

ATEA response to the Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper

The **Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)** is the major professional association for teacher educators in Australia. The mission of the Australian Teacher Education Association is to promote:

- research as a core endeavour of teacher educators;
- the continuing education of teachers and teacher educators; and
- advocacy and support for the professionalism and expertise of teacher educators at local through to global scales.

The objectives of the Association are:

- to lead and facilitate teaching and research based continuing education and networking for teachers and teacher educators;
- to assist teachers and teacher educators on the journey to reconciliation with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- to encourage and promote research and innovation in all aspects of teacher education;
- to recognise innovative contributions to research, scholarship, service, and practice in teacher education;
- to be an advocate for teacher education and the exchange of contemporary ideas to work to improve the professional status and welfare of teacher educators; and
- to promote cooperation among teacher educators and relevant organisations internationally with a particular focus on the Asia-Pacific region and other settler-colonial societies.

This submission has been put together by the President of the Association after recording members' responses to the four priority areas through a Townhall meeting. Our submission follows the structure of the Discussion paper, addressing each priority in turn. However, we would like to point out that as an Association, we believe that the key driver to strengthen ITE is to increase opportunity and investment in Work Integrated Learning, including but not limited to professional experience. In other words, we believe the most important area is Reform Area 3 – Improve the quality of practical experience in teaching.

Reform Area 1 – Strengthen ITE Programmes to Deliver Confident, Effective, Classroom Ready Graduates.

ATEA agrees that evidence-based practices should be taught in all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses. There was agreement that this core content can be aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs) is already taught in courses. It was pointed out that that APST 1 – know students and how they learn calls for teachers to do more than just understand the brain and the learning process. It asks for teachers to relate to their students as people. Members did show concern that there did not appear to be evidence for ITE needing improvement and asked for other sources rather than just AERO. Also, there was concern about the lack of attention to evidence based early childhood pedagogies.

There was consensus that too much focus was being placed on the cognitive model of learning and that this focus was rather narrow and shallow – a lack of acknowledgement of other approaches. Despite not wanting any further prescription, a long list of topics was recorded that members felt had been missed – these included – critical reflection, reflective

practice, creative thinking, wellbeing, resilience, diversity and mental health. Regardless, members did not want these topics added specifically – there needs to be room for autonomy and teacher judgement in all teaching. There did not seem to be any drive for changing standards.

Members generally felt that the inclusion of culturally responsive pedagogies and practice and critical reflection was positive but should be further developed and elaborated. It was suggested to look at ARC work from Lunn et al. that offers a pedagogy of teacher education, which can support self-reflection and reflexivity in diversity education and culturally responsive teaching specifically. This group refer to teaching about/to and for diversity – see Rowan et al 2021 – Review of Educational Research – the highest impact factor journal for education globally.

Research from this same ARC group suggests that the brain and learning core content should be augmented through the addition of content related to epistemic cognition which plays a key role in all learning and teaching processes. Epistemic cognition is a robust body of research spanning diverse disciplines in teaching and learning which indicates that core knowledge and beliefs that we hold about what we think knowledge is and how we gain knowledge can determine the type of teaching that takes place across different fields of education. (For a review, see Ferguson and Lunn, 2021). Additionally, there needs to be a focus on evaluative thinking which can support pre-service teachers to interrogate the core content with respect to individual teaching/learning contexts rather than simply using knowledge as a tool that remains unexamined.

