



STUDYING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER EDUCATION (SETE)

RESEARCH BRIEF 2 – June 2012

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 intensive case studies following graduates teaching in 30 schools across Queensland and Victoria commenced in November 2011. Primary, secondary and P-12 schools are represented. A total of 110 graduate teachers in 11 Queensland sites were recruited, visited and interviewed– 65 teachers who graduated in 2010 and 45 who graduated in 2011. In Victoria, visits and interviews were undertaken with 61 graduate teachers in 19 schools – 36 teachers who graduated in 2010 and 25 who graduated in 2011. Interviews also took place with school leaders and principals at each site.

Initial analyses of case study data were conducted using Harré and van Langenhove's Positioning Theory (1999), Gee's work on identity as an analytical lens (2000-2001), and Heidegger's understanding of practice and learning (1927). Investigators with carriage for each case study site are leading site specific analyses. Their analyses will be collated and commonalities and anomalies identified across cases. Findings will be reported in relation to associations between the previously identified key themes and dimensions of teacher education programs.

In March-April 2012, online teacher surveys were distributed to over 3,000 principals and the 15,000 teachers who graduated in 2010 or 2011 and are registered to teach in either Victoria or Queensland. Questions were framed around themes of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, classroom management, catering for diverse learners, professional ethics, collegiality, engagement in ongoing professional learning, and engagement with parents and local community. The response rate for graduate teachers was 10 per cent (N=1,443), of these responses 115 had a matched principal response. The total number of returned Principal Surveys was 454, approximately 11 per cent of all principals contacted. The split of respondents by state of registration was 63 per cent Victoria and 37 per cent Queensland.

Ninety-three per cent of survey graduate respondents had English as their main or only language, which is higher than for the general Australian population (ABS, 2011). SETE also had a higher percentage of English-speaking background graduate teachers than in the Staff in Australian Schools survey (SiAS) 2010, which reported 92 per cent of graduates from an

English-speaking background. Indigenous teachers in the graduate teacher cohort make up one per cent of the SETE sample. This is less than the proportion reported for the whole teaching population in SiAS (3 per cent) and less than identify as Indigenous in the Australian population, which is 2.5 per cent (ABS, 2011). The average age for the sample was 31 years, while the average age for the population was 29 years. This noted, in both the sample and population, the largest number of respondents are in the 24 and below age category. Seventy per cent of the graduate teachers indicated that they had qualifications in a field other than education. Female respondents account for 80 per cent of the sample.

Nearly half of all graduate teachers (49 per cent) had been enrolled in a graduate or postgraduate diploma. Forty-four per cent had completed a Bachelor degree (including double degrees and Bachelor Honours degrees), and seven per cent a Masters. A very small number of graduate teachers stated 'other' for program type (0.4 per cent). This 'other' included a Doctorate and a Refresher Teaching Course. Over half of the graduate teachers attended their program on a metropolitan campus, and with outer-metropolitan areas included, this takes the proportion in the greater metropolitan areas to 64 per cent. Twenty-two per cent of graduate teachers attended a regional campus and 12 per cent completed their teacher education off campus. Domestic students made up 96 per cent of responses, 83 per cent completed their teacher education course full time, and the largest per cent of graduate teachers stated their main area of program was secondary, at 46 per cent. The next largest group of graduate teachers was those in the primary area, at 33 per cent. Eight per cent of respondents identified early childhood wholly or partly as their main area of program.

Graduate teachers generally agreed that their teacher education program prepared them for their current teaching context; the clear majority of graduate teachers would recommend their teaching program to someone else (73 per cent). The main findings of the Graduate Teacher Survey (Round 1) are as follows:

- Over 70 per cent of respondents were employed as teachers and of those that were not, 76 per cent were seeking employment as a teacher.
- Over 97 per cent of graduate teachers agree or strongly agree that the skills they gained during practicum were important. Over 91 per cent of graduate teachers agree or strongly agree that their practicum prepared them for their current teaching context.
- A large majority of the graduate teachers cited altruistic reasons as an attraction to teaching. Their motivations to teach stem from wanting to make a difference and teach/work with children.
- Nearly 90 per cent of the graduate teachers indicated that they have been successful in influencing student learning.
- Graduate teachers cited classroom management, engaging diverse learners and engaging parents and the local community as key challenges in their first years of teaching.
- The clear majority of respondents, which includes those currently teaching and not currently teaching, indicated that they see themselves working as teachers in a school in three years' time.

