

Chapter 2

Teacher Education/ors in Australia: Still Shaping the Profession Despite Policy Intervention



Alyson Simpson , Wayne Cotton , and Jennifer Gore 

Abstract This chapter provides an overview of recent key policy changes driving efforts to improve initial teacher education in Australia. It documents the challenges faced by teacher education providers in terms of the discursive framing, subjectification and lived impact of policy imperatives on initial teacher education. By analysing the flow-on effects of Federal and State government policies, the researchers reveal the complexity of competing attempts to shape the profession. All teachers in Australia undertake formally accredited programs of study. Therefore, we call attention to the vital role of teacher educators in leading change and negotiating productive partnerships with stakeholders while responding to political intervention. Our chapter celebrates the strengths of initial teacher education in Australia while also demonstrating how the complex policy landscape interacts with teacher educators' efforts to keep shaping the profession.

Introduction

Teacher education in Australia, as in most nations, is a field of intense political interest, given the attribution of pupil learning outcomes to their teachers and, by extension, to the preparation of those teachers. A long history of teacher education reform has intensified recently, in the name of enhancing the quality of teachers and teacher education. This chapter provides an overview of key teacher education policy changes that have emerged in Australia over recent years. In doing so, we document the existing teacher education system and major challenges faced by initial teacher

A. Simpson (✉)
University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia
e-mail: alyson.simpson@sydney.edu.au

W. Cotton
University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia
e-mail: wayne.cotton@sydney.edu.au

J. Gore
University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308, Australia
e-mail: jenny.gore@newcastle.edu.au

education providers. The analysis highlights much to celebrate about teaching and teacher education in Australia, including increasing demonstration of professionalism, commitment to social justice through education and dedication to excellence. At the same time, we expose several tensions that must be navigated pertaining to: (1) attempting to enhance the status of teaching and initial teacher education through increasing regulation and standardisation; (2) balancing the push for excellence with workforce requirements; (3) accounting for the quality of initial teacher education against diverse notions of evidence and measurement; and (4) maintaining teaching and initial teacher education as intellectual and creative endeavours in the face of external pressures. We argue that teacher educators must continue to take the lead in shaping the profession both to meet our own goals and to engender greater trust from the governments and education systems we serve.

Background

The key historical period we address in this chapter is bookended by the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians in 2008 and the Alice Springs (Mparntwe—pronounced M-ban tua) Education Declaration in 2019. The Melbourne Declaration inspired much of the policy change of the last ten years including the conceptualisation of a national approach to curriculum. Initiated by the Council of Australian Governments Education (COAG) all state and territory Ministers of Education were signatories to the policy document. Fast forward to 2019, an updated agreement was approved, which continues to focus on a national vision for education and signals the ongoing commitment of Australian Governments to improving educational outcomes. The amendments include explicit attention to: core actions supporting educators; strengthening early childhood education; and promoting world-class curriculum and assessment. Our discussion below tracks the complex interplay of competing discourses associated with ongoing reform and highlights how the academic autonomy of initial teacher education (ITE) has been framed by increasing regulation. First, we provide some background to the local context, giving insight to key political and systemic factors that impact the work of teacher educators in Australia.

The Australian political system operates both Federal and State governments. The Federal government controls higher education while State governments have responsibility for schools. Since 2009, the Federal government has steadily increased its influence over schooling and teachers' work, and consequently initial teacher education, although with some cross over of influence. For example, in the state of NSW, reforms stimulated through the blueprint *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* (GTIL) included design of a literacy and numeracy test for teacher education graduates in 2013. This concept was subsequently taken up at a national level to require literacy/numeracy testing of all initial teacher education students in Australia prior to graduation. The test is known as the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE). Similarly, all primary pre-service teachers are required

to develop a ‘teaching specialisation’, yet the depth of expertise expected varies substantially between national and state guidelines.

The Australian school system is mainly comprised of primary schools (students aged 5–12 years) and secondary schools (students aged 13–18 years). In 2018, there were nearly 4 million students enrolled across 9,500 schools, with 85% of students staying in school until their final year. 65.7% of school students were enrolled in government schools, 19.7% in Catholic schools and 14.6% in independent schools. Across all schools, the ratio of students to teachers is 13.5:1 ($n = \sim 290,000$ full-time equivalent teachers). The teaching workforce is predominantly female at 72% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cat. No 4221.0).

