

TEACHER EDUCATION

The Independent Education Union of Australia believes that high quality pre-service teacher education is an important foundation for a strong teaching profession.

Pre-service teacher education must be developed and delivered so that it forms one element of a continuum of learning from pre service through induction to skilled practitioner, with appropriate standards established at key points including graduate and higher levels of accreditation.

The IEUA notes that the evidence is clear from inquiries and research going back more than twenty years with regard to the importance of a quality pre-service program for teachers, coupled with strong partnerships between teacher educators and schools and underpinned by well-resourced induction and ongoing professional learning programs.

The recommendations from such research have failed to gain support and resources from Government. Nevertheless, the IEUA supports in principle, the recommendations set out in the recent 2007 report (Top of the Class) from the House of Representatives Inquiry into Teacher Education

The IEUA supports a compulsory national accreditation scheme for teacher education and rejects the notion of a voluntary system allowing institutions to opt in or opt out. This would undermine the whole basis of the national accreditation system which is based on ensuring that both the institutions and the courses they offer are high quality and meet agreed standards.

The IEUA believes that it is essential that the authorities with responsibility for the registration/accreditation of teachers are also responsible for the accreditation of the teacher education courses underpinned by a standards framework. This provides the essential nexus between the accreditation of teacher

education courses and the registration of the teachers.

In this context, the IEUA supports the work of the various state Institutes of Teaching (operating as AFTRAA) in seeking to establish improved standards frameworks, consistent with the MCEETYA Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching, with the intention to:

- establish agreed common elements for initial teacher education and beginning teachers
- achieve an extended model of mutual recognition
- build on the cooperative work being undertaken by the existing registration authorities

The IEUA calls for a more realistic resourcing of the practicum and induction processes in schools. The opportunity for a more constant and profound relationship between teacher practice/school experience and pre-service education is dependent on this.

The IEUA notes that recent research has shown that the feature of teacher education programs that has the strongest and most consistent effect on reported outcomes is the extent to which the course has a strong focus on the '*content to be taught*'. Further, opportunity to learn '*how to assess student learning and plan curriculum units*' is strongly associated with preparedness in the areas of professional knowledge and knowledge of students in the first year of teaching.

Opportunity to *receive feedback* was also found to be significantly related to the reported effectiveness of pre-service courses. Students in the most highly rated courses were much more likely to mention the opportunities they had for gaining timely and useful feedback from lecturers and practicing teachers as helpful features. However, the current levels of funding for teacher education do not make it easy for university staff

to provide feedback to students about their developing practice. This must be redressed through proper levels of resourcing.