



Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group Consultation 2014 SUBMISSION

NAME OF ORGANISATION OR INDIVIDUAL MAKING SUBMISSION

The Brotherhood of St Laurence

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?

Teachers need the skills to teach increasingly diverse class cohorts, including students who experience disadvantage due to low socioeconomic, non-English speaking and/or Indigenous backgrounds, learning difficulties, disabilities or ill-health. Mainstream, teacher education programmes do not adequately assist teachers to develop the skills to adjust the content and pedagogical style to diverse learning needs, manage complex behaviours, and address wellbeing needs (Myconos 2011). It is necessary to better equip pre-service teachers with the knowledge, skills and practices to effectively engage students from disadvantaged circumstances in learning (Myconos 2011; Productivity Commission 2012).

CANDIDATE SELECTION:

It is important that the teaching force be diverse and committed to helping all students learn. Teachers from minority backgrounds are more likely to have high-achieving minority students, whereas Caucasian teachers are more likely to view minority students as less capable academically (Bracey & Molnar 2003). Evidence of the ability to critically analyse and reflect on student learning and teaching practice is essential when assessing the suitability of pre-service teacher candidates (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness & Duffy 2005). To be effective, teachers need to reflect on their own practice and personal issues that might thwart the development of authentic teacher-student relationships and an openness to change (Morgan 2012).

THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE (BSL) RECOMMENDS TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES:

1. Incorporate criteria for selecting students for their training programmes that positively value:
 - a) Diversity and life experience (e.g. CALD or disability) to help ensure the teaching force reflects the changing profile of the Australian classroom; and
 - b) Core interpersonal and reflective skills, including the willingness and capacity to learn from practice.

TRAINING TO DEVELOP SKILLS:

Poor relationships with teachers often act as a trigger for early school leaving (Taylor 2009). In particular, early school leavers identify teachers' inflexibility with rules or perceived negative judgement of them as a catalyst for their disengagement from school (Butler, Bond, Drew, Krelle & Seal 2005). The quality of student-teacher relationships is vital in helping young people stay engaged (Myconos 2011); being honest, respectful, safe and open are key teacher skills for maintaining student engagement (Morgan 2012).

BSL RECOMMENDS TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES:

2. Have mandatory training in conflict resolution, inclusive teaching and multicultural education;
3. Provide ample opportunities for pre-service teachers to practise developing positive relationships with diverse student groups (e.g. via hands-on workshops with actors);
4. Provide pre-service teachers with an online, updatable toolkit containing resources (e.g. YouTube clips of experienced teachers) that provide practical tips on building positive relationships with diverse student groups.

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 in Victoria receive little training through their teacher education programme that enables them to prevent and respond effectively to student disengagement (Hanson-Peterson 2013).

INCLUSIVE AND FLEXIBLE INSTRUCTION METHODS:

Pre-service teachers require training in a variety of instruction methods to respond to individual learning needs, cultural backgrounds and social experiences (DEECD 2009; Myconos 2011; Seal 2009). For students who have experienced stressors (e.g. trauma) that affect development and learning, it is important to use flexible teaching methods that accommodate different learning styles and pre-existing knowledge (Jensen 2009), and to promote students' social-emotional learning skills (self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship and responsible decision-making skills) (Buick 2014). Experiential and applied learning strategies are effective for engaging diverse student groups and enhancing language, literacy, and numeracy skills (Davies, Lamb & Doecke 2011; Myconos 2011). Integrated instruction, involving teaching around themes rather than one discipline, is effective for engaging diverse students in problem-solving (Myconos 2012).

BSL RECOMMENDS TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES:

5. Train pre-service teachers in cross-cultural awareness, social-emotional learning, and brain development;
6. Teach pre-service teachers to use inclusive and flexible teaching methods;
7. Incorporate real-time monitoring (e.g. filming pre-service teacher practices) into school practicum experiences to assess effectiveness in teaching diverse student groups (Darling-Hammond et al. 2005).