- Graduate teachers indicated feeling well prepared by their teacher education programs in the following areas:
 - Knowledge and skills to engage in reflective practice
 - Understanding ways in which students learn – using a range of sources for teaching and learning
 - Evaluating and adjusting teaching in classrooms

- Graduate teachers indicated feeling less well prepared by their teacher education programs in the following areas:
 - Teaching to linguistic diversity in the classroom
 - Supporting full participation of students with a disability
 - Working with the school's surrounding local community.

Principals' views of the effectiveness of individual, named, graduate teachers were overwhelmingly positive in comparison to their comments about the effectiveness of graduate teachers in general. Across all items the levels of agreement were substantially higher for the individually named teachers than for graduate teachers in general. When individual graduate teacher responses and responses to the Principal Survey are matched, principals also consistently rate graduate teachers' effectiveness higher than the graduate teachers' self-reporting of their preparedness for the same items. The difference between teacher and principal means for the teaching sub-scales ranged from 0.32 for demonstration of professional ethics through to 0.7 for the collegiality sub-scale.

Principals' general responses for first and second year teachers reveal that perceptions of effectiveness improve over time. Principals consistently rated second year teachers as more effective than first year teachers across all key areas. The largest reported improvement was in the area of 'Classroom management'. The area with the greatest percentage of agreement in relation to graduate teacher effectiveness is 'Engaging in ongoing professional learning'. The area with the greatest disagreement about graduate effectiveness is 'Catering for diverse learners'.

Overall, 60 per cent of school leaders strongly agree or agree that, in general, first year teachers have been successful in influencing student learning, and 73 per cent strongly agree or agree that second year teachers have been successful in influencing student learning.

Sitting alongside the case study and survey data collection is a national mapping of initial teacher education programs, which enables graduate teacher responses to be considered in relation to the key dimensions of the programs they completed. An initial desktop mapping of the teacher education programs was conducted between late 2011 and early 2012. Publicly available online information for undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education programs was examined. The second phase of the mapping involved verification of the collated data with each teacher education provider. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with teacher education personnel at each institution to further clarify the data.

Desktop mapping of teacher education programs was completed for all 47 providers of initial teacher education across Australia. Representatives in 44 of those institutions agreed to review and verify their program data and 45 took part in telephone interviews. More than one interview was conducted with some providers that offer teacher education on multiple campuses. This occurred in instances where the structure, approach and/or content of programs are quite different depending on the campus, for example, the

programs offered on the La Trobe University Bundoora campus are distinct from the programs offered in Albury. A total of 551 programs were reviewed.

The main findings of the SETE mapping are detailed in relation to teacher education structures, teacher education approaches and measures of entry into teacher education programs 2011-2012:

I. Teacher education structures

Length, structure, and delivery

- Of the 551 programs offered across Australia (across 103 campuses), 397 were Bachelor's degrees (72 per cent), 96 were Graduate Diplomas/ Postgraduate Diplomas (17 per cent) and 58 are Masters degrees (11 per cent). In contrast, the AITSL (2013) report determined that 60 per cent of programs led to an undergraduate teaching qualification.
- The programs ranged in length from 1-5 years. A majority of undergraduate teacher education programs were offered over four-years or part time equivalent (63 per cent). Postgraduate programs were generally offered over 1-2 years, with Masters programs commonly two years of study (or equivalent) and Graduate Diplomas one year. Graduate entry Bachelor degrees were 1.5 or 2 years duration and Postgraduate Diplomas were sometimes offered as an early exit qualification from a Masters degree.
- 81 per cent of programs were offered by universities and 19 per cent were offered by private colleges of TAFEs. Of the 38 universities offering teacher education programs, one was private (University of Notre Dame) and the other 37 were public universities.
- 401 programs identified the year levels that the programs prepared graduates to teach. A majority of these programs offer preparation for primary teaching (n=306) and early childhood/primary (n=66). This finding is inconsistent with the results of the AITSL (2013) report which found fairly even split between the number of programs offering primary and secondary teaching qualifications.
- Based on 497 responses, 75 per cent of programs were offered in full-time mode with part-time options, while 14 per cent were offered in external/distance modes.
- A majority of providers identified 'social justice' as a key distinguishing feature of their programs, followed by 'discipline/method knowledge' and 'forging community and school-university partnerships'.

