



Introduction

This response is made on behalf of The School of Education and Professional Studies (EPS), Griffith University. EPS is a major provider of undergraduate and postgraduate Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes for preservice teachers who live in South-East Queensland and for those who live in other states of Australia and choose to study online with Griffith University.

We preface our discussion by noting that early years, primary and secondary teaching is a complex endeavour that involves a high degree of professional judgement and expertise. Failure to understand that complexity hinders the understanding of the reality of classroom and community context needed for effective teaching and for retaining an expert workforce now and in the future.

Overall Concerns with the TEEP Direction

- At its most fundamental, a focus on what occurs within ITE is only one aspect of a suite of strategies needed to ensure and promote the attractiveness of teaching as a profession.
- The architecture of the TEEP Discussion Paper treats all the reform areas separately, thereby rendering invisible their points of interconnection and tension. For example, establishing ITE performance measures (reform 1) needs to be considered in terms of improving postgraduate ITE numbers (reform 4). Similarly, there are tensions between attracting a high performing cohort (ATAR 80) on entry and ensuring the participation of a diverse cohort.
- The authorising environment does not ensure the implementation of many of the suggested elements of the TEEP Discussion Paper as the administrative authority sits with Teacher Regulator Authorities (TRAs) and jurisdictions. This must be addressed as a foundation so that national consistency and national sharing are priorities for any future action. HEPs work collaboratively with stakeholders but are constrained by jurisdictional and industrial limits, which are seen as HEP limitations rather than contextual barriers.
- The implementation of TEMAG reforms is still underway. Reform cycles are typically 7 years to achieve consolidation and improvement. The key elements of TEMAG are largely in place and require opportunity to take effect so their efficacy and impact can be ascertained through quality research. This includes the Program and Professional Standards, TPAs, entry requirements (academic + non-academic), and LANTITE, plus additional state-based variations that are a requirement of ITE program accreditation. Investing in understanding the plethora of reforms over the last decade is essential to developing an evidence base for evidence-based next steps.
- The TEEP direction lacks an evidence-base to support many of the suggested actions. This is especially relevant for the teaching practices/core content and quality indicators which are selective with little justification.
- There is a global teacher shortage that will continue to grow over the coming years. Strategies that increase barriers while not addressing teacher workforce issues are counterproductive.

- In real terms, ITE funding has been reduced by approximately \$1000 per full-time student per annum (based on two semesters per year) when compared to previous models. The combined contribution from students and CGS is lower in the current funding arrangements and disincentivises HEPs delivering ITE. Initiatives and quality activities such as PEx partnership and internship models have been abandoned because they are unaffordable with HEPs bearing the costs. Delivering effective ITE is increasingly costly; this backwards slide is a key point for TEEP advocacy for effective ITE and an opportunity to influence the University Accord. The matter is urgent and invisible in these recommendations.

Reform Area 1: Evidence-based Teaching Practices

- Evidence-informed practices are necessary in classroom teaching and in ITE and are already required by AITSL for ITE Program Standards. However, the term ‘evidence’ and the intent of ‘evidence’ carries significant limitations: evidence changes over time; the evidence-base is shaped by what is chosen to be the focus of research; and measures of effectiveness can be narrow. For example, the report draws on QILT data that has a problematic response rate and provides an aggregate response at the level of undergraduate or postgraduate study, without more specific detail for each program of study. This means QILT data is less informative when considering the continuous improvement agenda. Another issue with the term ‘evidence’ is illustrated in the TEEP Discussion Paper where it notes that “there is limited research-based evidence regarding what constitutes ‘culturally responsive pedagogy’ and the potential impact on student outcomes”, whilst at the same time the TEEP Discussion Paper rightly prioritises culturally responsive pedagogies as a pillar for ITE.
- The paper’s reliance on cognitive science in identifying teaching practices that work is unsurprising as cognitive science has a long tradition of producing research that ‘fits’ AERO’s criteria for rigour. Evidence from other disciplines that have a strong influence on the complexity of teachers’ work, such as sociology, is largely ignored. The caution is that evidence should inform, but not narrow, the lens through which the purposes and practices of classroom teaching and ITE are determined.
- Evidenced-based practices are only as effective as the critical thinking and reflective teaching that transpires. Therefore, the content of ITE programmes should be informed by a range of evidence *and* contextually responsive professional judgement – together these are major aspects of teacher expertise. Any evidence-based teaching practice needs to be responsive to context (place-based) and the specific students (personalised) in that context. Critical thinking and reflection are skills that can be nurtured if given the required time and focus towards lifelong learning within ITE programs, and where there is a close and productive partnership between schools and ITE providers.
- A higher priority than fixed content in ITE programs is the importance of fostering, supporting, and sustaining teacher identity, including resilience, well-being, agency, and efficacy in a manner that shifts the responsibility of lifelong learning towards the preservice teacher, graduate teacher and early career teacher.
- Responsiveness to diverse students’ learning needs is the essence of classroom teaching, with today’s classrooms containing students with many additional learning needs, including: students from a variety of complex social, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, students who are gifted and talented, twice-exceptional students (have both disability and giftedness), students with disability, trauma-impacted students, refugee students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, LGBTIQ+ students, and intersections of diversities. An extensive literature base provides

evidence for the effectiveness of a range of teaching approaches suitable for addressing the varied learning needs of these students, including: differentiated and personalised learning (e.g., Tomlinson, 2000, 2006, 2011; Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019) and problem-based learning, which Hung et al. (2008), state is “perhaps the most innovative pedagogical method ever implemented in education” (p. 486).

