Vice-Chancellor and President
Professor Deborah Terry AO

21 April 2023

Professor Mark Scott AO
Chair
Teacher Education Expert Panel
Email: TeacherEducation@education.gov.au

Dear Professor Scott and Colleagues

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the issues raised in the Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper (Paper). We would like to begin by reminding the Panel that preservice teachers completing their initial teacher education (ITE) program are registered at the graduate level. Attracting, preparing, transitioning to and retaining preservice teachers in professional employment is complex and requires multiple stakeholders to provide the support necessary. Finally, the Discussion Paper is based on the premise that presently ITE programs are not graduating classroom-ready teachers; however, there is evidence in support of the effectiveness of current teaching practice of recent graduates. A study of 990 lesson observations from classrooms across Australia (Gore, 2023) found no significant differences in teaching quality existing among teachers with less than one year's experience through those with more than 24 years of experience. This supports the earlier findings of Graham et al. (2020) which did not find a relationship between quality of beginning and more experienced teachers.

Regardless, there is always room for improvement. Specific responses to the individual questions raised in the Paper are provided below.

Reform Area 1: Strengthen ITE programs to deliver effective, classroom ready graduates.
The Paper (summary) provides the following as the basis for Reform Area 1:
ITE program content should be evidence based and set graduate teachers up well to handle the classroom environment. The Panel has identified the key teaching practices every teacher should learn in ITE to be prepared for the classroom and best support students. This would equip graduate teachers with a strong understanding of what works best to improve student learning based on the best evidence.
On reflection of this statement, the identified four key teaching practices (Brain and Learning; Effective Practices; Classroom Management; Enabling Factors), and the discussion raised in the Paper we offer the following response.
- An opportunity to ensure all teachers learn in ITE the evidence-based practices which improve student learning.

The instruction provided in ITE programs have been and still are required to be evidence-based, as noted, due to accreditation standards/requirements of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and the annual reviews conducted by Teacher Regulatory Authorities (TRAs). While specific practices are not included in these AITSL program standards, it should be noted that teaching pedagogies are not static. As alluded to in the core content discussion in the report, our knowledge of neuroscience and the transformation of the physiological knowledge to practical application in the classroom to impact learning is growing exponentially with technological developments. Thus, prescribing specific teaching practices is not only limiting to all students (one size does not fit all), but would also lead to outdated teaching ideas (see for example, Deak et al., 2021). As our ITE programs undergo State review annually and national

Office of the Vice-Chancellor

CRICOS PROVIDER NUMBER 00025B

The University of Queensland
Brisbane QLD 4072 Australia

T +61 7 3365 1300
F + 61 7 3365 1266

E vc@uq.edu.au
W www.uq.edu.au

review at least every five years for compliance with delivering an evidence-based program, that should be sufficient to ensure what is delivered is guided by the most current education research. Of course, there is debate on how "effective teaching" is measured. This includes standardized tests scores, affective measures, observations of instruction and student reception. As teachers, we need to maintain a focus not only on content but on teaching the whole student.

The basis for deciding on the Core Content areas is not elucidated. First, all these core areas are already included in ITE programs. Second, what makes these "core" is less compelling in the report. For example, while we acknowledge that all areas cannot have the same weight, it was surprising to see digital literacy not considered a core area; considering the technological demands that are placed on society in day-to-day life. Similar concerns can be raised for other areas. Additionally, listing specific areas has the danger of limiting the scope of teacher preparation. How much attention to those core content areas must be included in instruction? Will it become something that is quantified, running the risk of overshadowing other Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs)?

Rather than prescribing a core, we would argue that ITE programs should be producing graduates that are capable of understanding, critiquing, and conducting educational research so they can make informed decisions about evidence-based approaches to teach more effectively in the future.

There is also a concern that an emphasis is placed on "explicit instruction" and inquiry instruction is discounted. There are levels of inquiry instruction, and inquiry is sometimes the best pedagogical approach to use. The Department of Education advocates the use of inquiry teaching, particularly in developing "critical and creative thinking so students can develop their abilities to ask questions, design investigations, interpret evidence, form explanations and arguments, and communicate feelings" (Australian Government Department of Education). Didactic teaching has its place, but inquiry does as well. Inquiry has been around since Socrates (and, in practice, well before that as we know from Indigenous pedagogies / knowledges), so it is not a new concept in teaching. Didactic teaching methods are useful for transmission of facts and procedures; inquiry helps with 21st century skills of knowledge creation (see for example, Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2010; Friesen & Scott, 2013). Interestingly, no mention is made of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (Schulman, 1986) or even content knowledge in describing any of the "effective pedagogical practices" outlined.

