



CHOOSING OUR BEST

Innovation in Teacher Education Selection

The ACDE Board acknowledged the importance of a far-reaching examination of ITE selection through its allocation of significant funding and the appointment of ACDE Deputy President, Professor John Williamson – formerly Dean of Education, University of Tasmania– to oversee this project.

The Federal Department of Training and Education (DET) later contributed additional funds, which enabled a widening of the project survey and additional interviews. ACDE greatly appreciates DET’s interest and funding contribution.

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION	7
PROCEDURES	10
ETHICS	10
Gaining approval to conduct the research	10
Identifying and inviting participants	10
DATA COLLECTION	12
Surveys – Institutions	12
Quantitative data collection	12
Qualitative data collection	12
Interviews – Deans of Education	12
Interviews – Teacher Education Students and Graduates	12
Data analysis	13
RESULTS OF THE SURVEYS	14
Contextual Items	14
Returns by State	14
Items – Selection Strategies Used	15
All Strategies	21
Additional Comments	21
RESULTS OF DEANS’ INTERVIEWS	22
Use of a variety of selection strategies and accompanying rationales	22
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education	27
Entry and Graduate Standards	28
SUMMARY OF DEANS’ INTERVIEWS	31
RESULTS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AND GRADUATES INTERVIEWS	33
Previous Life and Work Experiences	33
Reaching the Decision to Teach	33
Previously Developed Skills and Characteristics	34
that Contribute to Interviewees’ Success	34
Processes and Perceptions of Entry into Initial Teacher Education	37
Professional Experience Placement Issues	40
Expectations of Teaching and Conveying Them to Prospective Teachers	41
Reasons for Entering Teaching: Some Issues that Received Attention	42
SUMMARY OF TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENT	43
AND GRADUATE INTERVIEWS	43

THEMES EMERGING FROM DEANS AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS.....	45
AND RECENT GRADUATES.....	45
CONCLUSION.....	47
REFERENCES	49
APPENDICES A, B, C and D.....	50
Accounts of individual pre-service teacher or recent graduate interviews.....	50
APPENDIX A: DAVID (TASMANIA)	50
APPENDIX B: ZOE (VICTORIA).....	52
APPENDIX C: ASHLEY (NEW SOUTH WALES)	54
APPENDIX D: KARSAN (SOUTH AUSTRALIA).....	56
APPENDIX E: THE SURVEY	58
APPENDIX F	64
Interview items – Deans	64
APPENDIX G.....	65
Interview Items – Pre-service Teachers and Early Career Teachers	65

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study seeks to describe and map the approaches and mechanisms used by Australian Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Providers to select students into courses. It focuses on processes not based on the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

Institutions regularly review their course entry requirements and the TEMAG report provided recommendations for consideration by ITE providers in this regard. This study reflects institutional action following adoption of the recommendation regarding the use of academic *and non-academic* selection approaches.

The Human Research Ethics Committee of Tasmania approved the study, which was conducted during late 2016 and early 2017. Researchers used the same questionnaire instrument as one designed and implemented by Universities Australia in an earlier investigation (undertaken in 2013) for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). Interviews, to obtain stakeholder perceptions of the entry approaches and mechanisms, were conducted. The interview sample comprised Deans and Heads of Faculties and Schools of Education, pre-service students and recent graduates.

The mixed-methods approach to data gathering was chosen to provide base-line data and richer, detailed information about specific approaches.

The questionnaire was sent to all Deans/Heads of Faculties/Schools of Education (N=40) and 27 completed returns were received. Four Deans/Heads and 13 pre-service students and recent graduates were interviewed and audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis.

The data show a variety of institutional approaches to the selection mechanisms and processes for entry into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses with approaches resulting from institution mission, context and strategic priorities. All are rigorous and publicly available through the respective Academic Board or Senate.

The data suggest institutions:

- Have strategies for consideration of equity, and access and participation. They are consistent and not ad hoc in their use of bonus points and targeted approaches, which provide additional student support
- Have rigorous entry requirements, but see the ITE course as important in refining the qualities and dispositions of the pre-service students
- Regularly review their entry approaches and mechanisms to ensure they fit their institutional mission
- See the need to work collaboratively with other key stakeholders to raise the status of teaching as a career.