- The issue is not to provide prescribed pedagogy or to add to the list of core curriculum for ITE programs, but to illustrate the complexity of teaching and reinforce the important role of ITE in facilitating a broad and deep capacity so preservice teachers can locate and critically engage with a range of evidence, and exercise professional judgement with their unique expertise within the fray of teaching practice.
- We welcome the coverage of intentional planning, modelling and scaffolding content. However, the TEEP Discussion Paper frames this as an approach that involves preservice teachers selecting an appropriate evidence-based practice ‘from the shelf’, rather than the professional translation and application of theory and practice to context. Contextual factors include, but are not limited to, the school (early years, primary, secondary, combined, selective, IB, alternative education); demographic factors, cultural factors, and increasingly complex student needs (e.g., students from trauma backgrounds). Attempts to reduce pedagogy to a series of steps, underestimates the complexities of disciplinary teaching and personalised learning for students, which is suggestive of trying to skip whole layers of theory to over-simplify teaching and learning.
- Excellence in teaching and learning is exemplified by engaged students, this in and of itself is the ‘best’ form of classroom management; when students are authentically engaged (behaviourally, emotionally, and cognitively) and actively participate in their learning, classroom management is addressed by the core facets of having an engaging curriculum and associated learning activities. Having a repertoire of evidence-based pedagogical approaches is the essence of any experienced teacher’s toolbox of teaching approaches; there is no one standardised approach that can meet all classroom teaching requirements and diversity of students - it would be a mistake to make this assumption. The Discussion Paper does not address the increasingly complex issues that teachers are faced with in the classroom that impact upon student behaviour. Hence, the way curriculum is taught, as well as how expectations are established, and how equipped teachers and schools are to respond to complexity are intertwined.
- Specifying a national ITE curriculum would not be responsive to what individual schools and education jurisdictions are actually practising in classrooms – every school is different and different pedagogical practices are used in response to context and need. Under a narrow ITE curriculum, PSTs would be at risk of only being familiar with a narrow set of practices that are not actually used in their future schools/classrooms. It is one thing to mandate ITE curriculum but another to mandate these practices in all schools where PSTs will eventually teach – this runs a very real risk of further disconnecting ITE and actual classroom-based practices. Effective educators are constantly adjusting approaches to learning; a key feature of teacher expertise and professionalism. De-professionalising teachers by standardising content in ITE is a damaging strategy and will lead to retention challenges, loss of job satisfaction, flexibility, and ultimately student learning.

Reform Area 2: ITE Performance Measures

Under this section we also address questions related to standard setting, as we see these as interrelated.

- An underlying assumption appears to be that ITE programmes are not already engaged in processes that support continuous improvement. However, attention to improvement is

embedded through ongoing cycles of unit/course/subject evaluation, programme evaluation, and through university-wide School/Department Review processes, as well as AITSL accreditation requirements.

- The TEEP Discussion Paper positions the public availability of an ITE provider's performance against a prescribed set of measures as a means of ensuring 'consumer' choice. However, a range of factors influence the decisions of potential PSTs, including location and the educational foci of the provider. A potentially adverse outcome of over centralising core curriculum, and emphasising choice based on such performance measures, is that ITE programmes become standardised; this will level out, rather than improve quality.
- It is premature to amend existing AITSL program standards and APSTs before they have been fully rolled out and evaluated. A number of HEPs are yet to undergo AITSL Stage 2 accreditation for their ITE programs; the impact of the recent TEMAG reforms, and the additional state-specific mandates, have not yet been independently evaluated.
- TPAs should be a key feature in ITE measures of performance for funding as they are the exit point and thus, a demonstration of the exit standards for graduate teachers. TPAs are focused on the work of a teacher and on classroom readiness. Some TPAs already have a rigorous large-scale process for moderation within and across HEPs and should be resourced to progress this work.
- Reward funding will create a two-tier ITE system, which would be counter-productive to strengthening ITE programs overall. Lifting the quality of the whole sector requires a willingness to share expert knowledge and collaborate, rather than compete. It would be more effective to foster collaborative research and evaluation within ITE programmes, rather than create a system of winners and losers, especially given that an intended outcome of the TEEP is to increase the number of teacher graduates.
- Whilst retention in the workforce is an important objective, many factors impact upon retention that sit outside the influence of ITE, including the organisational culture of the school, and the availability of professional support and mentorship. The focus on ongoing relationship between ITE providers and employers is laudable, around issues such as induction but is not cost neutral. ITE providers will have graduates who work in geographically dispersed areas, and in diverse educational contexts, thus ongoing induction and support must be accessible and tailored.
- Retention should not be a tunnel-visioned focus. For example, aspiring teachers who start their ITE studies and find they are not suitable for classroom teaching should not be the focus. The focus should be the attraction, retention and graduation of high-quality candidates, who then go on to be highly effective teachers.
- ITE programs add value to an aspiring teacher's wherewithal over the period of study, and hence it can be argued that entry demands are of less importance than exit standards. Adding more barriers to ITE entry is concerning both for workforce matters and equity matters. Pathways should be broadened to build a committed, well-qualified, sustainable, and diverse workforce.