Currently in Australia, there are 48 providers of initial teacher education. As most institutions offer a range of initial teacher education programs including primary and many secondary subject specialisations, sometimes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, more than 350 accredited programs exist (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2020). In 2017, there were just under 100,000 tertiary students enrolled in these programs (AITSL 2019).

Pathways into Initial Teacher Education

Teachers in Australia can be prepared via a range of pathways. These include:

- Four-year bachelor’s degrees (e.g., Bachelor of Education);
- Double bachelor’s degrees (e.g., Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Education), typically as pathways to secondary teaching; and
- Master’s level degrees (e.g., Master of Teaching) for those with a first non-education bachelor’s degree
- Alternate pathways into teaching such as Teach for Australia, which are relatively small.

Pre COVID-19, one in four ITE students commenced their studies as part of an online ITE program (AITSL 2019). However, during the pandemic, all ITE programs have provided classes largely online when return to on-campus teaching was not viable. Initial teacher education programs in Australia usually comprise professional studies, curriculum studies, and professional experience or practicums, as well as discipline or content study for relevant teaching areas where entrants have no first degree in the discipline. Professional experience or practicum comprises a series of supervised experiences in schools during most years of the program, totalling 12–20 weeks depending on the length of the program. Secondary teachers are usually prepared to teach two subject areas, and primary teachers to teach across all subject areas, including the arts, English, health and physical education, humanities and social sciences, languages, mathematics, science and technologies (Mayer et al. 2017).

Policies Influencing Initial Teacher Education in Australia (2008–2020)

Australian initial teacher education policy tends to be grounded in the premise that weak student results on national or international tests is the direct result of poor quality teachers and therefore poor quality teacher education. This view grossly oversimplifies the complexity of education as a socially contextualised system (Ell et al. 2019). Policy attempts to regulate ITE in response to this perception, which has taken multiple forms over many years, have threatened but not cowed teacher educators' efforts to exercise their professional autonomy. In this chapter, we use Baachi's (2009) analytic framework for understanding policy development to inform our exploration of a period of significant policy churn related to ITE. As we read the policy documents, our focus was on the discursive framing of ITE (what was/was not discussed); the subjectification of teacher educators (how policy represents and positions teacher educators); and the lived impact on ITE (how teacher education programs responded). Given the recent announcement by the Federal Education Minister of yet another review of ITE (Tudge 2021), we argue that for teacher educators to gain a position of trust where providers can act with responsible autonomy and collect the practice-based evidence needed to validate their approaches, the time frames within which policy is enacted need to be expanded. Teacher educators also need to exert some influence over the discursive framing of issues identified so the complexity of education systems is more fully recognised.

We begin this analysis with a review of recent, major policy influences on initial teacher education, selecting from the total suite of policies to reflect their highly dynamic and sometimes conflicting impact. The policies depicted in Table 2.1 are arranged in chronological order in four key stages noting their date, major driver/reform, and espoused purpose. This descriptive overview of the main policy drivers that shaped the current ITE profession in Australia provides important context for our main analysis provided in the Discussion.

Preparing a Profession

To set the context for this analysis it should be noted that in 1996 the Australian Commonwealth Department for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) approved funding for a project to develop a set of national standards and guidelines for initial teacher education. The Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) responded proactively to this opportunity to frame the debate. After consultation with numerous stakeholders in initial teacher education, the report, *Preparing a Profession* was published (ACDE 1998). As a result of this work, the first set of national standards and guidelines for initial teacher education in Australia was created. That is, the emergence of a strong framework and structure for judging the quality of ITE programs was led initially from within the profession itself.

