DEAKIN UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

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Elevating the Profession

Targeted Campaign

There is no doubt that a significant investment is needed to elevate the status and value of the important role played by Australia's teachers. It is also acknowledged that \$10 million dollars could be used productively to promote the excellent contributions that our teachers make to our communities in a wide range of settings.

However, in seeking to elevate the profession in the public's view, it is important to prioritise and address the key issues contributing to diminished perspectives of the profession. Many of these issues are related to perceptions about teachers' working conditions which, thankfully, have been highlighted as an area for action elsewhere in the draft action plan. There is, therefore, an opportunity for powerful messaging that is directly related to how these working conditions are changing and improving in recognition of teachers' value by making the role they play in our society more sustainable.

While it has been argued that teachers are already highly valued in our communities, it is also clear that teachers themselves do not perceive this to be the case (see for example Heffernan et al 2019; OECD, 2020a), and this is likely to impact their motivation to stay in the profession. It is therefore important to consider that efforts to raise the status of teaching also need to address the perceptions of teachers themselves, and the reasons they may think they are undervalued in society. Teachers talk about their role to other members of our communities, and as such how they portray themselves as valued in the community is perhaps one of the most important elements to address in elevating the profession.

Creation of new Australian Teacher of the Year Awards

This proposed action is welcome and, in addition to recognising and celebrating the many ways that teachers do make a difference in communities, it may also provide an opportunity to highlight productive and positive collaboration being achieved as a federal and state partnership. The suggested categories of First Nations, Rural and Remote, and inclusive are also welcome, however it may be worthwhile considering recognition at the levels of early childhood, primary and secondary education.

Nominate teachers for Medals of the Order of Australia

This suggested action does provide a potentially positive way for Ministers and Members of Parliament to publicly recognise the valuable work of teachers and change the way teachers have been portrayed negatively in political discourse as a problem to be solved. If this action does encourage more positive levels of engagement by Ministers and Members of Parliament, which is also reflected in the media, then this may be a very positive development in elevating the profession. Teachers do deserve to be recognised for their service to the community and this action may provide a more systematic way to achieve this outcome. However the complexity of social and political influences impacting teachers' negative portrayal of themselves should not be underestimated and this action should be further informed by research to better understand this complexity.

Increase numbers of HALTs

Establishing a target of 10,000 HALTs or equivalent by 2025 is an admirable goal, however, more research does need to be done to understand the barriers that are preventing more teachers currently achieving formal recognition for their accomplishments. Feedback from our school networks and teachers does indicate that the HALT process is currently too onerous and already busy teachers are less likely to apply because of pandemic-related impacts and staff shortages diminishing their time.

Improving Teacher Supply

More ITE places in the right subject and specialisations

The additional CSPs targeting ITE places are most welcome, particularly after the financial impacts of Jobs Ready Graduates (JRG) have served to discourage enrolment over the caps in the field of teaching. However, the increases do assume that there will be sufficient market demand to fill these places and will rely on earlier successful actions related to better valuing the profession and improving motivation for people to become teachers.

The additional CSP support for early childhood education and primary courses are of course quite logical for bachelor level courses, but it should be remembered that many secondary teachers are first required to complete an undergraduate degree in their specialisation areas before entering a postgraduate Master's degree in teaching.

The additional CSP should therefore be extended to postgraduate teaching as a priority for secondary teachers who are more likely to be entering the profession from a Master of Teaching. For the past three years Deakin School of Education has been implementing an accelerated, employment-based pathway for secondary teaching which subsequently increased enrolments by 300% compared to 2019. However, this pathway has been constrained by the availability of CSPs despite the growing demand, and subsequently additional CSPs made available for this purpose may improve the continued growth and sustainability of this innovative pathway.

The additional CSP for sub-bachelor qualifications may contribute to increased enrolments in subbachelor courses, such as Deakin's Associate Degree in Education which is an accredited pathway into the Bachelor of Education. However, some caution should be exercised in relation to excessive enrolments in sub-bachelor pathway courses as students are more likely to have higher rates of incompletion and may not translate to proportionally higher levels of transition to the bachelor's degree because of factors related to social and academic disadvantage.

