



## Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group Consultation 2014

### SUBMISSION

NAME OF ORGANISATION

Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA)

AREAS FOR RESPONSE

**1. What characteristics should be fostered and developed in graduate teachers through their initial teacher education?**

How can those best suited to the teaching profession be identified?

What are the skills and personal characteristics of an effective beginning teacher? How can teacher education courses best develop these?

Graduate primary teachers must have those characteristics that with classroom experience, feedback, reflection and improved pedagogy lead to their development into proficient, highly accomplished or lead teachers. These characteristics include the ability to:

- foster the cognitive, physical, social and emotional development of all students;
- develop and implement effective curriculum and assessment programs;
- explicitly teach literacy and numeracy;
- successfully manage student behaviour;
- differentiate practice to cater for student needs;
- ensure the classroom culture and organisation are inclusive;
- establish a safe and productive learning environment;
- nurture the wellbeing of all students; and,
- hold and communicate the highest expectations for every student.

Graduate primary teachers must have those characteristics that allow them to quickly engage in, and contribute to, the life of the school. These characteristics include:

- understanding of family, staff and community relationships in the school;
- willingness to contribute to the school ethos or culture;
- flexibility of thought and action to maximise the efficacy of limited resources;

- ability to collaborate and work productively in teams; and,
- empathy, respect and demonstrated kindness and compassion for all in the school community.

Graduate primary teachers must have those characteristics that allow them to quickly assimilate into and contribute to the teaching profession. These characteristics include:

- understanding of the teaching profession and the professional standards that define it;
- willingness to contribute to professional learning communities;
- capacity to be self reflective regarding all elements of teaching practice;
- willingness to invite feedback on teaching practice from colleagues and mentors; and,
- proactive approach to modifying pedagogy in response to self reflection and feedback.

### **How can those best suited to the teaching profession be identified?**

Given the high level skills and personal characteristics necessary for effective beginning teachers, and the fact that they must accept sole responsibility for their students from the first day in the classroom, there must be a rigorous and reliable selection process for those seeking to enter the profession.

First, applicants must be able to demonstrate high-level academic potential or achievement. This demonstrated capacity should place successful applicants for education courses in the top 20% of the population. This is particularly important for primary teachers who must understand or quickly develop an understanding of the principles and concepts that underpin all subjects in the Australian Curriculum. This means more than familiarity with the content to be taught at a particular year level. Effective primary teachers have deep understanding of the subjects they teach.

Second, applicants must have the social disposition and emotional intelligence to work with young people. They must be able to maintain a professional approach and positive outlook when confronted by deeply disturbing or challenging circumstances.

Third, applicants must be able to work collaboratively with students, parents, carers, colleagues and specialists to identify and implement strategies to maximise student learning.

All these factors indicate the need for an interview as an element of the selection process for all applicants. While selecting students for degree courses is properly the role of the universities offering those courses, participation of the profession in selection interviews would strengthen the process.

The unique way teachers enter the profession must be considered. Undergraduate education students must be provided with sufficient professional experience very early in their course to ensure they fully understand the nature of the profession they seek to enter. Those who decide to withdraw from an education course after

an initial professional experience should be able to do so without financial penalty.

**What are the skills and personal characteristics of an effective beginning teacher? How can teacher education courses best develop these?**

Beginning teachers must have strong intrapersonal skills. They must have an energetic and enthusiastic approach to their work; be able to motivate and organise themselves; be resilient in the face of challenges; display a relational sense of humour; be open-minded and flexible; and, have a disposition towards lifelong learning.

These intrapersonal skills and characteristics provide successful beginning teachers with a self-efficacy that can transcend the steep learning curve and uncertainties that are common when teachers are appointed to their first class. This 'stickability' is also fostered by well resourced, well structured and supportive professional experience. Effective professional experience ensures beginning teachers understand school organisation and culture, and know how to access support from the first day in their own classroom.

Strong communication skills are required in most professions. These normally include effective written, oral and aural skills as well as information and communication technology skills. Beginning teachers must also be able to communicate with young people while simultaneously modelling accepted language patterns and establishing empathy with their students. They must also be able to provide constructive feedback and respond positively to feedback they receive.

These skills, particularly giving and receiving feedback, should be essential elements in all teacher preparation courses.

Beginning teachers requires particularly strong interpersonal skills.

They must be able to collaborate and contribute to the achievement of team goals; organise time, resources and others to achieve learning outcomes; display a passion for teaching and learning; demonstrate connectedness and empathy with other people; and, be able to identify and respond to the needs of learners.

These skills should be fostered in teacher preparation courses through reflective discussion of case study scenarios, deep learning that clarifies the connections between theory and practice, and study of the sociology of learning (learning as a social activity) rather than pedagogy as the transmission of content.

