

Improving Quality in Initial teacher education – Lessons for Australia?

Webinar series: Wednesdays 8 and 15 September 2021

Outcomes Statement

The key outcomes from the webinar series were:

- The importance of the opportunity available to university ITE educators from **working closely together with an activated profession in schools and school systems** and in **genuine partnership**, including in the co-design of ITE curriculum and the impact of ITE-related research and inquiry activities on school improvement.
- **Clinical practice / clinical praxis ITE models can provide a clearer interface between theory and practice and inform evidence-based teaching.**
- **Programs where ITE students are embedded early within schools of greater need** (including innovations such as residency programs) and have an accompanying social justice element appear to be **effective but also labour-intensive**, with implications for teachers' work as well as teacher educators.
- **Additional research is required into the impact of the different elements of ITE and different models of ITE upon student learning outcomes, recruitment and retention of teachers and the quality of teaching.**

Context

Every child has the right to a quality education to help them expand and fulfil their potential.

In Australia, this vision is best articulated in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*, where the importance of improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is recognised as being central to helping young people live fulfilling lives, as well as our shared social and economic prosperity.

In turn, Australia's teachers are a critical element to achieving this vision, with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providing the foundational pathway for excellence in teaching.

Collectively, the Group of Eight (Go8) enrolls 10.1 per cent of Australia's education undergraduates and 20.8 per cent of our postgraduate education students. We are committed to quality and continuous improvement in both our ITE tuition and our research.

These two Go8 ITE webinars – the first on *Lessons from international experiences* and the second on *Lessons from Australian experiences* – sought to inform that quality of tuition and research.

Given the current Australian Government review into Initial Teacher Education (ITE), the contribution that these webinars have made to the Australian national discussion – as well as international discussion – is timely.

Webinars in detail

Lessons from international experiences

Wednesday 8 September, 2021

18:30 – 20:00 AEST

Ms Lisa Paul AO, Chair, Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

The Terms of Reference for the Quality ITE Review Panel cover:

- How do we select the best possible candidates to enter teaching? (the **selection effect**);
- What happens inside the teaching of teaching that most likely to guarantee success? (the **treatment effect**); and
- What happens once an early-career teacher starts teaching? (the **induction effect**).

In terms of process, the Review Panel has been grateful to hear directly from approximately 100 stakeholders and have received over 200 submissions. In addition, the Panel has commissioned behavioural economists to examine higher achieving school leavers and mid-career professionals – especially STEM professionals – to see what it would take to get them to become teaching candidate.

As a conceptual lens, it struck the Panel early on in their Review that if they could ascertain the range of personal characteristics that correlated with quality teaching in the classroom, then the selection of ITE candidates would be more straightforward. **The Panel is aware that academic ability and characteristics such as self-reliance do correlate with the completion of a degree, but what constitutes a high-performing teacher is less clear.**

The Panel has been keen to build on past reviews where possible, although **the connection between personal characteristics and quality teaching – in addition to other topics relating to ITE – requires further, quality research.** Further, they have sought to give particular voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, people with disabilities, and people from regional, rural and remote areas, as well as from recent ITE graduates.

The Panel is consolidating their understandings and will present their findings to Government towards the end of 2021 (<https://qitereview.dese.gov.au>).

Professor Rachel Jakhelln, University of Tromsø, Norway

In NORWAY, to become a teacher in upper primary/lower secondary education, it has been a requirement since 2017 to undertake a master's degree culminating in a thesis aimed at improvements in the quality of teaching, a type of thesis research known as 'professionally-oriented research' (APTE, 2020). This is one major reform in series of reforms seeking to close the gap between ITE theory and practice, with the aim of **developing a teacher's ability to engage in research and thus build their capacity for continuous self-development.**

There have been many challenges, particularly in the assessment of the thesis component which is required to be based on both theory *and* practice, including tensions between the thesis completion rates and teacher shortages. It is here that having **access to quality interdisciplinary inputs** – a range of school-subject matter expertise – has been critical to the level of success of the reform, alongside the development of **meaningful collaboration with schools and the Norwegian school system.**

The Norwegian reforms are distinctive internationally in that there has been an enhancement of the academic component – and a restructuring of the higher education system in order to support higher academic expectations – as well as lengthening of school placements and greater integration of classroom-based and academic work. They are also distinctive because they were intentionally designed to have an impact on the school system and the quality of teaching.