An additional concern is that there is at times a disconnect between what is stressed in ITE programs and what is actually happening in individual schools. Classroom teaching is part of a multi-tiered system. How preservice teachers are prepared does not always get transferred into the classroom as different classrooms have different cultures of pedagogies and emphasis in instruction. There could be a misalignment between the evidenced-based practices taught to our preservice students and those actually employed in classrooms in the field.

We welcome the focus on classroom management, and particularly the emphasis on tiered interventions to support student behaviour, as critical foundational knowledge within ITE courses. The Paper stresses rules and routines and a range of proactive practices, as well as strategies for what we would describe as supporting, rather than managing, student behaviour. The Paper emphasises the need for "verbal feedback that draws attention to expected behaviours" when responding to more intense behaviours. While drawing attention to expected behaviours is an evidence-based approach, for inclusive reasons, we would argue that it isn't essential that this feedback be verbal. At times, non-verbal feedback such as cueing may be even more effective (McLeskey et al., 2022; Zeki, 2009). We would argue that graduate teachers need to be able to demonstrate both high-quality instruction as well as high-quality engagement as a proactive practice (Poed et al., 2020). We would like to suggest any reference to this suggested area be amended to "support students to manage behaviour" rather than simply "manage behaviour" as helping learners to regulate their emotions is an important part of the education process (Chazin, 2022).

- An opportunity for graduate teachers to be assessed on these practices as part of their final year assessment (known as the Teaching Performance Assessment) so that they develop and practice their skills in these areas

As a last comment, the Paper suggests adding requirements to the Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs) and overseeing of same. Changes to the TPAs are unnecessary. For one, these are still too new to require changing. Additionally, some assumptions about the TPA are inaccurate. TPAs are required and are part of annual reviews and accreditation reviews. They are

required to be ross-institutionally moderated so there is no need for an "oversight body". Finally, the TPA does measure impact on students, so it produces evidence of the efficacy of preservice teacher instruction.

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

The Paper (Summary) provides the following as the basis for Reform Area 2:

A publicly available quality measure for ITE programs would drive performance of higher education providers and help ITE students make informed choices. The Panel has been asked for advice on assessing the quality of ITE programs and how quality should be linked to funding.

*The Panel proposes that high-performing ITE programs are those which: **select** diverse, high-quality candidates in areas of workforce need; support and **retain** their ITE students to graduate as a teacher; prepare ITE students to be **ready for the classroom**; and support graduate teachers to **transition** effectively into the teaching profession.*

We offer the following response:
- Selecting diverse, high-quality candidates in areas of workforce need

Research is murky about the relationship between tertiary entry scores and success in the classroom, depending on the measures being used (see for example, the research summarised by Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2016). However, there are concerns about using high ATAR scores or even LANTITE qualifications for entry into/completion of ITE programs as (a) multiple factors impact success in teaching and (b) relying heavily on academic measures precludes entry of a wider demographic of potential teachers who have the potential to be successful teachers. The inclusion of "participation of STEM students" seems short-sighted (other content areas also have shortages and these fluctuate over time). It is difficult to measure the impact of specific ITE programs on their attractiveness to specific teaching areas as undergraduate programs tend to be double majors and for both undergraduate and post-graduate ITE secondary preparation programs are parallel across teaching areas except for specific curriculum studies areas.
- Support and Retain ITE students to graduate

Concerning retention, as noted in our response to the QITER, often, students who choose to exit an ITE program leave when they self-determine their suitability for a career in teaching. This is the reason why there are early and frequent placements built into the programs so as to provide the preservice teachers with classroom experiences that either solidify their desire to teach or help them realize a different career pathway may be more appropriate. Leaving the pathway toward a teaching profession while in an ITE program is a more positive outcome than: (a) graduating students not suited to the profession; or (b) graduating students who will leave the profession early and need to reskill for different career pathways.

ITE completion rates can be improved through individual support and mentoring for struggling students. Progressing through the program on a part-time basis is also an option. These can also help in retention of under-represented groups and/or first-generation university students (Aruguete & Katrevich, 2017).