Table 2.1 An overview of the major reforms underpinning ITE in Australia: 2008–2019

Stage	Date	Major Driver/ Reform	Purpose/Description
Preparing a Profession ^a	1998	The report on the National Standards and Guidelines for ITE	This report focuses on the need for national standards and guidelines for ITE
National Agenda Setting	2008	The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians	The Education Ministers across Australia made a collective commitment to enhance ITE
Promoting National Excellence in Initial Teacher Education	2010	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was founded	AITSL's purpose is to provide national leadership for all Australian Governments in promoting excellence in teaching and school leadership
	2011	The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers were introduced	This detailed statement from AITSL describes the professional knowledge, practice and engagement expected of Australian teachers at Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead levels
	2014	The establishment of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG)	TEMAG was established to ensure that new teachers have the right mix of academic and practical skills needed for the classroom
	2015	National standards and procedures for the accreditation of ITE programs were introduced	The Education Ministers across Australia endorsed the standards and procedures to ensure that every ITE program is preparing classroom-ready teachers with the skills and knowledge to make a positive impact on their students. This included the introduction of mandatory literacy and numeracy tests (2016) and capstone teaching performance assessments (2017)
Developing a National Vision	2019	The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration	The Declaration sets out the Australian vision for education and the commitment of its Governments to improving educational outcomes

^aWhile outside the 2008–2019 period, this report is included in this Table as it sets the scene of Australian ITE policy and reform being initially driven (in part) by the Australian Deans of Education

These standards and guidelines were “intended to be used for the external review of initial school teacher education programs for the purposes of approval or accreditation” (ACDE 1998, p7). The report received overwhelming support among teacher educators due to its professional credibility and its flexibility to accommodate varying approaches to ITE at different universities.

While this report was written 10 years prior to the 2008–2020 window selected for this policy analysis, it demonstrates not only clear evidence of leadership from within the field but also a long history of involvement by initial teacher educators in

conversations about the quality of initial teacher education. Indeed, the final statement prefacing the report is, “Properly used it [the report] will help maintain a teaching force of the highest international standard” (ACDE 1998, p2).

National Agenda Setting

Building on early work, including the *Preparing a Profession* report (ACDE 1998) and the *1999 Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 1999), all Australian Education Ministers convened in Melbourne in 2008 and made a commitment to ensure high-quality schooling for all young Australians. The aim of this *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA 1999) was to set the national agenda for schooling from 2009 to 2018, based on two overarching educational goals, namely that:

1. Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence; and
2. All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

While the majority of the 2008 Declaration focused on schooling, the Education Ministers also made a collective commitment to enhance initial teacher education (MCEETYA 1999, p. 11). This commitment paved the way for promoting national excellence in ITE for the next decade.

Promoting National Excellence in Initial Teacher Education

Delivering on the commitment made in the 2008 Melbourne Declaration, in 2010 the Australian federal Labor government established the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to promote excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership. AITSL worked closely with key education stakeholders to develop National Professional Standards for Teachers. The first version of these national standards for teachers was released in 2011 (building from existing state-based work¹). A revised set of *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL 2016b) were later developed and supported by research documentation (Louden 2015a, 2015b; Mayer 2015).

In 2014, the Federal Minister for Education established the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) to provide advice to the Government on how ITE programs could further ensure graduating teachers have the right mix of academic

¹ For the historical record, the NSW Professional Teaching Standards, the Western Australian Competency Framework for Teachers and the Victorian Institute of Teaching’s Standards and Professional Learning were implemented in 2004. The Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers were introduced in 2006.

and practical skills. In 2015, the TEMAG, which consisted of vice-chancellors, deans, education professors, school principals and other education professionals, released their *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* report.

This report outlined that major reform in ITE was needed in five areas:

1. Stronger quality assurance of initial teacher education courses
2. Rigorous selection for entry to initial teacher education courses
3. Improved and structured professional experience for initial teacher education students
4. Robust assessment of graduates to ensure classroom readiness
5. National research and workforce planning capabilities.

These enhancements were presented as a response to concerns expressed by teacher employers about the classroom readiness of ITE graduates and the need to lift public confidence in ITE programs. The *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* report provided specific advice to the education Ministers on how ITE programs could be improved. This resulted in the Ministers endorsing a series of standards and procedures to ensure that every ITE program prepares classroom-ready teachers with the skills and knowledge to make a positive impact on school student learning. The *AITSL Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (AITSL 2015) document outlined the requirements ITE programs need to meet to be accredited nationally.