The 2017 reforms are a continuation of more than a decade of ITE reforms in Norway that have had the support of governments of all parties and led to sustained change (McKinsey & Co., 2019).

Professor Alma Harris, Swansea University, Wales

In WALES, the reform process has been a radical redesign of the structural relationship between university ITE and schools and the Welsh school system, resulting in a new accreditation process for university ITE that is predicated on **an authentic and active partnership between schools and universities** (Welsh Government, 2021). Partnerships between schools and universities are now the entities that are accredited rather than the universities alone. The notion of the university as the ‘provider’ has gone.

This has resulted in an end to much of the divide between universities and schools, an integration of ITE delivery – joint delivery of ITE by schools and universities, the ownership of educational standards by the teaching profession, and the **adoption of a clinical practice model that provides a clearer interface between theory and practice** (Furlong, 2019).

Whilst ITE is still fundamentally research-based, it does not expect teachers themselves to be researchers during their initial training.

The newly balanced relationship between universities and schools has led to positive impacts upon recruitment and the retention of teachers, with anecdotal evidence (at this stage) that better teachers are being attracted than before the reform, including an unintended positive consequence of **greater demand by graduating teachers to be more involved in education research**.

Dr Tanya Maloney, Montclair State University, United States of America

In New Jersey in the UNITED STATES, the Montclair State University’s Urban Teacher Residency Program (<https://bit.ly/3mBGWIF>) provides an intensive year of ITE in-school residency alongside a mentor teacher for schools and subjects in need and **modelled on medical residency programs**. Residents earn a Master’s degree as well as dual certification in either elementary or secondary education and working with students with disabilities. Residency models of ITE have been continuously funded by the US Department of Education since the Obama administration with multiple examples across the country and abundant evidence of their effectiveness from federal government datasets (Silva et al, 2014).

Residents receive a living stipend and must make a three-year commitment during which they are provided ongoing coaching and induction support. Both residents and mentors are required to undergo a rigorous selection process, with mentors also receiving professional development support and often also stipends. **Residents from minoritised groups are well-represented and are strategically hired directly into school districts**, often in districts which have a high proportion of African American and Latinx students. Many graduates of the program now serve as its mentors.

Close relationships between the program, school administrators and district administrators are of integral importance to its success. Although a highly effective (see also Guha et al, 2016) and nation-wide initiative, the small size of cohorts – usually 20 to 25 students – necessitates the high levels of funding provided by the US government.

Professor A. Lin Goodwin, The University of Hong Kong, China

In HONG KONG, teaching remains an attractive and secure ‘Iron Rice Bowl’ profession. **There is movement towards a Masters ITE degree model that would introduce a research component and would also raise the status of teaching.** What remains unanswered – at this stage – is whether being able to undertake research is what is important, or whether being able to understand and apply research is sufficient.

Interestingly, there is little close interoperation between ITE educators and schools. A significant tension also persists between cemented practice on the one hand – including a high-stakes exam culture and heavy focus on content – and innovative teaching on the other.

However, non-mandatory standards have recently been rolled out to guide a teacher’s journey in self-development, self-evaluation, and self-reflection.

Lessons from national experiences

Wednesday 15 September, 2021

18:30 – 20:00 AEST

Professor Margaret Gardner AC, Chair of the Group of Eight Board and President and Vice-Chancellor, Monash University

In the preface to the discussion, the Go8 Chair noted that there was value in:

- **investigating different ITE study models that make a teaching career change more attractive;**
- **increased mentorship in the early years of teaching;**
- **increased financial support, especially for talented students who are willing to work in schools facing greater social and economic disadvantage;**
- **a more fluid exchange of expertise – in both directions – between our universities and school systems; and**
- **additional research into the impact of the different elements of ITE upon student learning outcomes.**

Professor Mark Scott AO, Group of Eight Board Member and Vice-Chancellor and Principal, The University of Sydney

Professor Mark Scott noted that teaching was a very demanding job that has never been more demanding than now as it faces much more complexity, the erosion of social infrastructure around schools and teachers, and an enormous pressure is placed upon teachers.