It is important to keep in mind that with a growing number of preservice teachers attending ITE programs on a part-time basis and others taking interruptions, six years for completion is not an appropriate timeframe.

- Prepare ITE Graduates to be ready for the classroom

In looking at QILT data, several concerns exist. There is a discrepancy between how graduate teachers view their preparation and employer satisfaction data. Student response rates for QILT may not produce representative results. QILT data do not differentiate between programs (e.g., they group primary and secondary programs together which does not allow for specific program examination/improvement). Another complication with these measures is there is no indication of who is teaching out of field or had teaching practicum impacted by COVID and their perception of their level of preparedness.

- Support Graduate Teachers to transition effectively into the teaching profession

The idea of funding for transitions is well-received! Research has shown that mentoring of beginning teachers helps them to both be successful and remain in the profession. Developing stronger bridges between ITE providers and the field will be helpful in providing professional development to both beginning and mentor teachers.

- Concerns regarding performance measures

ITE programs are currently required by annual and Stage Two accreditation reviews to show continuous improvement. Is external recognition for doing what is expected (and should be the goal of any program) required?

Information about ITE programs is currently available to prospective students. Some of what is submitted by ITE programs to their TRAs during annual reporting is made available and QILT data are readily available. It should be noted that in a recent note in the *Campus Morning Mail*, it was reported that in a survey conducted by Studiosity, "**11 per cent of survey responders considered "global ranking scores" in selecting a course/university**" (*Campus Morning Mail* April 14, 2023), which questions whether additional publication of performance measures will be impactful.

What performance measures are appropriate? The possible selection variables listed are confounding: SES, environmental factors, and school factors all impact academic performance. Further, in Australia, secondary students tend to attend tertiary institutions that are geographically close to their homes. To compare these measures because of "international literature" does not make sense as, in other countries students exhibit more mobility in choosing universities.

We do appreciate the idea of using student pass rates for the TPA as an indicator of program quality. The TPAs are cross-institutionally moderated, and as the TPA measures classroom performance, using these data make sense from both a validity and reliability perspective and provides a more common measure of program performance.

In terms of measuring performance, we do like the idea of continuing to look at program improvement. Note that using averages for comparisons has inherent problems as by the nature of average, some ITE programs will always score as being below average. Setting some kind of benchmarks for program improvement would provide greater equity. Despite the problems with attracting a broad demographic of students noted earlier, this does not mean trying to increase diversity in our study body is not a worthwhile goal.

Note that some of the measures indicated on page 36 of the Paper relating to keeping beginning teachers in the profession are beyond the control of the ITE programs. Sustainability of employment and places of employment are beyond the control of ITE Programs. Again, looking at concerns about the teacher pipeline is a system issue/problem.

Linking quality and funding sets up an unnatural competitiveness among ITE providers and may lead to a "gaming" of the system. As already noted, ITE programs already strive for continuous improvement. By preparing classroom-ready teachers, we strengthen our relationships with industry, encouraging them to continue to accept our students for practica, and creating a positive flow from pre to inservice teachers. We do not need a funding carrot to do what we are passionate about. As noted in the Paper, not all ITE programs are of equal size and shifting funding allocations would impact and ITE provider's ability to prepare adequate numbers of preservice teachers and could be detrimental.

Reform Area 3: Improving the quality of practical experience in teaching
The Paper (Summary) provides the following as the basis for Reform Area 3:
Practical experience placements play a critical role in providing ITE students with the opportunity to apply their learning and practise their skills in classroom settings. The Panel is looking at how to improve the quality of practical experience with regard to best practice models used in education and other disciplines.

We offer the following response:

- developing more comprehensive system level agreements between school systems and higher education providers to improve the coordination and quality of placements

At UQ, we agree that field experiences should start early in the program and be scaffolded with increasing responsibilities and tied to classes to stress the connections between theory and practice. In relation to Queensland ITE providers, we have recently negotiated a new agreement with our placement schools which clearly outlines responsibilities for all stakeholders. Our field handbooks clearly spell out expectations for the different experiences as well. Our TRA offers training for supervising teachers which have a good uptake. Annual training is offered to our University facilitators. Across Queensland, we all use the same instrument for evaluating assessed field experiences so there is consistency across ITE providers. The State has tried to develop a state-wide system of field placements with all ITE providers, the Government, Independent and Catholic school systems. We have been unsuccessful in finding a fundable model that is fit for purpose.