INTRODUCTION

A scan of contemporary media shows how educational standards and student outcomes are still very much on the public agenda, with the question of ‘who becomes a teacher?’ stemming from the view that standards and outcomes depend largely on the quality of teaching and individual classroom teachers.

In October 2013, former Education Minister Christopher Pyne encapsulated several ITE entry issues when he told the Independent Education Union of Australia National Conference that:

The Government will improve admission standards for university teaching courses... We'll establish best-practice guidelines to encourage universities to base admission not just on academic achievement, but on the personal qualities that make good teachers... We should be admitting to university courses people who have marked down teaching as their first or second preference, not their last.

(Pyne, 2013, paras 49 – 53)

Around the same time, several Vice-Chancellors said that ‘entry standards for teachers are too low’ (Byrne, 2013; Hilmer, 2013) and academic entry scores (ATAR) should be lifted significantly.

Some researchers also linked the possible ‘surplus or over-supply’ of teachers, in areas like primary education and some secondary subjects, with the impact of lower academic entry scores (Dinham, 2013).

But the Vice-Chancellors have not been unanimous in their views. Professor Greg Craven, Vice Chancellor, Australian Catholic University and Chair of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), said:

The demand for teaching graduates to meet workforce needs across the sector is a complex phenomenon that is unavoidably difficult to quantify. Recruitment, retirement and resignation of full-time staff reflect only some of the teaching demand measures. There is a significant need for a flexible workforce,

estimated to be as much as 20 per cent of the current equivalent staff numbers, across the year and location. (Craven, 2013, p. 4)

In 2014, the TEMAG *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers Report* stated:

The Advisory Group has reached unanimous agreement in making the key findings of fact:

...[We] need to lift public confidence in initial teacher education – Australians are not confident that all entrants to initial teacher education are the best fit for teaching. This includes the balance of academic skills and personal characteristics needed to be suitable for teaching. (p. xi)

While public perception of the 'best for fit' teaching was important for TEMAG, AITSL in 2016 formalised this in its requirements for nationally accredited ITE courses as follows: 'providers apply selection criteria for all entrants, which incorporate both academic and non-academic components that are consistent with engagement with a rigorous higher education program, the requirements of the particular program and subsequent success in professional teaching practice (p. 18; section 3.2).'

These initiatives have occurred since 2013 when the AITSL Commissioned Universities Australia (UA) Project surveyed Faculties and Schools of Education.

In this context, the ACDE Board, with financial support from the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, sought to provide a current picture and mapping of entry into ITE. To provide a base for comparison with the earlier survey, the same UA instrument was used, however, to provide a richer understanding of particular approaches, individual semi-structured interviews were also conducted with Deans and Heads of Faculties/Schools of Education, as well as pre-service teachers and recent graduates. These interviews sought to look 'under the surface' to explore how participants saw the selection criteria operating in their particular circumstance.

The present study has the same purpose: to describe ITE providers' selection methodologies. Accordingly, the same UA instrument was used to survey so data sets collected several years apart could be compared in the future. This study also employed interviews conducted with Deans and Heads of School, and with pre-service teachers and

recent graduates, to provide additional data to enable future investigation of perspectives on selection strategies.

PROCEDURES

ETHICS

Gaining approval to conduct the research

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Tasmania (Approval no. H0016066).

Identifying and inviting participants

All ACDE member institutions were invited to complete a survey (see Appendix E).

Based on returns received and knowledge of entry requirements, four Deans (or their nominees), whose programs/courses offered alternate selection into Initial Teacher Education (ITE), were interviewed (see Appendix E for interview schedule). These interviews were video-recorded by ACDE, so the complete interviews and/or excerpts could be uploaded for viewing on the ACDE website.

Deans from each state and the Northern Territory were invited to identify and contact, in some cases, pre-service teachers or very recent graduates who had been selected for ITE via alternate pathways and who were then highly successful in these programs and, if applicable, as graduates. Potential participant names and contact details, as permitted by each institution's privacy requirements, were sent to the researcher who conducted the student interviews.

Some interviews were recorded by video but only by audio for others. Audio recording allowed for consistency of the finished product as it enabled inclusion of interviews from more states, without travel considerations, and provided ease of information access over the Internet or by telephone.