## **2. What teaching practices should be developed in graduate teachers through their initial teacher education?**

How can the teaching practices that produce the best student outcomes be identified?

How can teacher education programmes encourage teachers to reflect on evidence to support their choice of teaching practice?

How does reflection on evidence translate into student outcomes?

Graduate teachers will require an extensive repertoire of teaching practices to meet the needs of different students at different times and in different contexts. No single pedagogy or approach to pedagogy is sufficient for effective teaching in all circumstances.

There are a number of fundamental teaching skills that must be available to graduate primary school teachers. Included in these would be how to plan and deliver a lesson (including the review step); the I do, we do, they do – modelled, guided then independent learning sequence; scaffolded learning; using provocations, cognitive dissonance and other advance organisers; use of organisers such as Y charts, PMIs and KWLs; and, the methods best suited to explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy at each stage of learning.

Graduate primary teachers must be aware of, and able to, implement a number of different pedagogical approaches in their classrooms. These include co-operative learning, play based learning, challenge based learning, problem solving, inquiry and investigative approaches, direct instruction and focused learning episodes. These and other approaches can be delivered to individual students, small groups and whole classes.

There are also decisions about organising the curriculum that graduate primary teachers must make as part of their teaching practice. At the program level this involves decisions about integration of content from different subjects, methods of assessment of student achievement against the standards and consideration of the readiness, needs and interests of the class.

In terms of individual student learning programs, graduate primary teachers must be able to differentiate teaching practice to cater for students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, students from other ethnic, cultural and language backgrounds and students with social, emotional and/or behavioural challenges.

All of these capabilities should be addressed in initial teacher education courses. Furthermore, primary education students should develop a deep understanding of their role as the 'activator of student learning'. The ability to plan differentiated curriculum and assessment programs based on the Australian Curriculum should be developed along with the ability to evaluate and report student achievement in language that is readily understood and honest. They must also know the significance of formative and summative assessment in driving teaching practice.

All this must be made meaningful to graduate primary teachers through professional experience that allows them to observe effective teachers using a

range of teaching practices in real classroom situations. They must have the opportunity, with appropriate scaffolding and support, to practise providing real life and lifelike experiences for students and to match behaviour management strategies and pedagogy in ways that maximise student learning.

### **How can the teaching practices that produce the best student outcomes be identified?**

The work of Hattie and others clearly identifies that some teaching practices are more effective in general than others. All students in teacher preparation courses should understand these best practices.

### **How can teacher education programmes encourage teachers to reflect on evidence to support their choice of teaching practice?**

Graduate teachers must have the skills to be able to decide which particular strategy is best suited to their students. To do this, graduate teachers must be taught to act as clinicians (in the manner described by Stephen Dinham). They must be able to collect both qualitative and quantitative evidence of what works and link it with respected research to inform their pedagogy. They must be provided with the skills to discern the quality and reliability of research, and to interrogate the data they collect or can access about their students. These skills should be taught during course work and demonstrated by teacher educators during professional experience.

### **How does reflection on evidence translate into student outcomes?**

The evidence about the effectiveness of graduate teacher practice is gathered through observation and feedback. Feedback is the cornerstone of practice. Students in teacher preparation courses need to learn how to give and receive feedback. The involvement of current teachers in delivery of teacher preparation courses and ensuring education lecturers maintain currency of classroom experience will strengthen the connection of evidence of what works (through informed commentary and observations) and student outcomes for graduate teachers.

### **3. What level of integration should there be between initial teacher education providers and schools?**

What evidence is there that effective integration achieves good teaching practice? What are the most effective types of integrated experiences in preparing new teachers?

What are the cost implications of more integrated professional experience? Are there more effective ways in which professional experience might be funded?

What other methods, or combination of these methods, could achieve better outcomes than the current approach to professional experience?

How can partnerships between teacher education providers and schools be strengthened to make teacher education more effective?

How can teacher education providers and schools best work together to select and train mentor teachers to effectively support pre-service teachers on professional experience?

How can consistency of good practice and continuous improvement across teacher education providers and schools be assured?

Schools are very busy places and the workload and stress on teachers and school administrators is increasing. Providing professional experience for initial teacher education undergraduates contributes to this increase because of an apparent lack of coordination between governments, employers, universities and schools. For instance, schools are frustrated when they are asked to provide professional experience for a much greater number of students than will be able to join the profession. Communication between universities and schools is often late and confusing. It is often through email rather than the more effective face-to-face meetings or phone calls. It is common for schools to be contacted just before professional experience programs begin to be asked to provide additional placements.