If significantly more can be invested in retaining and supporting sub-bachelor students' completion of an associate degree and subsequent transition to a bachelor's degree, then this may also potentially improve pathways for underrepresented cohorts into and through teaching courses. Such additional supports do require additional financial investment for more scalable support for this cohort, and this may not be financially viable based on current funding arrangements. This action should be considered in relation to the development of Australia's Higher Education Accord.

The additional CSP is particularly relevant for the early childhood courses where educators are more likely to have first completed a Diploma of Early Childhood Education before entering a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education prior to becoming a registered teacher.

Deakin School of Education has been working very closely with the Victorian Department of Education over the past three years to implement an accelerated, employment-based pathway which has proven very effective in increasing supply of early childhood teachers. Additional CSP places will potentially enhance this capacity. On this point, the additional fee-free TAFE places may strengthen this diploma-bachelor pathway in early childhood by encouraging increased enrolments in the Diploma of Early Childhood Education.

In considering the likelihood of the additional CSPs increasing direct enrolments into a Bachelor of Early Childhood education, some consideration needs to be taken into account for the difference between a three-year Bachelor of Early Childhood Education and a four-year dual early childhood/primary qualification.

Deakin School of Education currently offers a very successful three-year Bachelor of Early Childhood Education which is more accessible to the Diploma pathway students and school leavers because it is uncoupled from the regulations impacting primary teaching. This pathway is more likely to promote graduates who will enter and remain in the early childhood education workforce more rapidly and successfully compared to the dual early childhood/primary courses where graduates are more likely to enter and remain in primary teaching. On this point the salary differences between early childhood teachers and primary teachers is an obvious factor influencing graduate decisions.

However, there does remain some inconsistencies across Australian states and territories in relation to registration of early childhood teachers who are birth to five year trained which acts as a barrier to achieving national consistency on improved supply of early childhood teachers via a three-year Bachelor or Early Childhood of Education. It would be very helpful for the Working Group to prioritise achievement of national consistency in relation to early childhood teacher education regulations.

The action related to improved data collection/sharing and supporting strategic partnerships with providers to deliver on targeted outcomes is also very welcome. Deakin School of Education is also very active in partnering with DET and VIT in relation to these objectives and will continue to do so in line with these objectives. Three examples of our innovative, accelerated, employment-based pathways into targeted areas of teacher shortage include:

- The Bachelor of Early Childhood Education accelerated employment-based pathway
- The Master of Applied Learning and Teaching (Secondary), accelerated employmentbased pathway – supporting STEM and other teacher shortage areas
- The Graduate Certificate of Adult, Vocational Education and Training/Master of Applied Learning and Teaching (Secondary), accelerated employment-based pathway – supporting priority VET and vocational teacher shortage areas in secondary schools

Bursaries to attract more people into teaching

The availability of 5,000 bursaries up to \$40,000/student for UG students, and \$20,000/student for PG students is likely to have a high impact in attracting additional people to the teaching profession.

However, caution should be exercised in adopting the discourse of 'best and brightest' given the extensive requirements already regulating entry into teaching, which already assure people entering teaching are already highly capable and committed.

In contrast, the language of 'best and brightest' may have the unintended consequence of profiling others already in the teaching profession as not necessarily 'the best and brightest' which also relates back to the earlier problems experienced with the public image and valuing of the profession.

It would be more suitable, and potentially more effective, to frame the bursaries as a practical measure to addressing the well-known financial barriers that inhibit many more capable and committed people from completing a teaching degree.

These barriers include the need to study full time while undertaking the degree, with significant periods of unpaid professional experience whereby students are unable to sustain even casual employment while completing their qualification.

Deakin's accelerated, employment-based pathways in both early childhood education and secondary teaching have been highly successful because the accelerated and employment-based components have enabled the students to earn while they complete their studies and subsequently maintain family and caring commitments and other obvious life matters such as paying the rent or mortgage.

However, having additional access to the proposed bursaries would significantly increase the demand for these accelerated pathways and subsequently also increase teacher workforce supply in these priority areas. This point is particularly relevant for the mid-career professionals who may wish to complete a teaching degree which does correspond to most of the students who complete our accelerated, employment-based pathways.