The researcher emailed each potential participant the approved set of materials – the Letter of Invitation, Informed Consent Sheet and the Interview Schedule (see Attachment F for the Interview Schedule). At a telephone number and suitable time nominated by the potential

participant, the researcher discussed the project and answered any questions before the participant decided to participate in the project.

DATA COLLECTION

Surveys – Institutions

Quantitative data collection

The surveys comprised two parts:

1. Two demographic items (regarding location and size of ITE intake)
2. Seven items which sought information about six selection strategies used by institutions. These were *bonus marks*, *essays/statements*, *prior experience*, *interviews*, *relevant experience*, *psychometric tests* and *written applications*. Four choices were provided to determine how frequently institutions used each strategy. The choices were: *not used*, *used in a minimum of instances*, *used in most instances*, and *used in all cases*.

Qualitative data collection

In addition to quantitative data, the survey sought comments about the reasons for institutional choices. The final item invited institutions to list selection strategies not previously presented in the survey.

Interviews – Deans of Education

Qualitative data collected from Deans (video recorded)

There were four items in the Dean's interview schedule (see Appendix F) seeking information about:

- Alternate selection strategies used
- Perceptions of a student or students who entered by an alternate pathway
- Information about support provided to students and any associated challenges,
- Any further comments.

Interviews – Teacher Education Students and Graduates

Qualitative data collected from pre-service teachers and recent graduates currently teaching (audio recorded)

There were seven items in the interview schedule (see Appendix G).

The items sought information about:

1. The selection process as it applied in their case
2. Thoughts about whether teaching would be a real possibility for them
3. Work/family/other experiences presented during selection
4. The perceived relevance of these to ITE
5. The perceived relevance to professional experience placements
6. Opinions about other prior learning or prior experiences that could be used as part of the selection process
7. Further comments about how to attract the most suitable people to teaching.

Data analysis

The surveys

The quantitative data were tabulated to enable simple comparisons between options chosen by participants. A summary of responses to each item was written.

The qualitative data were summarised so that common responses could be grouped and described in terms of information that could be added to the numerical data.

The interviews

In order to identify themes, the audio recordings of all interviews were transcribed. Manual coding was then employed in line with (Saldaña, 2009) the 'control and ownership' (p. 22) provisions of a small-scale project when data is physically handled and themes processed by a person's thinking rather than computer software. Reading and re-reading transcripts of interviews, underlining, highlighting and noting key words and phrases were integral to this method of analysis. This included identification of themes common across the interviews; summary of the interviews; and reports of individual interviews as presented in the Appendices.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEYS

The quantitative data were tabulated and are discussed with inclusion of information from the qualitative data (i.e. comments offered on survey responses).

Twenty-seven survey returns were collected and data were entered into tables.

Contextual Items

Location of ITE

Metropolitan	10
Rural/regional	5
Both	11
Not stated	1

No. of students (ITE)

<1000	7
1000-2000	9
>2000	9
Not stated	1

Returns by State

NSW	9
Qld	6
WA	3
SA	3
Vic	3
Tas	1
ACT	1
NT	1

Items – Selection Strategies Used

Item 1: Bonus marks

Not used	15
Minority of instances	9
Majority of instances	2
All instances	0

Most responses (15) indicated bonus marks were not used.

When they were used, bonus marks typically targeted applicants on the basis of one or more of the following:

- Economic disadvantage
- Social disadvantage
- Being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Rural or remote location

Other motives to use bonus marks included:

- Educational disadvantage
- Elite athleticism
- School subject results relevant to teaching.

Reasons for using bonus marks included:

- Addressing equity in selection
- Not overlooking a promising student
- Selecting applicants who have skills, capacity and attitudes that indicate likely success.

Bonus marks were used for undergraduate, rather than for postgraduate, entry and for entry to Applied Education (vocational) courses. ATAR requirements in some institutions meant that bonus marks were not applicable.

Item 2: Essays/personal statements

Not used	11
Minority of instances	9
Majority of instances	1
All instances	5

In 20 instances, essays/personal statements were either not used or used only in a minority of cases. Five institutions with smaller student cohorts used them in all cases. One institution is encouraging the use, and another is considering the use, of the essays/personal statement to provide non-academic criteria for teaching (as per AITSL, 2015, p. 8).

Examples of essays/personal statements employed in a minority of instances included:

- Fulfilling the social justice requirements of the university
- Providing an alternative pathway entry
- Determining student suitability, commitment and/or effective study skills
- For mature age students with no formal educational qualifications
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher education applicants
- To assess the understanding and capacity of students, who have failed previously, to undertake the course.