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR:

Pre-service teachers need to learn and apply evidence-based strategies to respond to students' challenging behaviour, including disengagement, to help students engage with learning. Punishment is the most commonly used behaviour management strategy by Australian teachers (Wilkinson & Meiers 2008). Unit descriptions and outlines in teaching courses tend only to mention the term 'behaviour management' and rarely state the strategies taught (Hanson-Peterson 2013; O'Neill & Stephenson 2011). Some strategies can be used to address disengagement, while others exacerbate disengagement (Seal 2009). Pre-service and in-service teachers have criticised units covering behaviour management for their strong focus on theory, provision of few useful strategies, and lack of opportunity to apply strategies (O'Neill & Stephenson 2011; Seal 2009). The BSL's experience in delivering a re-engagement programme has shown non-punitive approaches involving negotiation and collaboration can be effective (Buick 2014). Effective curriculum for behaviour management includes trialling evidence-based practices: reviewing research on what strategies work, implementing a strategy, and measuring student behaviour before and after to consider the strategy's effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al. 2005).

BSL RECOMMENDS TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES:

8. Require pre-service teachers, as part of their school placement, to conduct an action research project on the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies, including negotiation and collaboration, with diverse students;
9. Provide hands-on behaviour management workshops, with actors impersonating diverse student groups;
10. Provide pre-service teachers with an online, updatable toolkit containing resources that provide practical tips on using effective behaviour management strategies with diverse groups.



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?

MORE THEORY-TO-PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES:

More hands-on learning for pre-service teachers is needed. Having the opportunity to learn on the job, where applying theory to practice is supported, is important. Pre-service teachers' practicum experience is important for effective teacher preparation as it provides the opportunity 'to connect what they learn with the challenge of using it, while under the expert tutelage of skilled clinical educators' (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education 2010, p. ii). Pre-service teachers who complete their placements in a number of classrooms, as opposed to just one, seem to fare better in their first year of teaching (Darling-Hammond et al. 2005).

BSL RECOMMENDS TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES:

11. Require pre-service teachers to complete mentor-supervised fieldwork hours in three or more diverse school-settings that, combined, provide experience with diverse student cohorts.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE TO LEARN TO RESPOND TO IMPACTS OF DISADVANTAGE:

While issues such as mental health and family violence are typically handled by specialists, it is valuable to prepare teachers to help ensure students do not slip through the cracks. The BSL's experience delivering re-engagement programmes has found that to effectively engage students it is beneficial for teachers to understand and respond to the impacts of developmental trauma, neglect, displacement, and the experience of poverty on learning, and to know how to utilise specialist support (Buick 2014; Myconos 2011).

BSL RECOMMENDS TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES:

12. Broaden the student placement process to include opportunities to work in, for instance, NGOs, mental health organisations, and/or alternative school settings (e.g. re-engagement programmes);

13. Include workshops with professionals from key social and community service areas, giving pre-service teachers the chance to gain knowledge of the support that is available to future students.

HIGH LEVELS OF SUPPORT AND MENTORING:

Guidance, mentoring and support are more effective than letting a teacher 'sink or swim' in his or her practicum experience (Darling-Hammond et al. 2005, p. 412). Few teacher education programme units that address the essential practices for responding to student disengagement involve a school-based component that enables application of these strategies with diverse student groups under a mentor's guidance (Hanson-Peterson 2013).

BSL RECOMMENDS:

14. Teacher education programmes and the schools where pre-service teachers undertake their placements provide stronger support and mentoring, including:

a) Selecting the most effective teachers to act as mentor teachers. Suggestions to offer schools to free up mentors include having mentors attend fewer assemblies and lead fewer extra-curricular activities (Jensen 2014);

b) Every pre-service teacher receiving a mentor who helps plan new lessons for and observes their instruction of high-needs students.



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?

We have not responded directly to this question.



5. Other

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

If you would like further information on the sources cited in our response to the Issues Paper, please contact the

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If you have any enquiries, please contact TEMAGenquiries@education.gov.au.