Additional places for High Achieving Teachers program

Additional places for the high achieving teachers' program may be welcome if the program includes an extension to the number of providers participating in this funding initiative. It would be helpful to further qualify this proposed action.

Attracting and keeping teachers in school that need them most

This proposed action provides an important basis for building on current and developing innovations happening across the states and territories. However, some consideration needs to be given for the potential risk of having an excessive number of disconnected and uncoordinated innovations happening across and within states and territories that may inadvertently compete with each other.

Schools and potential ITE students are already subject to a broad range of programs and initiatives seeking to increase teacher workforce supply, and many find the landscape somewhat confusing.

It is also common for schools to be in arrangements with multiple provides who are implementing differing models of ITE provision and further investigation into the potential impact on schools is required, including consideration for any potential unintended consequences of significant expansion in this area of action.

The important point here is that Departments of Education and providers need to have a more national-wide, joined-up conversation in achieving the important objective of attracting and keeping teachers in school that need them the most.

Prioritise visa processing

Similar actions have been undertaken in past periods of teacher workforce shortages, although this time there is a more significant global shortage of teachers and Australian teachers are also being sought after by similar international initiatives.

Consideration should also be given for prioritised visa processing for suitable capable and committed international students who may wish to complete their teaching degree in Australia and subsequently work as a teacher as part of skilled migration.

This approach would also assure there is investment in migration that is well aligned with the high standards regulating teacher quality and initial teacher education in Australia. Scholarships for international students seeking to complete a teaching degree and work in Australia may also add value to the attractiveness of this potential action.

Whilst the visa changes may bring a pipeline of new teachers, there also needs to be consideration for the support provided to teachers who will be new to the Australian context and will require upskilling in relation to the Australian Curriculum and the relevant state systems, registration requirements. There needs to a sensitivity of any of the unintended consequences that such a policy move might impose on newly arrived teachers.

Strengthening Initial Teacher Education

Teacher Expert Panel Recommendations

It is noted that the expert panel is tasked with implementing the findings of the QITE review, rather than undertaking an additional review as was indicated in the draft Action Plan document. Most significantly, the discussions relating to performance funding need fully informed consideration for the potential impact on the demand for entry into teaching.

Full and research-informed consultation on the development of quality measures needs to be undertaken and a deeper understanding of the current apparently low current average completion rates as defined by government reporting definitions.

Deakin's completion rates are certainly well above this average, however, greater consideration of retention and success rates are also required to provide a more useful picture of what is happening in teacher education completions overall.

It is also highly likely that the impact of the pandemic on education provision at all levels will be reflected in ITE courses as many students take longer than four years to complete their degree due to a range of pandemic-related factors. These will continue to be reflected in the current reporting of completion rates as currently defined by definitions of completion.

The emphasis on improving the quality of professional experience is most welcome, as this is an area where significant further investment is required in identifying and sustaining professional experience settings in schools where there can be a high level of assurance of quality in teaching practice.

This initiative will also assist in achieving better prepared teacher graduates in priority areas such as early reading, numeracy, classroom management, cultural responsiveness, responding to diverse needs and working with families.

Deakin has established substantial partnerships with over 100 primary and secondary school that form our Alliances to achieve improved quality of professional experience. However, such partnerships initiatives are very difficult to sustain as funding for initial teacher education does not currently support such high levels of investment in sustainable partnerships with the high numbers of schools required to meet scalable best-practice professional experience models.

We doo note that ITE curriculum matters are best managed by providers in consultation with their communities and as Deakin's successes in building alternate and partnerships programs indicate, there is no appetite for a standard ITE curriculum. Such moves run counter the very heart of developing robust and socially just outcomes for all young Australians and the diversification of the teaching workforce.

However, the focus on improved quality of professional experience is highly important and potentially very impactful in improving the quality and completion rates of teacher education programs, and we look forward to more specific consultation on the matter through the work of the Expert Panel.

Recognise prior study and work experience transferable to teaching

The framework proposed to be developed by the ACDE is most welcome, although it should be noted that RPL is already a requirement under the higher education standards and providers are already required to provide RPL where this is justifiable.

This work will need to be undertaken against the existing AQF, higher education standards and regulations governing initial teacher education in Australia.