Professional Experience

- Professional experience included supervised practicum, classroom observations and internships
- All accredited teacher education programs meet teacher regulatory authority requirements for supervised practicum, usually 80 days in schools for four year undergraduate programs and 45-60 days for 1-2 year programs. Note that the mapping was conducted prior to national requirements (AITSL, 2011). Therefore, there were some variations across states and territories.
- Based on 457 programs, over 50 per cent (n=248) said they offered practicum days in excess of teacher regulatory authority minimum requirements. This finding must be treated with caution given the variation in professional experience nomenclature across Australia.

- In 462 programs, at least some of the supervised practicums were conducted in block periods of placement in schools.
- Observation days were usually incorporated in the early stages of the professional experience program. All programs incorporated early opportunities for observation in classrooms.
- Some programs included experience in community settings in addition to the supervised practicum days.
- 82 per cent of programs offered practicum in the first year (Note: 1-year programs are included in this data). Often double degrees did not have practicum in the first year.
- Over 43 per cent of the programs included internships as part of the professional experience. Internships were more likely to be available to pre-service teachers enrolled in Bachelor's degrees than in Graduate Diploma or Masters programs. Internships were usually 6-10 weeks in duration, and usually followed completion of the minimum number of practicum days required for registration. However, because of the different ways in which the term 'internship' was used, definitive conclusions about internships across programs was difficult.

II. Teacher education approaches

Content and Approaches

- Most teacher education providers require pre-service teachers in four year undergraduate programs to undertake at least two years of study in their discipline/content area(s). Entrants into one or two year graduate programs were expected to have completed discipline studies in their previous undergraduate degree programs.
- In undergraduate secondary teacher education programs, discipline-based content subjects are commonly taught both by the discipline-based faculties in the institution and within schools or faculties of education. Discipline-based *method* or *curriculum* subjects are taught within schools or faculties of education.
- Primary teaching preparation programs usually require teachers to study discipline-based units in conjunction with curriculum or methods units for all key learning areas. Content and curriculum subjects are generally taught by education staff.
- Many teacher education programs included study in the preparation to teach culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse learners. Some programs had stand-alone units, while others integrated these aspects across their programs.
- Preparation to teach ICT was usually embedded across the teacher education program rather than through stand-alone units.
- Preparation to teach literacy and numeracy is a key requirement for teacher education program accreditation to ensure pre-service teachers are competent to meet the literacy demands of the curriculum areas they teach. There is also recognition that graduate teachers need to possess a high level of personal literacy and numeracy.
- Primary teaching preparation programs focused on the teaching of reading, with a range of models, including instruction on how to teach phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and text comprehension, and writing (including grammar and spelling), speaking, and listening.
- Secondary teaching preparation programs often focussed on literacy teaching within and across all subject areas so as to prepare teachers to continue the literacy development of students throughout secondary schooling in all curriculum areas.

Theory and practice integration (and partnerships with schools)

- The ways in which teacher education programs helped pre-service teachers make theory-practice links varied in structure and approach. Some institutions incorporated professional placement within curriculum and educational studies units, while other institutions focused on key teaching and learning aspects (e.g. classroom management) during a specific professional experience period.
- All teacher education providers who were interviewed the importance of partnerships with schools.
- Community involvement and internship programs were seen as distinguishing features of some teacher education programs. Some institutions integrate action research and learning partnerships with community agencies.

III. Measures of entry into teacher education programs

Entry requirements specified by providers

- Selection for entry into teacher education programs varied from state to state. Generally, entry into teacher education required candidates to meet minimum tertiary entrance requirements for that state/territory, the entry pre-requisites for the program, and to be selected in competition with other eligible applicants.
- The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) and results of pre-requisite Year 12 subjects were usually used as the basis for selection of school leavers into undergraduate programs.
- Institutions also used a range of other selection processes, including interviews, portfolios, auditions, character references, residential location, socio-economic status and evidence of prior learning.
- Some institutions offered bridging programs specifically designed to provide school leavers with lower ATARs with a pathway into teaching.
- Entry into postgraduate and graduate entry programs was determined based on a combination of previously completed university studies, academic results and pre-requisites specific to the sector and state teacher registration requirements.

Providers reported valuing pre-service teachers who possessed personal values and attitudes appropriate to the discipline and/or professional as well as high levels of intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. In addition, they reported valuing pre-service teachers who demonstrated a commitment to ethical and sustainable practices, a commitment to the profession and effective communication including the use of ICTs.

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.

For more information about SETE contact jodie.kline@deakin.edu.au or diane.mayer@vu.edu.au