecting high quality candidates into the teaching profession.

1. The IEUA strongly believes that programs and/or policies which are aimed at attracting and retaining a high-quality teaching workforce must also acknowledge that there are significant issues around public perceptions of teaching.
2. The IEUA supports the principles that there should be a range of high-quality pathways into initial teacher education (ITE) to ensure that disadvantage is not a barrier to entry, and that candidates reflecting the diversity of the community can enter the profession.
3. The IEUA believes there is a need for transparency and consistency in respect to entry into teacher education and the profession from multiple pathways, and for rigorous monitoring of the standard of bridging or pathway programs.

Further, the IEUA believes that models of initial teacher education need to be rigorous and of sufficient length to ensure that students who graduate are able to meet the Graduate Professional Teaching Standards before commencing employment as teachers.
4. The IEUA has concerns that the Teach for Australia (TFA) model fails to address the fundamental recruitment and retention issues facing the profession. The IEUA believes that if mainstream initial teacher education programs were supported and resourced to the extent that the TFA Associates enjoyed there would be far fewer ITE student dropouts and an increased early career retention rate as students experienced a more positive introduction into the teaching profession.
5. The IEUA believes that Teach for Australia and other such similar programs fail to address the following:
 - a. Teacher shortage problems in both the short and long-term
 - b. The retention of the program graduates in disadvantaged schools and schools experiencing subject shortage problems, and indeed retention in the teaching profession beyond the two-year placement
 - c. The challenges identified in the ACER evaluation of the program.
6. The IEUA believes that Commonwealth initiatives should extend State and Territory incentives to include:
 - a. Funding for Rural ITE campuses
 - b. Scholarships and fee payment schemes

7. The IEUA strongly believes there needs to be a genuine, long term commitment to recognise and reward the work of teachers and other educational professionals if we are to attract high quality candidates into initial teacher education courses.
8. The IEUA strongly believes that a quality practicum component of ITE is crucial in the development of preservice teachers' professional skills, abilities, and confidence in responding to different educational contexts.
9. The IEUA believes that to ensure a quality practicum component, professional and industrial issues must be addressed. The workload involved in taking on a preservice teacher far exceeds the time and resources allocated. It is essential that there is greater provision of time release for supervising teachers to hold reflective discussions, and greater support from universities and employers is provided.
10. The IEUA calls for meaningful investment in incentives for graduates to move to rural and regional areas and/or development of rural/regional training facilities.
11. The IEUA believes that solving the issues of initial teacher education requires more than increasing pressures and demands on teachers and principals. The retention of quality education professionals can only be ensured through greater provision of additional supports (beyond classroom teachers and even beyond Education Support Staff) which can be accessed to engage students from disadvantaged and challenging backgrounds and thereby addressing the challenges.

PART B – Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers

12. The IEUA notes that the introduction of Higher Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) certification was supposed to recognize quality classroom practitioners. Care is needed to ensure that these excellent practitioners remain in schools, where they can guide less experienced colleagues to develop and improve their own practice.
13. The IEUA notes that TEMAG reforms have brought about significant changes in the way ITE programs are accredited and these reforms are still being worked into practice. Now is not the time to destabilise by introducing further change.
14. The IEUA notes that feedback on existing TPAs suggests reforms have initiated significant cross-institutional collaboration (specifically sharing of assessment processes and products to allow moderation) which is leading to better practice in ITE.
15. The IEUA believes that it is essential to retain some diversity in TPAs, to encourage ITE providers to continue working on quality improvement.
16. The IEUA strongly believes that lead teachers and principals should be kept in practice inside schools, where they can support and influence beginning teachers.

Further, the IEUA is opposed to the idea of creating specialist 'teacher training schools,' as this runs counter to what the profession knows about context-dependent practice.

17. The IEUA recommends ITE providers continue to provide background knowledge and quality practicum experiences for pre-service teachers, and not diversify into the provision of post-graduation PD. There are already ample offerings in this space.

Submission

PART A - Attracting and selecting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession

1. How can we further encourage high-performing and highly motivated school leavers to enter ITE and choose teaching as a career?

The IEUA notes that the reasons for high achievers not choosing to enter the profession are complex and it is not genuinely possible to separate recruitment and retention issues. Comments relating to pathway and access are made further into the submission.

The IEUA strongly believes that programs and/or policies which are aimed at attracting and retaining a high-quality teaching workforce must also acknowledge that there are significant issues around public perceptions of teaching.

The IEUA believes it is important to note that:

- Government/media rhetoric implying that those currently working in teaching are deficient in skills and knowledge¹ fails to acknowledge the professionalism of practising teachers and does nothing to address negative perceptions of the profession.
- Studies of teachers who leave the profession indicate that negative perceptions are reinforced by a lack of legitimate career pathways including employers' excessive use of casual and short-term contracts, excessive workloads, and relatively low remuneration compared to other professions^{2,3,4}.