A key element in the national Program Standards is the requirement for all providers to include within their programs a valid, reliable and moderated Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA). The TPA is mandated to be a 'capstone', end of program, assessment intended to provide evidence of professional knowledge, professional judgement and professional practice. Similar to work in the USA on the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) and the Teacher Performance Assessment (EdTPA) but a locally derived model, Australian designed TPAs are assessed and approved by a national expert advisory group, mainly composed of university academics.

AITSL's plan was to have TPAs implemented in all ITE programs by the end of 2018. To start the process, in 2017 AITSL sponsored two consortia of ITE providers to develop separate TPA instruments. Since then, a wide range of TPAs have been designed and utilised by ITE providers working in consortia or as individual institutions. As of mid-2021, there are over ten approved TPAs in Australia involving more than half of the ITE providers. However, no cross TPA benchmarking has been undertaken and the predictive validity of the various TPAs has not yet been determined.

Another mandated requirement stemming from the *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* report was the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (or LANTITE). The LANTITE was introduced in 2016 to ensure all ITE graduates across Australia have personal literacy and numeracy skills broadly equivalent to the top 30% of the Australian population.

It is important to note that while the federal body AITSL is responsible for the development and implementation of National Professional Standards for Teachers

and Program Standards for ITE, programs are actually accredited by individual state or territory teacher regulatory authorities. For example, in New South Wales (NSW), the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) is the state government education board that accredits teachers for employment and assesses ITE programs against the National Program Standards.

This dual level policy structure allows state and territory regulatory bodies to add locally nuanced specific program requirements in addition to the AITSL standards. An example of these additional requirements are the *NESA Elaborations in Priority Areas* (2017), which require only NSW ITE providers to demonstrate how their programs will enable their graduates to gain and demonstrate (a specific series of arguably additional) skills and knowledge in the NESA identified priority areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, Classroom Management, Information and Communication Technologies, Literacy and Numeracy, Students with Disability, and Teaching Students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect.

Another example of the dual level policy structure is evident in how the LANTITE requirement is enacted. The 2016 AITSL programs standards state that ITE programs must have "...mechanisms to ensure that only those pre-service teachers who pass the Literacy and Numeracy Test will be eligible to graduate" (p. 22). Various states and territories have acted on this requirement in different ways. Some require a pass in the LANTITE for students to be able to undertake their final practicum, whilst other states require a pass to register or be employed as a teacher. The consequence of this variation is often confusion, particularly for those ITE providers and students who work or live across state borders.

Developing a National Vision

In late 2019, a decade after the Melbourne Declaration, the Australian Education Ministers again gathered to discuss the country's education plan for the next 10 years. The resulting Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Australian Governments Education Council 2019) acknowledges the vital importance of teachers, educators and leaders to the accomplishment of future education goals. The report highlights the role that teacher educators play noting:

All Australian Governments and the education community, including universities, must work together to foster high-quality teaching and leadership ... Teachers, educators and leaders are vital to achieving these education goals for young Australians. Australia is fortunate to have excellent teachers and educators; their professionalism, expertise and ongoing engagement in developing education in Australia will be critical (p.11).

Despite all of these declarations, regulations and policies, public uncertainty about the value of initial teacher education still exists. Unfortunately, the claim made twenty-two years ago "Teachers have never been subject to more scrutiny than they are today" (ACDE 1998, p4) continues to resonate. In 2008, Loudon identified more than 101 government inquiries into initial teacher education over the preceding

30-year period. Since then, we have seen some of the most extensive changes to ITE requirements ever. Even now, debates continue to focus on the appropriate and transparent development of criteria to improve the quality of ITE, with a broad commitment to ensuring rigour while allowing scope for state-based, professional and institutional forms of autonomy. Time will tell if current government reviews, action plans and policies will have a positive and measurable effect on ITE programs and graduate outcomes. In the meantime, teacher educators have consistently demonstrated a willingness to play a role in, if not lead, reforms and have acted with agility and goodwill in responding to changes.