Potential problem identified: Plagiarism or essays/statements can be written by someone other than the applicant.

Item 3: Prior experience

Not used	9
Minority of instances	17
Majority of instances	0
All instances	1

Prior experiences were used in a minority of instances (17); not used (9); and used with all applicants (1).

Consideration of prior experience was used typically with:

- Postgraduate applicants (with an undergraduate degree but not completed within the previous 10 years)
- Mature age applicants
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants for one primary program, where application was borderline
- For recognition of prior learning and or industry, discipline, professional experience where significant experience was substantiated in an application.

One institution used prior experience for admission to a BEd (Applied Learning) – VET.

Reasons for using prior experience included:

- Addressing equity in selection
- Not overlooking a promising student
- Selecting applicants who have skills, capacity and attitudes that indicate likely success.

Potential problem identified: Verification of CVs.

Item 4: Interviews

Not used	12
Minority of instances	12
Majority of instances	1
All instances	1

Responses about the use of interviews were evenly split with 12 institutions not using interviews and 12 using it in a minority of instances. All applicants were interviewed in one case.

Use of interviews was restricted to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Students coming from alternative pathways

- Graduates in the case of discrepancies in applications
- Employment-based entry
- Programs with early placement requirements
- Early admission for undergraduates.

Reasons for using interviews included:

- Being a university-wide practice
- Addressing equity in selection
- Not overlooking a promising student who may not have the required ATAR
- Selecting applicants who have skills, capacity and attitudes that indicate likely success or that are broadly equivalent to those embedded in the degree.

At two institutions, interviews were used for entry to Bachelor or Master’s degrees.

Potential problems identified: Resource intensive, time consuming, lack of robustness and consistency.

Item 5: Relevant experience

Not used	12
Minority of instances	11
Majority of instances	1
All instances	3

Relevant experience was not used in 12 instances; used in a minority of instances in 11 cases; used in a majority of instances by one institution; and used in all instances by three institutions.

Examples of using relevant experience for selection included:

- For requirements of specialised trade subjects or knowledge of languages
- Mature age (in one case with substantiation in principal’s letter)
- For students who have failed previously (including in teacher education)
- Those with borderline academic entry criteria
- Selecting applicants who have skills, capacity and attitudes that indicate likely success or that are broadly equivalent to those embedded in the degree
- To demonstrate an applicant’s motivation and commitment

- For use in the case of a VET teaching course.

Typically, the experience would have to be relevant in combination with evidence of academic level achieved.

Item 6: Psychometric testing

Not used	24
Minority of instances	1
Majority of instances	0
All instances	2

Psychometric testing was not used in 24 instances. Use in a minority of instances (1) and all instances (2) completed the picture for this item.

Several responses (7) indicated that this testing was not considered reliable or appropriate because:

- Of unsuitability for undergraduate applicants (one response)
- It did not align with selection standards
- It isolated characteristics.
- The significant cost of developing a test (one response)
- Cost and data ownership issues of using of a test already available.

Several other responses (6) indicated consideration of using this type of testing, or similar, in the future.

Item 7: Written applications

Not used	17
Minority of instances	7
Majority of instances	0
All instances	3

Written applications were not used (17 responses), used in a minority of instances (7) and used in all instances (3).

Use of written applications was for:

- Alternative pathways
- Low SES entry
- Mature age entry
- Where circumstances indicated an increased likelihood of success in higher education than previously shown
- Hardship during secondary education (when supported by the school)
- Part of an overall strategy for gauging skills and preparedness
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants
- Entry with no tertiary admissions score
- To gauge readiness for early placements.

Use of written applications was an approach combined with other strategies and mapped to inherent requirements.

Potential problems: Applications could be plagiarised or written by someone other than the applicant.

All Strategies

The reasons institutions cited for not using many of the strategies above, and as presented in the survey, included the strategies not being relevant; having no evidence base; being of high cost; not aligned with selection standards; or not practical given applicant numbers.

Additional Comments

In one case, for postgraduate admission, a teaching demonstration was required. English language proficiency scores were required for international students (one response).

It was noted that selection strategies varied between ITE programs in the same institution; there were differences between undergraduate and postgraduate prerequisites and for VET teaching courses.