Whilst much debate and attention has focused upon ITE, it is but one lever – **performance quality within schools can also be driven by an in-service, continuing professional development approach** which would reach a greater number of teachers than the annual ITE cohort.

From an education department perspective, Professor Scott indicated that **there was not the sense of partnership with universities in developing teacher graduates**, which could be **contrasted with doctor training and medical faculties where there is a deep investment in collaboration and partnership with the hospital system**. Professor Scott posed the question ‘Should education departments be procuring – and in partnership with universities – rather than just recruiting teachers?’

The **transition from ITE into work remains a huge challenge**, with major contributing factors including the complexity, demanding interpersonal workload, staffroom dynamics and politics, managing demands and expectations from parents, and the sheer weight of the workload.

Professor Joanna Barbousas, La Trobe University

At LATROBE UNIVERSITY, the Nexus Program is an ITE program based on a **tripartite partnership model between universities, schools, and the community** (La Trobe University, 2021). It works in areas of need and is designed according to social justice principles driven by research from leading scholars at UCLA and Boston College.

ITE students are embedded into the school context early in their studies as education support workers, which prepares them for the step up to teaching. Students who live in and near the communities they wish to teach in are targeted for recruitment to the program, with the aim of **building the local teaching profession with and through the community**.

The **focus on student mentoring delivered by universities, schools, and community leaders has been the strength of the program**, and there are regular meetings between groups of mentors from all three partners.

Associate Professor John Quay, The University of Melbourne

Beginning in 2008, the UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE’S Evidence-based teaching framework and internship model (MGSE, 2021) adopts a **clinical praxis approach**, namely, the application of theory in practical circumstances (*clinical*) through which that theory, lesson or skill is realised (*praxis*). This approach requires partnerships within universities, as well as with schools and childcare centres and their IT providers.

Clinical reasoning is an important feature of evidence-based teaching, although it faces the hazard of perceived solutions being used to inform the evidence. The focus of evidence-based teaching upon an individual student’s learning growth – or a single lesson learned – has faced the critique of being too narrow in application.

The internship component of the model is delivered through partnership with the department of education; the current model is comprised of two days a week at school and three at university. However, a new model of multiple ten-day teaching blocs that are integrated with subject teaching has been proposed.

The notion of integration has been a major challenge, but one approach has been for all subject matter teachers regardless of the level they seek to teach at to attend training and education together. For example, all indigenous studies ITE students – including childcare ITE students – attend the same training and education. The approach in medicine – where specialisation is pursued later in the study cycle – needs further investigation.

Ms Melodie Potts Rosevear OAM, Teach for Australia

As an employment-based program, TEACH FOR AUSTRALIA occupies a **unique role as broker and facilitator in actively recruiting, selecting, and placing ITE graduates** to meet needs of schools and employers (<https://teachforaustralia.org>).

Teach For Australia **operate in partnership with universities for embedded practice with wraparound coaching and support**; they provide mentors or coaches that focus on instructional coaching alongside mentoring and pastoral care. They also aim to support schools to build their internal mentoring capabilities.

All of Teach For Australia’s work is done in partnership with Governments – who are their primary funders – as well as with alumni and recruitment partners. They seek to apply a range of core tenets to their work including: leadership; classroom-based practice and impact; social justice; employment-based outcomes; and all with a focus on working in partnership with schools, school systems, and communities.

The organisation considers their greatest success to be the ongoing engagement of their alumni in their programs.

Mr Derek Scott, Member, Quality Initial Teacher Education Review Panel

Our concluding speaker, Mr Derek Scott, noted that **the diversity of ITE pathways in Australia is both a strength and weakness** and discussed why high achievers would choose to go into education, pointing to research commissioned by the Quality ITE Review that concluded:

- **it was less about pay and more about where the pay ended up;**
- **high value scholarships were attractive to young high achievers**, although less so the older they became;
- **guaranteed ongoing employment** was important;
- **paid work – i.e. continuity of income – during ITE study was very important;** and
- That more work was required to adequately **address the need for mentoring.**

According to Mr Scott, key apparent **gaps in ITE student capabilities include classroom management, cultural responsiveness, and a thorough understanding of the lesson preparation process.**

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