In some jurisdictions this situation is exacerbated by the introduction of online initial teacher education courses which place increased responsibilities on teacher educators and schools for the development of teacher professionalism in graduate teachers.

To achieve the necessary high level of integration there needs to be a new collaborative process for providing professional experience developed in partnership between governments, employers, universities and schools with ownership and accountabilities for all partners. This process should involve an independent agency facilitating high quality professional experience for appropriate numbers of initial teacher education students in a range of school settings.

**What evidence is there that effective integration achieves good teaching practice? What are the most effective types of integrated experiences in preparing new teachers?**

Primary principals believe professional experience in classrooms is a vital component of initial teacher education. The professional experience must begin

very early in initial teacher education courses, be sustained throughout and of sufficient duration per placement to ensure deep understanding of, and skill in, delivery and development of teaching practice. This would require at least 100 days of professional experience with a final placement towards the end of the course of at least six weeks.

The alignment between course work and practicum, together with a shared responsibility between the university and schools to develop and undertake assessment of the professional experience, results in the most effective preparation of new teachers.

**What are the cost implications of more integrated professional experience? Are there more effective ways in which professional experience might be funded?**

The existing professional experience arrangements are massively underfunded. They rely on teacher goodwill and those administering the process appear at times to assume there is no limit to that goodwill. Any increased integration that requires more resources from schools or increases the workload of teachers or school leaders would need to be carefully considered.

One solution would be to allow schools to recover the real costs of providing school experience from universities, initial teacher education students or a combination of the two.

**What other methods, or combination of these methods, could achieve better outcomes than the current approach to professional experience?**

There are many innovative programs and trials in professional experience currently being undertaken in Australia. The Melbourne University Master of Education course and the Catholic Teacher Education Consortium (CTEC) program at the Australian Catholic University Melbourne are just two that show promising results.

Primary principals believe effective professional experience programs should have input into course content from schools through reflective feedback loops; university lecturers working with initial teacher education students in their classrooms; and, lectures and tutorials held in schools. A course requirement should be high level demonstrated competency before progression to subsequent professional experience placements.

**How can partnerships between teacher education providers and schools be strengthened to make teacher education more effective?**

There needs to be engagement at all levels to establish higher levels of trust in order to strengthen partnerships. For example, the Australian Primary Principals Association and the Australian Council of Deans of Education have discussed developing a joint position on initiatives to improve professional experience. Collaborations of this kind are essential.

**How can teacher education providers and schools best work together to select and train mentor teachers to effectively support pre-service teachers on professional experience?**

Schools should use quality resources, such as the AITSL professional learning modules for school based educators, to provide professional learning for teachers volunteering to mentor pre-service teachers. Completion of such professional learning should be recognised in certification processes for highly accomplished or lead teacher.

Universities could provide those components of initial teacher education courses that explain and develop effective feedback skills to pre-service teacher mentors. They could also fund school based professional experience coordinators to support pre-service teachers and teacher mentors in schools.

**How can consistency of good practice and continuous improvement across teacher education providers and schools be assured?**

AITSL should be tasked and resourced to gather and analyse data and report on good national and international practice in initial teacher education. These reports should be biennial.

Governments should resource effective professional experience programs based on the evidence presented by AITSL's reports. This investment is in the national interest.

#### 4. What balance is needed between understanding what is taught and how it is taught?

What is the desirable interaction between content knowledge and teaching practice for developing teachers? What is the difference for primary and secondary teaching? Why is there a difference?

Should there be explicit training in how to teach literacy and numeracy in all teaching courses?

How can the balance between the need for subject specialisation and a generalist approach in primary teaching qualifications be addressed?

What, if any, changes need to be made to the structure of teacher education courses? Should content be studied before pedagogy (i.e. should 'what' to teach be studied before the 'how' to teach)?

What barriers are there to restructuring teacher education courses to ensure they address these concerns, and how may they be overcome?

Why does Australia face a shortage of maths, science and language teachers?

What can be done to encourage teaching students to develop a specialisation in these areas?

Initial teacher education courses must introduce content and pedagogical knowledge and skills simultaneously. The content knowledge should be based on the Australian Curriculum and aim to provide pre-service teachers with a deep understanding of the principles that underpin each subject. Pre-service teachers should develop skills and understandings in various approaches to pedagogy during course work and practise those skills during professional experience.

The balance between content and pedagogy should vary from subject to subject. For example, integration and social investigation would be significant topics in Humanities and less prominent in other subjects. There should be explicit instruction on how to teach literacy and numeracy in all content areas. Assessment and reporting must be an integral component of content and pedagogy in all subjects.