RESULTS OF DEANS' INTERVIEWS

Use of a variety of selection strategies and accompanying rationales

The Deans provided examples of entry strategies that range from using ATAR scores to focusing on students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Some students who enter through alternate pathways have not experienced success at school and have not known what work or career they wanted while at school. Others have sufficient work experience so choosing to teach requires changing their viewpoint from being an expert in their field to becoming a learner as a pre-service teacher.

One Dean, whose institution required prospective students to be high-level entrants with the required ATAR score, said the institution also uses personal statements – a non-academic strategy assessed against a rubric ‘based on attributes identified in our own research, and in relation to the AITSL standards.’ The statement required prospective pre-service teachers to address questions like: *‘Why do you want to be a teacher?’ ‘How would you describe yourself in terms of interpersonal skills, of your acceptance of difference, your own resilience.’* A ‘mismatch’ between English language competency in a written application and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) results could raise questions for assessors.

In a different institutional context, ‘motivation to become a teacher, what they have to offer the profession, perhaps some of the challenges they might see, some of the personal development they might have to do’ or a need to keep in mind ‘culturally appropriate characteristics’ was highlighted. The Dean also mentioned the challenge for mature age ‘career changers’ who are ‘great successes in their jobs’ but who had to ‘learn some humility to become learners.’

The same Dean raised the issue of ‘being inclusive of people no matter what their physical and sensory and motor capacities.’ This Dean said, ‘There’s a set of students for whom we’ve worked very hard to make the adjustment, so they can have the advantage of the full program. But we haven’t always been successful.’ These included the example of a deaf student in a wheelchair who needed staff to support her with signing and with the

wheelchair. This Dean emphasised that she and her staff 'would work hard to make it work.' However, in that particular circumstance, the student made the decision not to continue when faced with the challenges of professional placement.

'There are some students who believe, or declare, that they need to have a break,' this Dean said, even though it does not fit with the usual model of 'the tough resilient teacher, who will be in the classroom all day with great patience, with great resilience and with a strong presence to manage whatever the classroom can deliver.'

Another Dean reported using 'an indicative ATAR' alongside other measures like references from teachers and principals; personal statements; and that an interview of 30 to 40 minutes was used 'as a basis for drawing out more information' from applicants. In a program for new staff, the Dean explained that staff members are taught to moderate their judgment by attending 'five interviews with an experienced interviewer until they can get the same measures.'

The Dean said applicants are asked, 'Why they want to be a primary teacher, for example, what are the characteristics of a really good teacher? Then [we] ask them to match that up with what they perceive to be their strengths. We ask them what challenges they think teachers might face today and how they feel about their capacity to cope with those challenges.'

'We tell them teachers need to demonstrate behavioural stability when they're working with children, and with the parents, and in sometimes quite a conflicted situation. How do they think their robustness is right now to be able to cope with those sorts of things or will they need help during their course to grow that?'

The Dean says that they are givers and not takers into their courses. 'We ask them to tell us about their ability to make a commitment to others. Some of the students come from low SES homes; mum and dad working two jobs and they too work to help their family to be able to exist. Perfect – they turn up for work every day... . That commitment to whatever it is, is really important for us. We ask them what experience they might have in working with children...they are choosing to work with. What we are looking for is: Are they articulate? Are they professional in their presentation? Do they have good eye contact? Are they really good communicators in a one-on-one situation? Can they provide thoughtful responses to

these questions? Do they have sound reasons for choosing not only teaching, but the particular age groups that they're wanting to work with, and have they worked with children?'

The interviews, the Dean explained, also benefit students' knowledge of the campus layout and their awareness of the staff's commitment.

'They know where to go – they've already met a staff member – they know where the front reception is if they get lost in their first week, they know where to get help. They hear, they see our passion and they see if there's a synergy with that for them and we see that as well,' the Dean said.

A third Dean referred to the notion of an 'equity pathway'¹ to distinguish it from an alternative pathway.

'Many universities have access or alternative pathways for a wide range of groups of prospective students including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students,' this Dean said. 'With teacher education, a number of jurisdictions (NSW and Victoria) have established threshold criteria for entry into teacher education. For example, entry into an undergraduate teacher education program requires a high school attainment, which includes three Band 5s, one of which must be English.