Discussion

The policy overview above demonstrates the premises on which much current policy rests and highlights the persistent discursive framing of initial teacher education as in need of continual improvement. The representation of initial teacher education as a policy problem also unhelpfully positions teacher educators as subjects to be worked on. In paying so much attention to initial teacher education, other, tightly interrelated elements that impact heavily on student learning are ignored. There are also visible disconnections between what policy demands and what teacher educators can and do achieve. In this section of the chapter, we discuss the ‘lived’ impact of policy as manifest in ITE programs. Our brief overview of recent key policy influences on ITE highlights much to celebrate about teaching and initial teacher education in Australia. We have seen increasing professionalisation of initial teacher education in the advent of a national approach to program accreditation. We have embedded concern for social justice in all initial teacher education programs, requiring units on special education, for example, as we embrace commitments made in the Melbourne and Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declarations. We have demonstrated a dedication to excellence with clear efforts to provide rigorous evidence of classroom readiness through the development and implementation of TPAs. More broadly, there are signs of a new appreciation of the profession, spurred on by greater community recognition of teachers’ work during COVID-19 (Garoni and Lampert 2020). Our perseverance in shaping a profession and system of initial teacher education of which we are duly proud, despite growing policy intervention, has meant that ITE in Australia has a strong reputation on the global scene.

At the same time, our analysis signals some clear tensions that have been/are still being navigated—tensions that are unlikely to be unique to Australia.

First, it requires a fine balancing act to try and enhance the status of initial teacher education by increasing the degree of regulation and standardisation. Increasing regulation, as seen in the program standards, can fortify perceptions of a professional field that has its act together. But over-regulation can strip teacher educators of autonomy and diminish their intellectual /conceptual leadership of the field. Increasing standardisation of graduates can contribute to a perception of well-prepared teachers emerging from every institution. However, there is a risk that by seeking to develop

uniform skills that can be easily measured, over standardised initial teacher education programs will discourage graduates from becoming intellectually creative and adaptive teachers. Similarly, taken too far, the push to restrict entry into a highly regulated field of initial teacher education to the top 30% of the population could deter the very high achieving students the field seeks to attract and thus further reduce the status of teaching (Gore et al. 2016). In many jurisdictions, regulatory bodies and/or individual ITE providers have taken opportunities to improve on the ‘lowest-common-denominator’ of AITSL standards by locally nuancing programs to suit cohort focus, for example, provision of more Indigenous teachers. This resistance to a uniform approach to ITE by going beyond what is mandated is a clear demonstration of professional leadership by teacher educators.

Relatedly, there is ongoing tension between professionalising ITE from within—initiated or led by teacher educators—or without—stemming from government or think-tank representations of the field (Goss et al. 2017). Public and media portrayals questioning the quality of initial teacher education have contributed to a broad undervaluing of the profession and increasing levels of government intervention. The external push for program standards, literacy and numeracy tests, and evidence of classroom readiness, for example, have a role to play in lifting the quality of and respect for initial teacher education. It has been suggested that AITSL standards provide a national language to enhance collaboration and creation of shared practice within which teacher educators can act autonomously. Arguably, however, these initiatives fundamentally convey a lack of trust in teacher educators to take responsibility for the quality of their programs. This is despite the field-setting commitments explicated in the *Preparing a Profession* monograph (ACDE 1998) and consistent drive from within the field to ensure teacher educators are at the table in developing new policy directions.

In the current regime, ITE providers must collect and compile extensive documentation attesting to the compliance of our programs with the Standards as well as data proving our impact on pre-service teachers and on the students they teach. Admittedly the system of reporting and accreditation is costly and time-consuming, and yet initial teacher educators have been willing to engage with the process. We have strategically collaborated with accrediting bodies, sometimes introducing innovations to programs that prompt policy catch-up. Now, with the advent of a new review of ITE (Tudge 2021) insufficient time has been given to compile the cohesive evidence TEMAG requested. Changing parameters have again stymied the longitudinal view teacher educators hoped to gain by tracking pre-service teachers through their programs and into the first five years of their appointments as teachers. We can only hope that there is a time in the future when teacher educators are more fully trusted, which would encourage wider innovation in program design and allow for greater responsiveness to local needs as well as robust evidence collection.