**What is the desirable interaction between content knowledge and teaching practice for developing teachers? What is the difference for primary and secondary teaching? Why is there a difference?**

In terms of content, primary teachers must have deep understanding of the principles that underpin the content in all subject areas while secondary teachers require deep and extensive understanding in their chosen subjects. This difference must be reflected in the design of their courses.

In terms of pedagogy, primary teachers must be able to select the appropriate pedagogical approach and effectively implement it depending on the students and content teaching. While this is true for secondary teachers they would select approaches from a range of pedagogies appropriate to the subject they are teaching. This difference should be reflected in both course work and professional experience.

### **Should there be explicit training in how to teach literacy and numeracy in all teaching courses?**

This is an essential element of all primary, secondary and specialist teaching courses but requires a particular focus at the primary level where the foundation skills for literacy and numeracy competency are laid.

### **How can the balance between the need for subject specialisation and a generalist approach in primary teaching qualifications be addressed?**

Primary teachers must be specialists in all subject areas. This means high academic achievement must be a prerequisite for entry into a primary initial teacher education course so that pre-service teachers have strong foundational knowledge in some subjects and the capacity to rapidly acquire it in the others. Where specialists are employed in primary schools (e.g. Physical Education, Music and Languages in some jurisdictions) they are most effective when they work with classroom teachers to enhance existing teaching and learning programs.

### **What, if any, changes should be made to the structure of teacher education courses? Should content be studied before pedagogy (i.e. Should 'what' to teach be studied before 'how' to teach)?**

The 'what' and 'how' to teach should be studied simultaneously in a similar manner to the way teachers plan. The content and pedagogy considerations influence each other. The connections between content, pedagogy and other considerations such as behaviour management strategies and differentiation should also be made explicit at the same time.

### **What barriers are there to restructuring teacher education courses to ensure they address these concerns, and how may they be overcome?**

The need of the majority of contemporary pre-service teachers to work full or part time while studying for their education degrees means restructuring courses to allow sufficient professional experience to develop teaching practice and refine pedagogical skills is problematic. One solution would be to move to an internship model towards the end of initial teacher education courses with interns being remunerated for their work in the same way as interns in other professions are inducted.

### **Why does Australia face a shortage of maths, science and language teachers?**

There are many reasons for this shortage. It is unlikely that a single cause could be identified particularly if all three disciplines are considered as a single entity. A possible mechanism to attract more senior secondary students to study these subjects would be to give them greater weighting in selection processes for applicants seeking to enter teaching courses.

### **What can be done to encourage teaching students to develop a specialisation in these areas?**

There are three points of influence on pre-service teachers' decisions about teaching specialisation. First, the subjects studied at senior secondary level and the quality of teaching experienced in those studies are significant in choice of major areas of study. Second, the prospect of employment in one's chosen speciality is also a consideration for students. Third, the quality of specialist programs (including professional experience), lecturers and their approach to teaching in initial teacher education courses are critical if students are to complete these programs successfully.

Universities, schools and employing authorities must all address these issues if the current shortage of specialist teachers is to be ameliorated.

## **5. Other**

Any other comments in response to the Issues Paper may be provided here.

### **Professional Experience and Induction**

Professional experience for beginning primary teachers should include in-depth case studies to give them professional understanding of child development, student learning styles and readiness to learn. Effective beginning teachers must have used their professional experience to develop a frame of reference to understand why they use the practices they select for their students.

Pre-service teachers should have an additional contact on the university staff besides their supervisor. This person should be responsible for assisting the pre-service teacher to reflect on their social and emotional capacity to join the teaching profession.

There is evidence that a seamless transition from professional experience into induction processes is helpful for beginning teachers. Universities have a role to play post graduation in ensuring all graduates successfully enter the teaching profession. Professional experience supervisors should regularly observe teacher practice and provide feedback during practicums and maintain contact with beginning teachers throughout their induction.

### **Additional Graduate Teacher Skills**

Initial teacher education courses must provide graduates with an understanding of the national, state and territory education architecture (AITSL, ACARA, ESA, NCEC, AIS, CEOs and Education Departments) and how it affects their classroom.

They should also equip beginning teachers with the presentation skills necessary to write CVs, develop and present portfolios and present professionally at interview. The profession would be available to assist in this work.

### **Initial Teacher Education Courses**

There must be a balance between depth and breadth in all teacher education courses. Primary principals are concerned that some courses aim to cover too much material to the detriment of deep understanding for students. There is also a view that course content can be influenced by political considerations rather than evidence about what effective beginning teachers need to study.

Primary principals are concerned that unless some action is taken to redress the imbalance they perceive between the number of students in primary initial teacher education courses and the number of places available for them to enter the profession there will be a marked decline in the quality of professional experience offered to many students.