'In order to promote access to teaching as a profession, universities have developed alternative pathways which allow prospective teachers to undertake a suite of study, which is viewed as 'equal' to the attainment captured in the three Band 5 criteria. An equity pathway, by way of contrast, recognises that, for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aspiring to be teachers, schooling has not served them well. However, what they bring is a rich set of cultures, knowledges and life experiences, which often can include a range of teaching and learning work.

¹ 'The Equity Pathway to teaching has been designed to provide a suite of sustained, culturally appropriate, and academically and professionally endorsed support and assessment opportunities for students seeking entry to an undergraduate teaching degree. The engagement phases relate to: (1) Learning what it takes to be a teacher; (2) Applying and acceptance to the assessment event; (3) Undertaking the personal and professional assessment comprising a cultural experience, assessments, an interview and presentation of a portfolio assessed by a panel; and (4) Recommendations and pathways in which the decision about either immediate or delayed entry to ITE is determined, supports are identified, or counselling about other career options is offered, depending on the outcome of the application and associated experiences.

'An equity pathway, seeks to understand the value that these background experiences and knowledges have for the teaching profession, the potential candidates' aspirations that they have for their careers and how we can support them to achieve their aims,' the Dean said.

'This is important because we are working in a context where, to my knowledge very few if any jurisdictions in Australia have achieved the required number of teachers to meet population parity. Proactive measures, which ensure high standards are needed, to ensure that we are able to meet the needs of all children and young people in schools.'

This Dean described a three-day 'residential situation' when potential students complete applications, undertake assessments and, in 2018 will also participate in a 'cultural experience...led by Elders on our campus.' Students meet admissions people, spend time in a school or similar and, at the end of the residential period, are given feedback on their readiness for an ITE program. The development of that ITE program is informed by 'many years of tweaking ... [and considering] what's going to be the best way to encourage success from a group of students who traditionally often face a range of challenges in their learning and things like being in a cohort,' the Dean said.

The fourth Dean also spoke about the institution's early entry program that guarantees a student university placement based on a letter from the student's school principal and an ATAR meeting university requirements. The selection approach in this entry program enables the institution to focus its selection in small part on 'low socio-economic status households' as well as demonstrating the university's trust of the judgment of school principals.

The Dean observed that these students demonstrate a very high retention rate and are more passionate and focused. The Dean said an allocated staff member looks after all first-year students specifically to help those with early entry develop their sense of belonging and to deal with problems one-on-one.

Alternate pathways can bring in students who are passionate, focused and with increasingly higher entry levels.

Another Dean reported, 'For some of them, it's been what they always wanted to do. For some of them it's been a growing realisation over time – sometimes it's been people in the community who have said, "*look you'd make a really good teacher*".'

'Increasingly, some students who would be accepted into a 'mainstream program...[have] decided to come into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program, which means they're opting for a particular type of experience...[that] actually embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledge and ways of being in the world,' the Dean said.

Intensive and personalised entry offers students an opportunity to become familiar with their new university and to meet staff. Reports of levels of support needed vary from one-on-one time to small group meetings to networking with peers, which can lead to future professional relationships. The downside is that these initiatives can be resource and time intensive and expensive. They also require time outside of normal staff workloads and can lead to the students involved being perceived as an elite group. However, Deans and staff are clearly prepared to go the extra step to ensure diversity of teacher education students. They are rewarded by the success of student outcomes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and those who are 'first-in-family' presents specific challenges. These include the need to communicate well with families, communities and Elders and to provide culturally safe environments within universities and during professional experience in placement schools.

A Dean said: 'The family is so excited that they've got somebody who has been accepted into a university and they say *we're going to support you to be successful*. What does that mean? It means that [they] cannot then also be looking after the children, cooking dinner five times a week, still working at flipping burgers at McDonalds on the weekend. No, [their] days are already full. Where [the student] going to make space and how are they going to support [them] to make space to do this university study?' the Dean asked.

'If the families don't understand the enormity of it, it's extraordinarily hard for the student to be successful. We think [based on Sally Kift's² work] bringing the families to understand, to feel welcome on campus as well, but also what it's like to be a student and what they need to do to support their child to be successful,' the Dean said.