Reform Area 3: Improving the Quality of Practical Experience in Teaching

- The capstone Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) is a TEMAG initiative that provides demonstrable evidence of preservice teachers' capacities to integrate theory and practice in a classroom context. The TPA is in its infancy, and as more Professional Experience (PEX) supervising teachers and PEX site coordinators come to know the TPA, the greater the demonstration of the integration between theory and practice during a preservice teachers' program of study. Research by Griffith University academics Exley, Pendergast, and Hoyte (2022) found that the intricacies of the TPA are not yet well understood by the media or school-based leadership teams,

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2022v47n1.1>. Communication channels need to be established and sustained to build TPA awareness across social media, legacy media, and in formal contexts.

- TPAs were designed to ensure that graduating teachers all meet a quality standard acceptable to the profession. The PEx component is overseen by the supervising teachers and school site coordinators (both registered teachers), and the research report component (the TPA) is assessed by teacher educators who are also eligible for teacher registration. Narrowing the number of TPAs across the range of HEPs and ensuring comparability across the TPAs within an institution and across institutions, is a space for improvement and reform. TPAs should be a key feature in ITE measures of performance for funding.
- PEx is an integral part of ITE. Finding quality PEx remains a challenge, with competing demands for teachers' time and work intensification. Adding PEx supervisory responsibilities and mentoring is often seen as a desirable but prohibitive extra responsibility.
- Industrial issues constrain innovation in PEx. Around the nation differing agreements, payment rates, partnership initiatives and investment in quality PEx fundamentally impacts on each preservice teacher's experience; this is an administrative matter requiring attention.
- There is no requirement for PEx supervising teachers or PEx site coordinators to undertake professional learning activities that support their work with preservice teachers. Introducing a requirement would have logistical and financial implications that would need to be factored into ITE funding. Additional funding should be used for release of teachers and increased support for teacher educators to foster their professional partnerships and processes that makes use of and extends existing expertise and gives agency back to the profession. Additionally, given the difficulties of securing the number of PEx placements in the required time frames and in the required teaching areas, any new professional development requirement for school-based personnel needs to carefully consider the unintentional consequences that may result.
- Funding models need to support rural and remote placements as accommodation and cost are prohibitive to many preservice teachers. Opportunities for a career pathway, and an opportunity to add human resources to rural and remote locations, is missed.
- In survey data collected by EPS, preservice teachers are unanimous on two fronts: the value of PEx to their ITE program, and the financial burden whilst undertaking PEx. In addition to forfeiting a wage for a month or more in each year of ITE study, preservice teachers undertaking PEx typically have increased transport costs (as their school site may be up to an hour away and not easily accessible by public transport), increased child-care costs, and increased costs when they have to purchase resources for the classroom.

Reform Area 4: Improve Postgraduate ITE for Mid-career Entrants

- The TEEP Discussion Paper conflates post-graduate ITE students with mid-career entry or career changes. However, at Griffith University, many ITE applicants into Masters programs come directly from undergraduate programs, with the average age for entry into a post-graduate ITE programs being in their late twenties.
- A number of HEPs currently deliver post-graduate ITE as an accelerated program. For example, the Griffith University Master of Primary Teaching degree and Master of Secondary Teaching degree have an accelerated option where preservice teachers study for 3 trimesters in Year 1 and 1 trimester in Year 2 and graduate at the end of 18 months. This 18-month option is in its fourth year of delivery and is appealing to preservice teachers who have the capacity to complete in this time frame. A two-year, three-year and four-year model is also available for preservice teachers who prefer this timeframe.

- Griffith University has been involved in a Queensland Government initiative, “Turn to Teaching” (TTT) since its inception in 2022. TTT is available to a select group of aspiring teachers via competitive application. TTT candidates are paid a \$20K retainer in Year 1 to allow a greater focus on studies and receive an internship wage in Year 2 (\$50,000), while teaching 50% and studying 50%. Research work has identified that this model is successful, both for attracting aspiring teachers who otherwise would not apply for ITE, and in retaining preservice teachers through their program who otherwise could not afford to continue studying. Our experience is that when these preservice teachers enter Year 2 and are part-time teacher/part-time student, they bring an incredible richness to the tutorial discussions; all preservice teachers benefit from this new level of discussion.
- There is a need to fund research for longitudinal studies into the effectiveness of the accelerated ITE programs and other industry-based initiatives. Investing in a research base in ITE is long overdue.