Second, while recent efforts to restrict entry into ITE to the so-called ‘best and brightest’ are clearly part of a professionalisation agenda aimed at excellence, current workforce demands in Australia suggest severe impending teacher shortages. Estimates suggest between 8 and 50% of Australian teachers leave the profession within their first five years (AITSL 2016c). And the average age of teachers in Australia

(currently 43) signals substantial renewal (Gore and Rickards 2020). In addition, Australia currently has an undersupply of specialist teachers; with a growing number of teachers working outside their area of expertise (du Plessis 2019). Maintaining a hard line on academic excellence as necessary for entry to initial teacher education might not be sustainable in a climate of such changing workforce requirements. Furthermore, this policy has a limited basis in evidence. The idea that better school students (i.e., those with greater academic achievement) make better teachers has not been widely documented (Aspland 2019). And to suggest that we can or should determine who is suitable for teaching at age 17 or 18 is to emphasise ‘inputs’ (what students achieve at the end of school and bring into ITE) rather than ‘outputs’ (what students achieve by the end of their degree) in a way that undermines the value of ITE in providing a form of teacher education that will ensure the next generation of fine teachers.

In recent years, teacher educators have been asked to supplement academic criteria for entry into programs with non-academic criteria. This move goes part way to acknowledging the holistic potential of students rather than limiting candidate assessment simply to secondary school academic performance translated to a numerical Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). Responses to this requirement vary widely with some ITE providers setting up psychometric testing and others using interview or other entry measures such as the capability for study and school support statements. AITSL now requires teacher educators to collect data on student cohorts to explore any alignment between entry characteristics, university results and subsequent performance as teachers (AITSL 2015). While such an approach shifts focus away from ‘inputs’ towards the more important ‘outputs,’ problems arise as ITE providers often lose contact with their students post-graduation making tracking difficult. Certainly, teacher educators are interested in exploring the relationships represented across the trajectory from study to employment, however, such work needs to ensure complexity is accounted for (Ell et al. 2019).

Third, while policy demands over the last decade (such as those associated with LANTITE and TEMAG) are clear moves to increase the accountability of teacher educators for the quality of teacher education, what counts as adequate evidence of quality? How are we to demonstrate that our graduates are well-prepared for their important role as teachers? This question is a larger one for the field of teaching itself, where the tendency has been to adopt simplistic or blunt measures (such as test scores without any reference to context) that fail to address what really is at stake. As a case in point, the concept of ‘classroom readiness’ that emerged from the TEMAG in 2014 and is still upheld by Minister Tudge’s (2021) expectation for graduates to be ready ‘from day one’ encourages a view of ITE graduates as ‘future proofed’. Despite the policy requirement for all teachers in Australia to undertake formally accredited programs of study and be inducted into the classroom through substantial practicums, this added concept is to be captured in a final piece of assessment that demonstrates ‘readiness’. We argue that this notion of ‘ready’ works in direct opposition to a portrayal of teaching as a profession where adaptive expertise is developmental in nature. Instead, these policies have intensified data gathering and reporting across

the sector, while the field continues to wrestle with diverse notions of evidence and measurement (Mills and Goos 2017).

Similarly, teacher educators have noted the challenge of being asked to work within shifting definitional parameters. Reviews continue to call into question the effectiveness of initial teacher education. Yet, analysis of multiple reports addressing so-called ‘problems’ with ITE reveals little consistency regarding the term ‘effectiveness’ (Louden 2008; Mayer et al. 2017). A clear case of conceptual confusion can also be seen in the genesis of the requirement for degrees to include ‘specialisations’, which are defined differently in national and state-level documentation. Teacher educators regularly publish papers and present at conferences, critically engaging in conceptual, methodological and practical questions of measurement in relation to initial teacher education. Such research is important in either establishing the validity of the tools currently being used to assure the employability of graduates, or calling these tools into question in a way that asserts the field’s leadership of what has too often been driven by policy writers well-removed from the realities of teaching and initial teacher education.

Finally, maintaining teaching and initial teacher education as intellectual and creative endeavours in the face of so many external pressures, especially from governments, is an ever-present minefield for teacher educators. With the relatively stagnant performance of Australia’s schools on international rankings (ACER 2019) and on some internal measures of student performance such as our National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), initial teacher education remains an easy target. We have been blamed for inadequate preparation of teachers for the real demands of classroom behaviour management or addressing student and community diversity, but such specific concerns are often political responses to public pressure exerted by outspoken individuals rather than emerging from rigorous evidence of program failings. Widespread public interest in teaching and initial teacher education tends to combine with political agendas to lock ITE into a constant cycle of review in which we feel a lack of trust, despite multiple layers of regulation, surveillance, and accountability—most recently manifest in TEMAG and its associated requirements. The pace of policy change denies teacher educators opportunities to embed new structures and practices and compile evidence of impact. Indeed, we are continually in reactive mode while trying to plan long term. Currently, policy churn does not align with program length or tracking, collection, and analysis of data. ITE could be supported by standards if trust informed the process of course design and approval and therefore teacher educators had more time to provide data addressing the predictive power of entry requirements or exit capstone assessments in relation to graduation and retention in teaching.