References for suggested reading

Diversity education

- ARC DP180100160 Educating preservice teachers to teach diverse learners. Team members Lunn, J., Rowan, L., Ryan, M., Walker, S., Bourke, T., L'Estrange, L., Johansson, E. 2018 -2021.
- Ferguson, L. & Lunn, J. (2021). Teacher Beliefs and Epistemologies. In Susan Faircloth (Ed.) Oxford Bibliographies in Education. Oxford University Press, United Kingdom.
- Lunn, J., Bourke, T., Rowan, L., Ryan, M., Churchward, P., Walker, S., L'Estrange, L., Berge, A., & Johansson, E. (2022). How epistemic reflexivity enables teacher educators' teaching for diversity: exploring a pedagogical framework for critical consciousness. *British Educational Research Journal*, 48(4), 684-703.
- Rowan, L., Bourke, T., Lunn-Brownlee, J., Ryan, M., Walker, S., & L'Estrange, L. (2021). How does Initial Teacher Education Research Frame the Challenge of Preparing Future Teachers for Student Diversity in Schools: A Systematic Review of Literature. *Review of Educational Research*. 91(1), 112-158. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-021-00434-y>
- Ryan, M., Rowan, L., Lunn Brownlee, J., Bourke, T., L'Estrange, L., Walker, S. & Churchward, P. (2020). Teacher education and teaching for diversity: A call to action. *Teaching Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2020.1844178>

Reform Area 2. Strengthen the link between performance and funding of ITE.

ATEA members agreed with the need for a diverse teaching profession and asked for sufficient funding to enable this to be achieved. They also felt that there should be support for ITE students from rural and remote communities who could complete their studies and return home to their communities.

Members' responses indicated that they didn't feel the case had been made as to why there needs to be stronger links between performance and funding for ITE programs. Where is the evidence that this would make any difference? How will this improve the quality of what is offered? Indeed, members felt the performance measurements were proxies for quality and focus on inputs and outputs, not quality per se. Suggested reading for this – Dougherty & Natow (2013) - US introduction of performance funding to higher education produced mixed results. Specifically, the research literature did not provide firm enough evidence related to increasing rates of completion, retention or graduation.

It was suggested that funding should be used to support in school mentoring and/or give preservice teachers the funds they need to support themselves during their study/professional experiences.

Reform Area 3. Improve the quality of practical experience in teaching.

ATEA agree that a focus on improving the systems and processes that support practical experience is needed. Members supported further investigation in this space. Members pointed out that partnerships needed to be explored in more detail and there needed to be appropriate funding allocated to this space. It was felt that government funding had not kept pace with the real cost of placements especially in rural and remote schools. HEIs should be funded appropriately for placements.

There was recognition from members that classroom teachers should get workload allocation, time for supervision and be funded appropriately. University teacher educators used to go to schools to supervise and build relationships, but this is not always the case anymore. Could this be something linked to HALT programs with recognition from AITSL? There was agreement that time and space was needed for proper supervision/mentoring.

It was suggested that the government should consider a range of different models of work integrated learning to support students. Various models have been developing and a stronger evidence base needs to be established in the context of the current teacher work shortage.

Reform Area 4. Improve postgraduate IT for midcareer entrance.

Members felt that this section of TEEP was underdeveloped. They pointed out that this is not new in most states. There are various hybrid courses already happening, but terminology is not always the same across states which is problematic. There was discussion about consistency across universities in terms of recognition of prior learning. Perhaps guidelines are needed.

There seemed to be a need among members to understand more about this group of career changers – who are they, what they need, and how their diverse backgrounds and identities can contribute positively to teaching and how many might be get.

It was agreed that more research was needed in this area. An ARC has been funded on this led by Professor Martin Mills at QUT.

Erin Siostrum et al. (2023) have just had a systematic review published on career changers' motivations and decision making when considering teaching as a career. Some points to note:

- The truncation of postgraduate ITE programs would compel uptake is unfounded.
- Motivations of career changers to teach were largely personal, including prior experiences, the perception of teaching as a meaningful career, and a view of self as suited to the role.
- Often, people changed career because of life circumstances, eg changing family responsibilities.
- It was thought teaching might provide work-life balance and career stability.

For more information:

Siostrum, E., Mills, R., Bourke, T. (in press- 2023) A scoping review of factors that influence career changers' motivations and decisions when considering teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*.