2. What changes to admissions and degree requirements, including recognition of prior experience, would better attract and support suitable mid- and late-career professionals from other fields transition into the profession and become quality teachers?

2.1 ITE Pathways

The IEUA supports the principle that there should be a range of high-quality pathways into ITE to ensure that disadvantage is not a barrier to entry, and that candidates reflecting the diversity of the community can enter the profession.

¹ Panahi, R. (2014) Teaching should not be a last resort as a career choice. Herald Sun: 20th April 2014.
<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/opinion/teaching-should-not-be-a-last-resort-as-a-career-choice/story-fni0fh1-1226890573359>

² OECD (2005) Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers. OECD: Paris.
<http://www.oecd.org/education/school/attractingdevelopingandretainingeffectiveteachers-finalreportteachersmatter.htm>

³ O'Brien, Goddard & Keefe (2008) O'Brien, P., Goddard, R. and Keefe, M. (2008) Burnout Confirmed as a Viable Explanation for Beginning Teacher Attrition. AARE International Education Research Conference: Fremantle.

⁴ Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., Buchanan, J., Prescott, A. Louviere, J. and Burke, P. (2011) Retaining Effective Early Career Teachers in NSW Schools. University of Technology: Sydney.
www.rilc.uts.edu.au/pdfs/Beginning_Teacher_Retention_Report.pdf

There is currently a range of pathways into teacher education courses for candidates who successfully complete advanced diplomas, associate degrees, and vocational and training courses. However, the challenge is for ITE providers to have identified that candidates have or will acquire the requisite skills and knowledge to complete the teaching qualification and that bridging and other support programs are adequate to achieve this.

The IEUA believes there is a need for transparency and consistency in respect to entry into teacher education and the profession from multiple pathways, and for rigorous monitoring of the standard of bridging or pathway programs.

Further, the IEUA believes that models of initial teacher education need to be rigorous and of sufficient length to ensure that students who graduate are able to meet the Graduate Professional Teaching Standards before commencing employment as teachers.

2.2 Employment embedded Models

There has been much current debate on the quality and rigour of ITE courses – from student selection into courses, to the appropriate length of courses. The implementation of initiatives such as the move to a two-year post-graduate program have general professional and community support because they better enable graduates to be 'classroom ready' before entry into the teaching profession.

Current employment-embedded models of teacher education, such as Teach for Australia (TFA), place the employment of persons who have had minimal pedagogical preparation as teachers under a Permission to Teach form of registration.

It must be emphasised though, that these teachers cannot be 'classroom ready' until well down the track of the two-year program.

The current TFA pathway is a heavily resourced teacher education model aimed at attracting high quality candidates to shortage areas such as science and mathematics. To date there is little evidence the restricted nature of the program seriously addresses these concerns.

The IEUA believes that all Initial Teacher Education students should be supported and resourced to the extent that Teach for Australia Associates enjoy, including:

- A significant level of resourcing dedicated to the school to ensure high quality mentoring
- Significant associate in-school support including reduced teaching loads
- The development of closer partnerships between schools and the ITE provider.

This additional resourcing would go some way towards addressing the dropout rates from ITE courses and assist in the retention of early career teachers as they experience a more comprehensive and supported induction into the profession.

The IEUA believes that Teach for Australia and other such similar programs fail to address the following:

- Teacher shortage problems in both the short and long-term
- The retention of the program graduates in disadvantaged schools and schools experiencing subject shortage problems, and indeed retention in the teaching profession beyond the two-year placement

- The challenges identified in the ACER evaluation of the program.

2.3 Provision of Incentives

The IEUA notes the provision of incentives as a mechanism of attracting candidates into ITE.

It is noted that a number of states, particularly Departments of Education, have introduced incentive schemes to attract high quality candidates, particularly in subject shortage areas, into ITE courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Such incentive schemes include:

- Scholarships
- Payment of course fees (in part or in total)
- Rural placements, including lost income replacement opportunities, supported accommodation etc.

The IEUA believes that Commonwealth initiatives should extend State and Territory incentives to include:

- Funding for Rural ITE campuses
- Scholarships and fee payment schemes

3. *How can we increase ITE completion rates so that quality ITE students graduate and pursue careers as quality teachers?*

The IEUA challenges the simplistic import of this question.

3.1 Quality and well-resourced Practicum

The reality of teaching is that it is a very challenging profession, made more so with constant reform and resultant expansion of duties and tasks expected of teachers. If we want quality teachers, maligning of the profession must stop. This includes conducting reviews such as this one to which we are currently responding, which appears to imply there is a simple, isolated problem with a straightforward solution when the reality is complex and nuanced.