Co-design actions to attract and retain more First Nations teachers

This is a most welcome action, although more investigation is required into the impact of ITE regulations on First Nations people's access to ITE programs. This investigation should be

conducted as part of the co-design process to ensure subsequent actions are genuinely developed in recognition of structural barriers that may be working against the aim to increase the numbers of First Nations teachers.

We need more First Nations teachers. First Nations teachers are under-represented in Australian schools. As of 2016, 6.2% of Australian school students identified as First Nations, while just 2% of the teaching workforce identified as First Nations. We know First Nations cultures are the oldest continuous cultures in the world. We also know culture is not innate. We are born into culture, not with it. So First Nations peoples have the oldest teaching and learning techniques and knowledges in the world. This has the potential to benefit all students. Recruiting and retaining First Nations teachers is crucial to this becoming a reality.

There is limited detail about how these actions or measures will lead to increasing teacher numbers. We welcome the investment in First Nations languages in schools, but there are many barriers to growing a First Nations teacher workforce. According to the 2022 Closing the Gap report, 63% of Indigenous Australians aged 20 to 24 had finished year 12. This compares with 88.5% of non-Indigenous Australians in that age group. Research has identified Indigenous students doing teaching degrees at university then face racism, a lack of financial support, inflexible structures of university, limited access to technology, and isolation.

When First Nations teachers enter the profession, they often face overwhelming demands. It is not uncommon for First Nations teachers to be seen by non-Indigenous colleagues as the expert in everything Indigenous in a school. So, if we are going to get more First Nations teachers in schools, we first need to ensure they were successful as a school student. Then we need to help them find a pathway through teacher education at university and then ensure it is worth staying in the profession, once they make it into classrooms.

Another element missing from the plan is an agenda to decolonise classrooms. This requires teachers and schools to change their approaches to include First Nations contexts across all aspects of teaching and learning. This means everything from what is taught to the way it is taught and the spaces they are taught in. This means including knowledge of First Nations cultures in the curriculum, using First Nations ways of teaching, Aboriginal flags and artworks on display, dedicated collections in school libraries, and spaces that allow for on-Country learning. It also needs to involve Elders and other community members in our schools. Without these changes, schools themselves become barriers to First Nations teachers wanting to remain in the profession.

Broadly speaking there are two pathways for First Nations people into teaching - through teaching assistant jobs or through university. In many remote and rural schools, there is a strong workforce of First Nations teacher assistants. Programs to help Indigenous teaching assistants into teaching degrees have suffered from funding cuts, although the Northern Territory government, has recently announced it will increase professional development opportunities for remote Aboriginal teacher education. This includes school-based traineeships, grants and mentoring. The federal government's draft plan also touches on this – mentioning Queensland's plan to build pathways for First Nations teacher assistants and classroom teachers, by talking to TAFEs and universities. There is also the commitment to a First Nations teachers' strategy, and initiatives to build the cultural capabilities of the non-Indigenous teacher workforce. This is a start, but it lacks detail and a sense of national cohesion. And there is little detail about how First Nations school leavers – who mainly come from urban areas – can be encouraged to enter teaching degrees at university.

Lessons from past reviews highlight the merits of developing long-term, First Nations-led strategies and programs that provide real support for First Nations teachers. They also note the importance of listening to, acting on and resourcing initiatives controlled by First Nations peoples. Consistency is vital for success. Bipartisanship is needed across education and Indigenous policy,

so programs can be developed without the threat of funding being withdrawn if there is a change of government. This is a crucial moment for Australia's education system. The teacher shortage could lead to current and future generations missing out on the quality education they need. We welcome the investment in First Nations teachers. But we also fear this won't have the necessary impact unless there is system-wide reform and decolonisation that supports the recruitment, retention, and engagement of First Nations teachers – the oldest teachers in the world.

We welcome the initiative to support the teaching of Indigenous languages in schools. This upholds article 13 and article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that states:

- Article 13: Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.
- Article 14: Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

This initiative also upholds the linguistic human rights of students to be educated in their preferred language. Upholding language rights is essential in the reversing policies that have led to the elimination of Indigenous languages in Australia. Over 250 languages were spoken across the continent and adjacent islands on the eve of colonisation, only 120 remain, and of those 120 languages, 100 are either endangered or critically endangered. As such, Australia has some of the highest language death statistics in the world.