In short, on the one hand, initial teacher education in Australia is highly regarded, evident even in university rankings by subject, our editorial roles on key journals of the field, and other metrics of institutional performance. On the other hand, many teacher educators in Australia feel worn down, constantly under attack and undervalued for the important and effective work we do. Support in policy for a ‘delivery mode’ of teaching operates in conflict with the complex model of education systems

that inform teacher educator action. Despite these lived, discursive and subjectification challenges, productive signs of cross-institutional collaboration have emerged during the design, implementation and moderation of the TPAs signalling a strengthening of professional leadership. As stated above, we argue that teacher educators must continue to take the intellectual lead in shaping the profession both to meet our own goals and to engender greater trust from the governments and education systems we serve.

Postscript

In this chapter, we demonstrate that, for at least the past decade, teacher educators have been leading efforts to shape the teaching profession in Australia. Despite ever-tightening regulation of program design and graduate qualities, teacher educators have participated in reform efforts whenever we have been able to secure a seat at the table, often taking a leading role. Engaging with government agencies remains critical both for building trust in and respect for our work and for continuing to show intellectual/substantive leadership in ongoing review and reform. Analyses such as those contained in this volume are important if we are to ensure that future leaders have a deep understanding of the history of teacher education provision and reform, positioned within the broader national and global education landscape. Carefully juggling the conceptual and practical needs of both graduates and employers, together with the political needs of governments, is fundamental to maintaining important control of our work and ensuring that initial teacher education contributes to the larger national vision of a world-class education system that supports every student.

References

- ACER (2019). PISA 2018 in Brief I: Student performance by S. Thomson, L. De Bortoli, C. Underwood, & M. Schmid, (Australian Council for Educational Research).
- Aspland, T. (2019). It takes more than a great ATAR to make a great teacher. In 'EduMatters', February, <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=3608>.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 4221.0 - Schools, Australia, 2019, Australian Government. Retrieved August 18, 2020. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/4221.0Media%20Release72019>.
- Australian Council of Deans of Education. (1998). *Preparing a profession: Report of the national standards and guidelines for initial teacher education project*. Canberra: Australian Council of Deans of Education.
- Australian Governments Education Council. (2019). *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Education Council.
- AITSL. (2015). *Accreditation of ITE programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*. Retrieved from <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/deliver-ite-programs/standards-and-procedures>.