The IEUA strongly believes that a quality practicum component of ITE is crucial in the development of preservice teachers' professional skills, abilities and therefore confidence in response to different educational contexts.

The IEUA believes that, to ensure a quality practicum component, professional and industrial issues must be addressed. The workload involved in taking on a preservice teacher far exceeds the time and resources allocated. It is essential that there is greater provision of time release for supervising teachers to hold reflective discussions, and greater support from universities and employers is provided.

4. *What more can be done to address issues with workforce supply in some subject areas (particularly maths) and schools?*

4.1 Address the Underlying Professional and Industrial Issues

The IEUA recognises that research is demonstrating that shortages of maths and science teachers is particularly linked to the capacity of graduates in these areas to earn higher salaries in other fields⁵. As such, it would be preferable to encourage

⁵Productivity Commission (2012) Schools Workforce: Productivity Commission Research Report. Australian Government: Canberra. <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/education-workforce/schools/report>

students with skills and ability in these areas to study education, rather than to attempt to draw teaching graduates from other fields into science/ maths/ languages.

However, long-standing failures by successive governments to address professional and industrial issues has undermined the appeal of the profession.

The IEUA strongly believes that repairing this damage will require a genuine, long-term commitment that recognises and rewards the work of teachers and other education professionals.

4.2 Rural and Remote Areas

Further, the IEUA highlights that teacher shortages (in numerous subject areas) are also experienced by schools in rural and regional areas.

In geographically diverse states this is exacerbated by the fact that teacher training courses are offered primarily by universities based in predominantly metropolitan areas. Graduates of those programs are reluctant to relocate, even when their chances of gaining employment would be greatly enhanced.

The IEUA calls for meaningful investment in incentives for graduates to be recruited from rural and regional areas and/or development of rural/regional training facilities.

The IEUA also calls for meaningful investment in incentives for graduates to accept practicums and initial teacher placements in rural and regional areas.

4.3 Resource Challenging Urban Areas

The IEUA also acknowledges the broader issue of recruitment and retention in challenging urban environments. While various state and territory governments have recently enhanced powers of principals to help protect teachers from outright hostility directed toward them in some settings, there remains the significant contributing factor, namely, the disengagement of school students in classrooms.

The IEUA believes that solving this problem requires more than increasing pressures and demands on teachers and principals.

The retention of quality education professionals can only be ensured through greater provision of additional supports (beyond classroom teachers and even beyond Teacher Aides) which can be accessed to engage students from disadvantaged and challenging backgrounds and thereby addressing these challenges.

5. How can we attract a more diverse cohort into ITE so that teachers better mirror the diversity in school students and society?

The IEUA recognises that a diverse teaching workforce is essential for success with students from a range of backgrounds and that teachers must possess a broad repertoire of teaching practices that they can draw upon.

As stated elsewhere, the programs and policies that aim at attracting and retaining a quality teaching workforce must also acknowledge and address the significant issues of:

- Public perception and Government messaging of the teaching workforce
- Professional and industrial issues relating to work in schools
- Access to and encouragement of regional and remote and lower economic urban students.

PART B – Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers

6. *What more can we do to ensure that ITE curriculum is evidence-based and all future teachers are equipped to implement evidence-based teaching practices?*

6.1 Existence of Evidence Based Teaching

The IEUA challenges the assertion that teachers do not currently use evidence-based teaching practices. Planning, implementing, and reflecting on success or challenges to modify future implementation are standard practice for teachers.

It is ridiculous to suggest that teachers should also be engaging in formal, academic research to prove their capacity to do this.

ITE providers are also research institutions and the IEUA assumes that these providers would also challenge the premise of the above question that ITE curriculum is not evidence-based. Presumably, ITE curriculum is guided by evidence-based teaching practices endorsed by the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO).

6.2 Quality Practitioners Must Remain in Classroom

The IEUA notes that the introduction of HALT certification was supposed to recognize quality classroom practitioners. Care is needed to ensure that these excellent practitioners remain in schools, where they can guide less experienced colleagues to develop and improve their own practice.

7. *What more can ITE providers and employers do to ensure ITE students are getting the practical experience they need before they start their teaching careers?*

7.1 Importance of Resourcing Practicum

ITE providers need to deliver high quality practicum experiences (which include significant levels of mentoring and ongoing support) for all pre-service teachers.

Presently, a small number of individuals receive high levels of investment in extended practicum (internships, Teach for Australia) and evidence indicates that a considerable proportion of these do not remain in the profession.

IEUA member feedback highlights the importance of practicum and practicum assessment as integral to attracting and retaining ITE students.