In the context of this language loss we offer suggestions for policy, school leadership, teaching and resourcing to support this initiative of employing teachers of Indigenous languages.

We propose that there should be two distinct approaches to maintaining, revitalising, and sharing First Nations languages across Australia.

In regional or remote areas where languages are still prevalent, the role of the teacher-linguist should be re-instated with a view to updating the orthography of the relevant languages and support the creation of teaching and learning materials in the local First Nations language.

In suburban, urban, and metropolitan areas, where languages are currently sleeping, we call for additional funding and support to revitalise these languages to support the First Nations community to access their languages first, and a more specific plan to support the ongoing revitalisation of these languages to non-Indigenous students.

We also call for the grandfathering of a National Compulsory First Nations Learning Framework to be established to ensure all students have access to First Nations languages during their compulsory schooling years.

Finally, we also call for greater coordination between language learning policy and policies relating to the visibility of First Nations languages in other contexts. As such, there should also be a focus on the creation of bilingual signage etc. across the continent and adjacent islands to build wider community engagement and valuing of First Nations languages and their associated cultures and histories.

Most schools where the teachers will be located are administered by non-Indigenous principals and/or regional directors. A history of school governance tells us school leaders are quick to be named as a manager of a new program, such as this one. School leaders have also demonstrated their agility to shut down programs when they come to a new school, concentrating their reporting on initiatives they have designed rather than legacy projects they have inherited. To avoid aspiring Indigenous language teachers getting caught up in in this project management debacle in schools, we suggest the following: The continuity of funding for language programs are made explicit to the schools. This would support the potential teachers in their decisions to commit to the role.

Where there is a change of principal during this term of funding, a commitment is to be provided by the new principal to report on the successful continuation of the program.

Principals who manage the reporting on Indigenous student success are heavily focused on evidence that supports the Closing the Gap initiatives. The learning of Indigenous languages is not part of this reporting. We suggest that

Structures be put in place to raise the status of reporting on success with Indigenous language learning so this reporting has parity with improvements in Literacy and Numeracy (mediated in English).

While teaching is a complex practice, the teaching of Indigenous languages is extraordinarily complex practice. It requires specialist knowledge of the plurilingual context of each student, a solid understanding of the language and knowledge of how to nuance the language learning content to make it engaging for each student. The teaching of Indigenous languages requires specialist knowledge equivalent to experienced teachers with leadership roles in schools. To recognise this equivalence, we suggest that:

Teachers of Indigenous languages be employed on the same scale as teachers in leadership roles in schools.

Teachers of Indigenous languages would face overwhelming burdens of teaching and governing an Indigenous language program. Plurilingual communities have complex issues of governance of Indigenous language delivery in the schools. A governance group would be tasked with deciding the scope and operations of the language program in the school, alleviating the teacher of this responsibility. Indigenous governance is critical. Majority Indigenous representation on this group would be integral to the success. Funding for language governance in schools is just as important as funding language teachers. We suggest the following support be provided:

A fully funded Indigenous language governance group be set up in each school with the Indigenous language program.

Many Indigenous languages are not spoken the same way they were documented. In many communities the everyday practice of language is shifting fast. Many speakers of Indigenous languages use translanguaging in their speech. Translanguaging is a process that acknowledges how speakers use *one linguistic repertoire that contain elements of two or more languages*. Teaching one Indigenous language in a school might not match the creative ways children and young people use language in the community. Translanguaging is a complex phenomena and teachers need support to contextualise how language will be used in the school if the oral use in the community is patterned by out of school practices. This specialist support could be provided by:

Language teachers be provided with support from linguists and educators about how to approach translanguaging in a program of language learning in the school.

Indigenous language programs have not been a priority for successive Australian Governments. After broken promises and sustainable commitment to language programs in schools, resources are limited. A comparison between teaching English and Indigenous languages highlights this inequity.

A teacher of English can access the following supports

- A nationally design curriculum with a robust scope and sequence developed over years of evidence-based reflection
- An over-abundance of high-quality teaching resources developed by commercial providers all competing for use in schools.
- A network of national collaboration through professional associations with opportunities for dialogue and support and conferences to disseminate best practices

• Arrangements in schools that mentor and grow leaders in expertise in teaching subject English in secondary teaching contexts and literacy in primary teaching context.