- AITSL. (2016b). *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Retrieved from <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers.pdf>.
- AITSL. (2016c). *What do we know about early career teacher attrition rates in Australia?* Melbourne: AITSL
- AITSL. (2019). *Initial teacher education: Data report 2019*. Melbourne: AITSL.
- AITSL. (2020). *Accredited Program List*. Retrieved from <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/deliver-ite-programs/apl>.
- Bourke, T., Ryan, M., & Lidstone, J. (2013). Reflexive professionalism: reclaiming the voice of authority in shaping the discourses of education policy, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(4).
- du Plessis, A. (2019). Out-of-field teaching is out of control in Australian schools. Here's what's happening. In 'EduMatters', February, <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=3778>.
- Ell, F., Simpson, A., Mayer, D., McLean Davies, L., Clinton, J., & Dawson, G. (2019). Conceptualising the impact of initial teacher education. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 46(1), 177–200.
- Garoni, S., & Lampert, J. (2020). Speculating on teacher attrition in Australia: Might COVID-19 be 'the straw that breaks the camel's back'? In *EduMatters*, June <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=6669>.
- Gore, J., Barron, R. J., Holmes, K., & Smith, M. (2016). Who says we are not attracting the best and brightest? Teacher selection and the aspirations of Australian school students. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 43, 527–549. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-016-0221-8398-413>
- Gore, J., & Rickards, B. (2020). Rejuvenating experienced teachers through Quality Teaching Rounds professional development. *Journal of Educational Change, Published Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-020-09386-z>
- Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., & Griffiths, K. (2017). *Engaging students: Creating classrooms that improve learning*. Melbourne: Grattan Institute.
- Louden, W. (2008). 101 Damnations: The persistence of criticism and the absence of evidence about teacher education in Australia. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 14(4), 357–368.
- Louden, W. (2015a). *Research Agenda for Initial Teacher Education in Australia*, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Melbourne. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/initial-teacher-education-research-agenda>.
- Louden, W. (2015b). *Standardised Assessment of Initial Teacher Education: Environmental Scan and Case Studies*. Melbourne: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Retrieved from <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/standardised-assessment-of-initial-teacher-education-environmental-scan-and-case-studies>.
- Mayer, D. (2015). *An approach to the accreditation of initial teacher education programs based on evidence of the impact of learning teaching*, Melbourne: AITSL. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/an-approach-to-the-accreditation-of-initial-teacher-education-programs-based-on-evidence-of-the-impact-of-learning-teaching>.
- Mayer, D., Cotton, W., & Simpson, A. (2017). Teacher Education in Australia, *Oxford encyclopaedia online* - DOI/ 10.1093:acrefore:9780190264093.013.305
- Mayer, D., Dixon, M., Kline, J., Kostogriz, A., Rowan, L., Walker-Gibbs, B., & White, S. (2017). *Studying the Effectiveness of Teacher Education: Early Career Teachers in Diverse Settings*. Singapore: Springer. (<https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9789811039287>)
- Mills, M., & Goos, M. (2017). The Place of Research in Teacher Education? An analysis of the Australian teacher education ministerial advisory group report action now: Classroom Ready Teachers. In: Peters M., Cowie B., Menter I. (Eds.), *A companion to research in teacher education* (pp. 637–650). Springer, Singapore. (https://link.springer.com/chapter/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4075-7_43)
- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. (1999). *The Adelaide Declaration on the Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*.

- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. (2008). *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*.
- NESA (2017). *NSW Supplementary Documentation: Elaborations in Priority Areas*. Retrieved from <https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/how-accreditation-works/higher-ed-providers-ite/program-accreditation-requirements>.
- Rowan, L., Mayer, D., Kline, J., Kostogriz, A., & Walker-Gibbs, B. (2015). Investigating the effectiveness of teacher education for early career teachers in diverse settings: The longitudinal research we have to have. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 42(3), 273–298. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-014-0163-y>
- Stacey, M., Talbot, D., Buchanan, J., & Mayer, D. (2019). The development of an Australian teacher performance assessment: Lessons from the international literature. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2019.1669137>
- Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group. (2015). *Action now: Classroom ready teachers*. Canberra: Department of Education.
- Tudge, A (2021) *Being our best: Returning Australia to the top group of education nations*, Speech 11th March, Australia, <http://ministers.dese.gov.au/node/19326>.

Alyson Simpson is Professor and Associate Dean (Education) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney. Her research focuses on the role of children’s literature in education, teacher agency and the power of dialogic learning. She has established collaborations with teacher educators in the UK, Canada, Finland, NZ, China and the US. Her current projects investigate hybrid learning designs, teaching performance assessment, constructs of teacher effectiveness and models of dialogic research.

Wayne Cotton is Associate Professor and Director of Academic Partnerships and Engagement in the Sydney School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney. He has Masters Degrees in both Education (Health and Physical Education) and Computer Studies. He also has a PhD in Educational Technology. Wayne has been teaching and researching in education for nearly 30 years, including 10 years working in Australian high schools. He utilises these combined skills to design and evaluate innovative educational programs.

Jennifer Gore is Laureate Professor and Director of the Teachers and Teaching Research Centre at the University of Newcastle, Visiting Professor at the University of Oxford, and a recently elected Fellow of the American Educational Research Association. Her research focuses on quality and equity, teacher development, pedagogical reform, and enhancing student out-comes. Her current agenda focuses on the impact of Quality Teaching Rounds on teachers and students and the formation of educational aspirations during schooling.