Teachers and Principals stress:

- The importance of practicum – immersive preparation experiences spanning the course is ideal. ITE students attending schools for “observation periods” instead of structured practicum experiences are seen of little value.
- The need for schools to better resource the role of their experienced teachers in the practicum. Teachers are reluctant to undertake supervision work because of the heavy time demands and additional pressures already being experienced in, for example, the introduction of new curriculum, mentoring of beginning teachers in their schools, the increasing focus on individualised student learning and assessment, and the massive increase in administrative tasks which must be undertaken by teachers.
- The need for ITE providers to work in closer partnership with schools – many supervising teachers report minimal or non-existent contact by ITE providers during practicum.
- That the currency of teaching practice of teacher educators should be enhanced.

- That practicum assessment requirements vary considerably between universities, and some are very time consuming and do not “add value”. Teachers highlight the need for assessment approaches similar to the Stanford university approach, which reflects best practice for teachers in schools, with emphasis on assessment being self-driven and a learning experience in itself.
- The need for regular forums with representatives from key stakeholders which provide current and practical feedback for evaluation, re-structure of courses etc. Some university faculties do this very well.

8. How can Teaching Performance Assessment arrangements be strengthened to ensure graduate teachers are well-prepared for the classroom?

8.1 TEMAG Reforms

Teacher Performance Assessment is a relatively recent introduction, as part of reforms from the TEMAG review. Many institutions have implemented the reforms and several exemplary TPAs have emerged.

The IEUA notes that TEMAG reforms have brought about significant changes in the way ITE programs are accredited and these reforms are still be worked into practice. Now is not the time to destabilise by introducing further change.

Further, the IEUA strongly believes that it is not appropriate to punish the majority of providers for the failings of a few institutions.

The IEUA notes that feedback on existing TPAs is that the reform has initiated significant cross-institutional collaboration (specifically sharing of assessment processes and products to allow moderation) which is leading to better practice in ITE.

The IEUA believes that it is essential to retain some diversity in TPAs, to encourage ITE providers to continue working on quality improvement.

9. How can leading teachers, principals and schools play a greater role in supporting the development of ITE students?

9.1 Significant, systematic support

Development of ITE students into effective teachers requires significant, systematic and enduring support. Leading teachers, regardless of whether they are accredited at Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher, must be provided with sufficient release time to work with ITE students on an ongoing basis, and financial compensation that appropriately recognises the value of this work.

The IEUA strongly believes that leading teachers and principals should be kept in practice inside schools, where they can support and influence beginning teachers.

Further, the IEUA is opposed to the idea of creating specialist ‘teacher training schools,’ as this runs counter to what the profession knows about context-dependent practice.

10. Can ITE providers play a stronger role in ongoing professional development and support of teachers?

10.1 Existing Professional Development Opportunities

The central problem here is the widespread assumption that the day-to-day tasks of planning, teaching, assessing, and reflecting on practice are not inherently complex, contextualised work.

Both politicians and the general public underestimate the intelligence, creativity, and resilience required of teachers.

Teachers actively seek out learning/PD opportunities according to the professional assessment of their needs, or the specific needs of their students/classes. Enforced engagement with academics through involvement in/engagement with 'education research' ignores the reality of the teacher's work. The IEUA does not believe ITE providers should be engaging substantially in post-graduation PD. There are already ample offerings in this space.

If our previous recommendation to enhance the support offered to ITE students in schools is taken seriously, the area where ITE providers might potentially take a critical leading role is that of dedicated mentor training for teachers supporting ITE students in schools.

Conclusion

The timing and limited timeframe for this review has restricted consultation with practitioners and once again, the IEUA highlights the disconnection between such reviews and the profession.

The IEUA is on record calling for real and ongoing consultation with the profession and will continue to do so.

The IEUA notes that the predominant and historic models of initial teacher education involve either a practicum placement or 'internship' arrangement. These clearly have resource commitments and expectations and there have been many commitments by governments, and opposition parties who have subsequently gained government, into resourcing and consulting with the profession regarding current ITE in-school experiences.

Unfortunately, the experience of the IEUA over decades has seen a continued approach by governments and teacher education institutions to avoid their responsibilities to engage with the profession or provide the committed resources. This is having considerable workload implications for classroom teachers facing an ever increasing, imposed, political agenda

Quality initial teacher education cannot be supported in a situation where staff and schools are considerably time poor and struggling with inadequate resources.

The IEUA notes that the TEMAG reforms have brought about significant changes in the way ITE programs are accredited and that these reforms are still working their way into practice.

The IEUA believes that now is not the time to destabilise ITE programs by introducing even more change. It would be far more beneficial to see governments provide additional resources to support and enhance existing structures.

End of submission