It is interesting that the discussion in the Paper seems to focus on traditional school orientations and does not appear to reference special schools, early childhood centres, or alternative schooling contexts. Please note that in reference to 3.4.4, ITE providers would negotiate specific arrangements suitable to individuals experiencing these needs/difficulties.

A concern we have is our limited ability to assure the quality of the mentor in the classroom. With whom our students are placed is left to the School to decide. Another concern is the correspondence between the University and School calendars. Because of when our semester one starts, we are unable to place our students into schools at the very start of the school year to experience what occurs at the beginning of a school year.

We do see that improvements in this area require a system-wide solution. In relation to developing more comprehensive system level agreements between school systems and higher education providers to improve coordination and quality of placements, there are interesting insights from the Singaporean context. While their context is much simpler than what exists in Australia, there are lessons to be learned. Singaporean teacher education is "a result of attuned stewardship with nimble policies, high levels of resourcing, as well as supportive communities of practice which synergize as a conducive education ecosystem" (Nazeer-Ikeda & Gopinathan, 2022, p. 12). Teacher education is described as a 'core' element of the development of the Singaporean nation-state. Singapore has close relations among schools and the National Institute of Education, and the Ministry of Education. The Hubs existing in other states sound like this may be a similar, promising model to expand across the country, although this will take time and funding. These seem to provide the partnerships needed between ITE providers and schools to develop relationships to facilitate placements, strengthen connections between theory and practice and promote similarity between the research-base guiding preparation of preservice teachers and the practice in the schools; they may also assist in enabling continued educational research in best teaching practices and student learning. This model could also strengthen support of preservice and beginning teachers in the schools, as the type of support currently available to both populations vary considerably among schools.

Funding of placements is expensive. We question the rate of pay to supervising students as in Queensland teachers get paid the same daily rate regardless of their time investment in the students (i.e., teachers working with first year students primarily doing observations and those working with final year students with primary teaching responsibility get paid the same rate). Would teachers be amenable to not receiving mentor pay for the earlier practica in return for the extra assistance in the classroom they receive from these students? Perhaps teachers can be convinced to take on these supervisory duties of preservice teachers in meeting requirements to be recognized as Highly Accomplished or Lead Teachers.

If field placements were measured in hours instead of days, we would be able to provide greater flexibility with timing of placements, particularly with our secondary students. Block practica are problematic for our dual degree students as the schedule for their content area classes preclude these in the early years of their program. If we moved to hours, we would more easily be able to place the students into the same classrooms on a weekly basis. While the time per visit would be shorter, this would be a trade off for consistency with the placement school, students, teachers, etc.

Continued funding of Queensland programs such as *Beyond the Range* and TECE are helpful in promoting and supporting students looking to complete a practica in regional, rural, and remote schools.

Reform Area 4: Improve postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants
The Paper (Summary) provides the following as the basis for Reform Area 4:

People making a career change to teaching can bring considerable professional and life experience to the teacher workforce. The Panel has been asked to provide advice on improving postgraduate ITE to attract mid-career entrants.

We offer the following response:
- enabling mid-career entrants to enter the classroom sooner as part of their degree

We acknowledge that attracting postgraduate mid-career entrants into the field is daunting for all the reasons mentioned. Recognition of prior experience in the program is problematic as mid-career entrants bring with them a wealth of practical content area experience BUT not the background needed in the educational field. The latter is what is focused on in postgraduate programs. We rely on their undergraduate degree for content/discipline area preparation. It is also important to note that many of our postgraduate entrants are actually coming directly from an undergraduate program rather than being a mid-career entrant.
- improving the flexibility of available postgraduate ITE programs to support mid-career entrants in managing competing commitments.

