Promising Practices

Creating a Pipeline to Teaching in Tasmanian Government Schools: From the University to Hire

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This case study describes a “promising practice” drawn from an OECD review of initial teacher preparation in Australia from 22-26 May 2017.

The OECD Review Team – Hannah von Ahlefeld (OECD), Michael Day (University of Roehampton), Kjetil Helgeland (OECD), Ee Ling Low (Nanyang Technological University), Rob McIntosh (consultant) and Emily Rainey (University of Pittsburgh) – identified a number of “promising practices” in each country. These practices may not be widespread or representative, but seen in the context of other challenges, they represent a strength or opportunity to improve the country’s initial teacher preparation system – and for other countries to learn from them.

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Context

Australia’s current policy priorities in teaching include aligning ongoing teacher education efforts with the hiring needs and staffing pressures of schools, in addition to designing and building induction approaches that support teachers’ professional growth as they move from teacher education to full-time employment (Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2016[1]).

Hiring

Across the eight states and territories in Australia, recent graduates of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes commonly experience challenges securing permanent employment as full-time teachers. Currently, a relatively low number of recent graduates obtain full-time employment upon graduation. In 2014, less than half of graduates of undergraduate programmes had obtained full-time employment (45% primary teaching graduates, 46% of secondary graduates, 34% of early childhood graduates) (Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2016[1] citing the Australian Graduate Destination Survey).

Preparation and induction

For teachers who do secure full-time employment upon graduation from an ITE programme, it is common for them to experience a disconnection between their teacher education and their new professional demands. This disconnection can be the result of a sharp increase in job expectations, including the expectation that new teachers will be fully independent, and the challenge of applying theory to practice. As such, there is a need to develop and build upon existing approaches for induction support that would aid early teachers’ transition into the profession (Teacher Educational Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), 2014[2]). One possibility is for ITP providers to play a more systematic role in supporting early career teachers (Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2016[1]).

How the Teacher Intern Placement Program works

The Teacher Intern Placement Program is an innovative approach to integrating teacher preparation, selection and hiring. It offers prospective teachers a full-time (35 hours/week) internship in a local classroom during the final year of their ITE programme, with the promise of hire in that same school upon graduation the following year. The programme was developed by the Tasmanian Department of Education in partnership with the University of Tasmania (Australian Education Union, 2017[3]; University of Tasmania, 2016[4]).

The programme’s stated aim is to identify, attract and retain student teachers with suitable academic, personal and professional aptitude into priority teaching areas and locations as
identified by the department. Tasmanian government schools with ongoing staffing needs participate in the programme.

The programme began in 2016 with a cohort of 40 interns. Along with the guarantee of a permanent teaching position, interns receive school-based mentoring and professional development, the opportunity to participate in the department’s induction programme designed for graduate teachers, use of a teacher laptop and access to the department’s network, accommodation and/or travel support where applicable, consideration for a Limited Authority to Teach in their final year of study, and a stipend of AUD 15 000 (Rockliff, 2015[5]).

The programme offers:

- prospective teachers a pipeline to permanent employment while at the same time offering them the opportunity to deeply learn to serve students within a particular community context and, thereby, be better prepared for the realities of their first year of teaching
- school leaders the opportunity to hire new teachers who have already been successfully working in their school with the experienced teachers and students of the school
- students the benefit of well-prepared first year teachers who already know their school context.

The programme also introduces an element of selectivity; candidates must apply and compete for the internship, and selection is assisted by use of the Teacher Capability Assessment Tool (University of Melbourne, 2017[6]). Over time, the programme may also support efforts to attract and retain highly capable teachers.

Why is it an opportunity?

The programme responds to multiple challenges identified by the OECD Review Team in its visit to Australia from 22-26 May 2017:

- *Providing stability and high-quality training to graduate teachers.* Many teachers do not find employment on graduation and the prevalence of short term or temporary employment for those who do weakens the transition of graduates into the profession and their progression to full certification. This programme seeks to strengthen the employment status for recent graduates. At the same time, this initiative shows how newly graduated teachers can be supported to progress to full registration, and become a source for further development of professional learning cultures in schools.

- *Providing schools with a stable and well-prepared body of new teachers.* Weak workforce planning and feedback mechanisms from schools and system employers to providers regarding the match between graduates’ capabilities and school requirements means providers are slow to adapt their programmes to school needs. Some employers of teachers feel that they have little influence over the content and design of provider programmes. This programme seeks to link the needs of local schools with the efforts of one ITE programme.

- *School-based employment decisions.* The increasing involvement of principals in hiring decisions can, over time, give them greater leverage with providers to reinforce the key capabilities they require of new graduate teachers.
How could it be improved?

The programme faces the following challenges identified by the OECD Review Team in its visit to Australia from 22-26 May 2017:

- **Uneven ability of the profession to model and support excellent models of practice.** To learn excellent practice, novice teachers require excellent models of practice. As demands and understandings of best practice change, it can be challenging to ensure that novices all have field-based opportunities to learn to provide research-informed teaching. One way of improving this initiative would be to guarantee the quality of mentoring (for example, through supporting and monitoring mentors) while maintaining a natural diversity of approaches, given the diverse philosophies of practices and contexts in schools.

- **Further connection between ITE, induction and continuous professional development.** Across the system, there is a strong focus on initial teacher education with little recognition of the teacher’s professional learning continuum. Despite some strong partnerships, teacher education providers are slow to adapt their programmes to schools’ needs, and there are few formalised structures requiring universities to respond to feedback from schools. This initiative illustrates the need to support not just the interns but also the recent graduates of the programme working in the same schools by more directly linking induction efforts with the programme. Further, this initiative illustrates the need for continuing to develop strong feedback loops that inform and are informed by research and context-specific teaching practice. Further and improved feedback loops would ensure the integration of students’ internship experience with their teacher education coursework and programme expectations.

For more information


