



STUDYING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER EDUCATION (SETE)

RESEARCH BRIEF 1 – December 2011

The Studying the Effectiveness of Teacher Education (SETE) project is investigating the effectiveness of teacher education in preparing graduates for the variety of school settings in which they begin their teaching careers. It is following 2010 and 2011 graduates in Victoria and Queensland during their first three-four years of teaching. It is supported by a strong partnership with the teacher registration authorities and state education departments in both states. It is expected that the findings will inform teacher education practice and provide an evidentiary basis for policy decisions regarding effective teacher education and beginning teaching.

The project is investigating the following questions:

1. How well equipped are teacher education graduates to meet the requirements of the diverse settings in which they are employed?
2. What characteristics of teacher education programs are most effective in preparing teachers to work in a variety of school settings?
3. How does the teacher education course attended impact on graduate employment destination, pathways and retention within the profession?

The iterative research design employs a critical balance between large-scale quantitative research into teacher education programs and teacher effectiveness, and longitudinal in-depth qualitative study of effective professional practice. Database analysis, school-based case studies and on-line graduate and principal surveys are employed to systematically collect, record and analyse mutually informing data sets.

The project invites participation in **successive surveys** from graduates teaching in approximately 4,200 schools and the principals of the schools in which these graduates are employed. The first graduate teacher survey was designed to collect teacher demographic information such as age, gender, ethnicity, teacher education program completed, university of completion, and responsibilities within the school. The questions also cover motivation for selecting teaching as a career, any prior occupation and graduate teachers' perceptions of their preparedness for teaching. The principal survey collects information about school characteristics and perceptions of graduate teacher preparedness. Demographic data form a set of independent variables to be used for inferential statistical analysis. The outcome variables focus on perceptions of graduate teachers' preparedness and effectiveness. Subsequent surveys will be developed in response to data gathered from earlier rounds.

National and international survey instruments informed the SETE survey question construction. Three scales – attraction to teaching, preparation for teaching, and school support – are built into the Round 1 Graduate Teacher Survey, two of which are mirrored in the Round 1 Principal Survey. User testing and a state-wide pilot were conducted to assist

with instrument refinement. The internal reliability of the scales was assessed:

- Attraction to teaching: this scale has 12 items. The Cronbach's alpha (or inter-item correlation, and a measure for the reliability of the overall scale) for this scale was 0.628, which is a low for scale reliability. The items on the scale that rated very low (and therefore showing as unreliable) were 'Always wanted to teach/work with children', which had an item correlation of 0.117, and 'Teaching was a back-up plan', with a correlation of 0.103. The Cronbach's alpha with these two items removed was 0.64, which is still somewhat low. This scale draws heavily on the Australia Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) survey of final year teacher education students, 2006. In readiness for Round 1, distribution this scale has been reviewed by two external colleagues with expertise in education statistics.
- Preparation for teaching: this scale has 44 items. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.969, with no item on the scale falling below 0.3, therefore showing a good fit between individual items and the overall scale. This scale consists of nine sub-scales of varying numbers of items: collegiality; understanding, design and implementation of curriculum; demonstrating an understanding of professional ethics; engagement in ongoing professional learning; assessment; classroom management; community engagement; catering for diverse learners; pedagogy (relationships between teaching and learning - teaching theory and practice and learning theory and practice).
- Support: this scale has 9 items. Although this is a short scale, the internal consistency for this scale in the pilot survey was good with an alpha coefficient of 0.766. As this is a short scale, the mean inter-item correlation for the items was looked at. The pilot study shows good inter-item correlation so this scale is robust for internal consistency.

The surveys will be launched early in 2012.

Intensive **case studies** of teachers who graduated 2010 – 2011 are being carried out over the duration of the study. The purpose of the case studies is to explicate the 'tacit understandings' in the professional discourse on the effectiveness of their work. Thirty government schools in Victoria and Queensland have been selected as the case study sites. Schools were selected based on:

- 2010 student enrolment data
- Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value
- Percentage of students with language backgrounds other than English
- Percentage of students of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
- Number of first year teachers employed
- School location.

Five visits were conducted in Queensland schools during the second half of 2011. By April 2012 all 30 sites will have been visited at least once. Biannual visits will continue into 2014.

Analysis of survey and case study data sits alongside a **national mapping of teacher education programs**. This mapping is currently underway and will provide a point-in-time (October 2011 to March 2012) review of the programs which are of most relevance for the graduating teacher cohort being followed for SETE. Information about teacher education programs is being collected with the explicit intent to identify dimensions of teacher

education that could be used as independent variables in the analysis of the survey responses.

The national mapping of initial teacher education (ITE) programs specifically addresses:

I. Teacher education structures

- length, structure, content, and delivery of teacher education programs
- length, structure, and diversity of teaching practice incorporated into teacher education programs
- practicum and linkages with schools

II. Teacher education approaches

- discipline-based expertise
- preparation to teach: culturally, linguistically, socio-economically diverse learners; ICT; and literacy and numeracy
- development of pedagogical and assessment expertise

III. Measures of entry into teacher education programs

All accredited ITE programs across Australia, not just those offered in Victoria and Queensland, are being examined in recognition that teachers do not necessarily register in the jurisdiction in which they complete their teacher preparation.

The four-year SETE study runs concurrently with the national Longitudinal Teacher Education Workforce Study (LTEWS). The SETE project is supported by Australian Research Council funding and contributions from each industry partner - the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment (QDETE), the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), and the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT). LTEWS is funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and managed by the Sub-Group of the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC) Teaching Workforce Dataset Working Group.

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