Suggestions that the program length be condensed seems to contradict the considerations presented by the Panel in Reform Area 1. At UQ, we did originally offer a condensed, 18 month program for our Primary Postgraduate Teacher Preparation Program. Our students reported finding the intensive program too stressful. In response, we extended it to a two-year program and student satisfaction has increased and stress levels have decreased. Accelerated programs are not always the panacea they appear.
As noted in the Paper, there is no evidence base about the best way to deal with mid-career entrants. Depending on the size of the ITE program, offering part-time evening classes and summer classes in addition to a full-time daily program may not be economically feasible. Also, the values of the ITE program may dictate whether courses are offered in face-to-face format only or in a hybrid or on-line format.
A way of finding financial support for students while completing the program is something to be explored. Internships used to be available and a model of using these might be revisited. Permission to Teach might be an option (at least for final year, final semester students). Some individual schools are partnering with ITE programs to offer a type of paid teaching assistantship to students while they attend classes.
In closing, again we would like to thank the Panel for the opportunity to respond to the Discussion Paper. As Panel Members have noted, the problems do not lie solely with teacher education programs but also reflect broader systemic issues. Policymakers, school systems/organizations, supports available, individual demographics and other factors all impact on teacher preparation and the successful transition from preservice to inservice teachers.

Yours sincerely

Professor Deborah Terry AO
Vice-Chancellor and President

D23/48596

References

Aruguete, M. & Katrevich, A. (2017). Recognizing challenges and predicting success in first-generation university students. *Journal of STEM Education: Innovations and Research, 18*(2), 40-44.

Barron, B. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). Prospects and challenges for inquiry-based approaches to learing, in The Nature of Learning, OECD.

Chazin, K. T. (2022). *Improving social validity of behavioral interventions implemented with young children* (Doctoral dissertation, Vanderbilt University). https://ir.vanderbilt.edu/handle/1803/17887

Corcoran, R.P., & O'Flaherty, J. (2018). *Factors that predict pre-service teachers' teaching performance. Journal of Education for Teaching, 44*(2), 175-193.

Deak, C. Kuman, B., Szabo, I., Nagy, G., & Szentesi, S. (2021). Evolution of new approaches in pedagogy and STEM with inquiry-based learning and post-pandemic scenarios. *Education Sciences, 11*(319). doi.org/10.3390.

Friesen, S., & Scott, D. (2013). Inquiry-based learning: A review of the research literature. Paper prepared for the Alberta Ministry of Education. Retrieved from: https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/38355914/Inquiry-Based-Learning-A-Review-of-the-Research-Literature-libre.pdf?1438472393=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DINQUIRY_BASED_LEARNING_LITERATURE_REVIEW.pdf&Expires=1681431679&Signature=IrU2BZnV2bdKtXnUxGNqIEPcyXuNJCRr8gFwfIsT9xLnvx5Gm1VRVTCpRa4XcsoX1kPZO61ovbxJXHBSZZZf1~WqHFSp45zFgW7KhA6BDXtKWedQ8rTICTpbb5B3N2r6iUBVLdR0mAsN5xN4EJyF7exWv4eWYj2DorrhVj7ZAzoTafaQdj2WtSti7aFJtkaiueqfTJy1zGbQPxIM-JiFlvBafjxPPIgN2GBUy4K7XYaKIP82EY9OTcYaADhsHGkdVNYNXAFS2~ffhM0eps0Px3AQWuTRnSIBGLEP9vVabCOps6tAlb5voay7QZA3bA1mA2wNn9HEGDfhR4Y4OibpNQ__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA

Gore, J. (May 7, 2023). Our study found new teachers perform just as well in the classroom as their more experienced colleagues. The Conversation. Retrieved from: https://theconversation.com/our-study-found-new-teachers-perform-just-as-well-in-the-classroom-as-their-more-experienced-colleagues-200649

Graham, L.J., White, S.L.J., Cologon, K., & Pianta, R.C. (2020). Do teachers' years of experience make a difference in the quality of teaching? *Teaching and Teacher Education, 96*, 103190, doi.org/10.1016.

McLeskey, J., Maheady, L., Billingsley, B., Brownell, M. T., & Lewis, T. J. (Eds.). (2022). *High leverage practices for inclusive classrooms.* Routledge.

Nazeer-Ikida, R., & Gopianathan, S. (2022). Teacher education in a developmental state: Singapore's ecosystem model. In M. S. Khine & Y. Liu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Innovations and practices in Asia.* (pp. 11-35). Springer.

Poed, S., Cowan, I., & Swain, N. (2020). The High Impact Engagement Strategies (HIES). Parkville College, Department of Education and Training, Victoria. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5977deef8419c27557b25893/t/5f488136fb21f8604a156a71/1598587217353/The%2BHighImpactEngagementStrategies%2BV4.0%2BFinal.pdf

Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(2), 4-14.

Zeki, C. P. (2009). The importance of non-verbal communication in classroom management. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 1*(1), 1443-1449. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.254