We suggest that the following support for resources be provided:

- Funding for resource development be provided before the language program begins in each school the teacher of Indigenous languages has access to
 - 1) a scope and sequence of the language;
 - 2) locally contextualised language resources to match the scope and sequence;
 - 3) national networking opportunities with teachers of Indigenous languages and;
 4) opportunities of mentoring and leadership in schools.

Teaching students undergoing LANTITE in their first year

This action is justifiable although it may impact some providers more than others. Deakin students already have very high rates of LANTITE success on their first attempt and implementation will likely have limited impact on the remaining students who do not achieve this outcome.

Providing the opportunity to sit the LANTITE prior to entry could be helpful in addressing some of the current issues experienced by providers, although this may require the provision of more frequent and timely opportunities to undertake the test for this to occur.

Requiring the provision of quality and timely feedback for students by ACER is also likely to improve the very poor experience of students undertaking the LANTITE currently. The allowance of additional tests to be completed by unsuccessful students may also be helpful for students who are most likely to fail because of test anxiety which is surprisingly common.

Maximising time to teach

Effective use of ITE students

This action is potentially concerning in relation to how ITE students may be portrayed as a resource for unpaid use or exploitation in schools. Perhaps the expression used in this action does not reflect the genuine intent, but if it is in any way suggesting that ITE students may be exploited for the provision of unpaid labour in schools then this is an unacceptable outcome.

On the contrary, quality initial teacher education strives to align with priority areas for school improvement through the provision of purposeful, applied learning and assessment activities that are genuinely authentic in their activity.

Initial Teacher Education providers are already reporting increased risks to ITE students' completion rates created by uncoordinated and unmonitored permission to teach arrangements that reduces PSTs capacity to compete their degrees on time.

This action has potential in considering possible enhancements for existing employment-based pathways that are also aligned with meeting teacher workforce shortages but are supported but substantial mechanisms such as teaching coaches such as those used in Deakin's accelerated, employment-based programs.

Support for implementing the national curriculum

The provision of more significant support for teachers would be potentially helpful in reducing demand for resource preparation in priority areas of the national curriculum. It is pleasing to see that this action proposes to work closely with teachers to achieve this goal.

Of course, care must be taken not to inadvertently diminish the important role of teachers in preparing materials that reflect a place-based approach to their work. It would be unfortunate is an unintended consequence if this proposed action were the over use of generic teaching materials that had limited suitability in a full range of communities and contexts.

National School Reform Agreement

This action is also a potentially impactful activity although it clearly requires significantly more detail.

Better understand future teacher workforce needs

Nationally consistent teacher workforce projections and graduate data supply

Deakin is already working in partnership with the Victorian Council of Deans of Education as well as the Department of Education to support these actions.

National Quality Framework for Teacher Regulatory Authorities

This action may be particularly helpful, especially given the differences across states in regulation impacting early childhood education. While much work has already been achieved in relation to primary and secondary education, further work is required in achieving consistency in relation to early childhood education.

Data related to why teachers leave

This is a very positive development and will help inform many other aspects of teacher education as well as workplace reforms.

National guidelines to support early career teachers and leaders

This is a very important action and may be responsive to many of the issues currently faced by early career teachers within the firs four years of entering the profession. Our research and experience in supporting early career teachers has emphasised the need for timely and targeted support and the potential for this to impact on their decision to stay in teaching.

Access to First Nations cultural competency resources

This proposed action is potentially very timely and impactful but does require a process that is appropriately consultative with First Nations elders and local communities, as well as employers and providers.

Streamline HALT accreditation process

Further to my earlier point about teachers' perceptions of the HALT process, this proposed action is also a most welcome development if it can genuinely improve the experience for teachers undertaking the process to become accredited.

Develop micro-credentials

This proposed action is consistent with developments already underway in higher education in areas other than teaching. An investment of \$10 million into developing the delivery on that action is most welcome and is of significant interest to Deakin University where micro-credential processes are already in place in a range of discipline and professional areas.

References:

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