

# ACDE

Australian Council of Deans of Education



## TEACHERS MATTER: MODELS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING IN LOW SES SCHOOLS

Executive Summary of Final Report 2014



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Report available at: [www.acde.edu.au](http://www.acde.edu.au)

Support for the production of this report has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A scoping project was undertaken in partnership between Social Ventures Australia (SVA) and the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE), funded through the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT). The scoping project was overseen by ACDE's Network of Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching in the Discipline of Education (NADLATE). The two deliverables of the scoping project are:

1. an audit of current practices within Australian initial teacher education providers for preparing pre-service teachers to effectively teach in schools in disadvantaged and low SES communities; and
2. a literature review of recent research relating to recruitment, development, support and retention of teachers in schools in low SES communities (Available as a separate download on the SVA website).

This report synthesises the audit survey and literature review to provide a summary of the current landscape. The report highlights effective practices and cases of practice. It also identifies gaps in existing support as well as opportunities for further research and collaborative partnership to address such gaps.

## Key Findings

### 1. COMMITMENT AND APPROACHES

There is a high level of commitment to preparing Australian teachers to teach within schools in disadvantaged and low SES communities demonstrated via a national survey of initial teacher education providers. The survey data indicates this commitment is mainly shown through initial teacher education coursework study and professional experience placements in low SES schools.

Notable survey results include:

- Almost all surveyed initial teacher education providers (97%) have content embedded into subjects that is non-teaching specific though relevant to educators working in low SES communities.
- A significant proportion of institutions (84%) provide the opportunity for professional experience placements in low SES schools.
- A majority (81%) have mandatory preparation that is low SES and teaching discipline specific.
- Cross-institutional program partnerships between initial teacher education providers and industry stakeholders focused on low SES education are uncommon (31%).

A review of recent literature of initial teacher education for low SES contexts shows how research has critically examined teacher education, compared teacher education programs, explored recruitment and selection of quality teachers, investigated pre-service teachers' motivations for choosing to teach, explored strategies to prepare students to teach students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, and reflected on strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of professional experiences, mentoring, and school/university partnerships.

### 2. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PREPARATION

Initial teacher education providers prepare pre-service teachers through both theory and practice to teach in schools in disadvantaged and low SES contexts as indicated by the survey results.

Some notable survey results include:

- 81% of the initial teacher education providers surveyed provide mandatory preparation to work in schools in disadvantaged and low SES contexts. This proportion represents approximately 83% of Australia's initial teacher education graduates.<sup>1</sup>
- All (100%) of surveyed institutions reported that their initial teacher education students will be exposed to some low SES specific content, whether embedded into teacher core or education elective units. This sample represents approximately 85% of Australia's teacher education graduates.<sup>2</sup>

Similar trends are apparent in the professional experience placements. The key findings were:

- 84% of surveyed institutions offer the opportunity to undertake professional experience placements in schools in disadvantaged and low SES communities. This proportion of surveyed institutions represents approximately 75% of Australia's teacher education graduates.<sup>3</sup>

Recent research has increasingly focused on partnerships between institutions where pre-service teachers are simultaneously immersed in theory/praxis networks between the university and the school, in order to foster reflexive inquiry, cultural responsiveness and the ability to respond flexibly to contingent circumstances, diversity and uncertainty.

### 3. "BRIGHT SPOTS" IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (ITE)

Emerging from the survey data are 13 initial teacher education "bright spot" programs and partnerships that target improving the teaching and learning in disadvantaged and low SES contexts. In addition, the literature review provides an overview of landmark research into quality teaching in low SES communities.

## Recommendations

The following projects are recommended:

1. Researching curriculum design factors that shape ITE graduate standards for the transition and retention of early career teachers in schools in disadvantaged and low SES communities.  
  
Undertake longitudinal national research study into innovative curriculum design that sustains the transition of pre-service teachers into their early careers in the teaching profession analysing discipline developments, graduate teacher standards, effective pedagogy and the spatial-socio-material-affective dimensions of teaching and learning in low SES contexts. The literature review suggests that the "transition experience" for new graduates has a significant longer-term impact on their teacher identity and their sustainability in the profession.
2. Establishing a repository of online resources about quality teaching in disadvantaged and low SES schools.  
  
This would include a research repository, "bright spots" case studies of ITE curriculum design and innovative pedagogical practices, other relevant resources, as well as online discussion and mentoring that respond to difficulties of teaching in disadvantaged/low SES contexts.
3. Spreading and connecting through a community of practice.  
  
Create a national community of practice that connects universities, schools, and organisations that are dedicated to quality teaching in disadvantaged and low SES contexts and focus on the preparation of teacher graduates. This collaboration would establish a sharing of innovative pedagogical practice for the increased diffusion of knowledge relative to inclusive teaching in schools in disadvantaged and low SES contexts.

1. Based on AITSL Initial Teacher Education Data Report, 2011.  
[http://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/initial-teacher-education-resources/2013\\_aitsl\\_ite\\_data\\_report.pdf](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/initial-teacher-education-resources/2013_aitsl_ite_data_report.pdf)

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.