The opportunity to develop leaders who have knowledge and understanding of areas with disadvantage and who can contribute to their communities and be role models is assisted by selecting students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, low SES and other marginalised groups. However, a problem can arise if a school considers employing only one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher, for example, as ticking all the boxes required to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' needs.

² Professor Sally Kift has published widely on transition to university, see for example, <http://transitionpedagogy.com/>
<http://transitionpedagogy.com/altc-senior-fellowship/altc-senior-fellowship-professor-sally-kift/>

Entry and Graduate Standards

Deans emphasised the importance of the standards achieved pre-service teachers by graduation and referred to maintaining standards of entry versus graduate standards. The capacity of Faculties/Schools of Education to teach, support, nurture and provide opportunities for pre-service teachers is a crucial aspect of teacher education institution offerings.

One Dean said, 'For a lot of students, school is not entirely their cup of tea. They are going through puberty, they don't know what they want to be...I think it's really great that Australia particularly has alternate pathways...'

'If they [pre-service teachers] can really articulate [their beliefs about teaching, the challenges, strategies for overcoming these] then they will have the passion to put in the hard years and to...be successful,' the Dean said.

It is evident that it is crucial to attract students who:

- Are intellectually capable
- Have the potential to develop the capabilities of a successful teacher
- Have the capacity to think about what they do and then act accordingly
- Can imagine themselves 'being something other than what they have experienced'
- Add diversity to teaching.

When they become teachers, it is critical for them to:

- Have strong, personal/life skills
- Accept difference
- Be committed and capable of working with children who might be at risk
- Be resilient
- Have compassion
- Demonstrate endurance
- Not be 'precious'
- Be able to accept feedback and learn from it.

At the beginning of each university year, one Dean reported that she spent 'quite a bit of time talking [to pre-service teachers] about the importance of being able to take [feedback],

and not crumble, and not blame the teacher or staff member. More importantly...to take the feedback and grow from it, because how else would you ever know what to do better? And I say that quite bluntly to them.'

The Deans all noted that an ATAR score alone does not cover non-academic traits needed by teacher candidates, so increasing ATAR entry requirements is unlikely, on its own, to improve candidate quality.

When asked about ways to ensure teacher education is attracting the 'most suitable' or 'best' applicants, one Dean said, 'I'm not sure that we aren't.'

Another commented, 'I actually don't think we need to attract the best of the best. We actually have to attract people who are intellectually capable, who do understand the intellectual side of the work of teaching. But I think we also have to attract people who have the potential to develop the capabilities that we understand make a successful teacher...your capability as a learner and a problem solver, a capability to be innovative, to be responsive, to have good interpersonal skills...but you also need to have intellectual acuity, you've got to be able to think well, you've got to be able to draw on a whole lot of information and make informed judgments...an ATAR can be one way of doing that, but it's not the only way.'

A third Dean noted, 'It's not so much getting them in, but at the point of graduation we want them to be the best there is. Yes, they've got to come in with a generic set of skills but what we believe we can do with them over that period of time...with us, and what we can turn them into at point of graduation I think is key.'

Deans expressed concern about the public status of teachers, which they think needs improvement. How to do this raises issues of internal and external influences.

One Dean notes her perception that 'the status...should be enhanced and supported by Ministers of Education, by AITSL, by the state accrediting authorities' to 'enhance and support...the status of the profession.'

Another Dean commented, 'If they [applicants] can see the potential in the profession to grow into something different that really excites me, because they're the actual people that

will take the profession forward. We've got people who think we should be going back to the basics or staying as we are. I get frightened about that because the profession is changing quickly.'

One Dean says, 'I've been doing this for 45 years and I still love it. There's no greater privilege.'

The commitment and passion of the Deans is exemplified by another Dean who says: 'I could say I have never stopped being a teacher...I write it on my card when I go out of the country. I think teaching is an inspiring, life affirming role, and those who are passionate stand to be that for their lives...Their children in the community, their relationship, their adult friends, in small ways you're always trying to make things better.'

SUMMARY OF DEANS' INTERVIEWS

The Deans provided examples of a variety of entry strategies used that range across using ATAR scores, interviews, essays/personal statements and school principals' recommendation letters. They articulated the goal of attracting marginalised and disadvantaged cohorts, who are currently under-represented in teaching, with particular strategies to encourage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher education students.

The Deans recognised the effect of maturity on students' achievements in academic study. They also highlighted the challenge faced by senior, experienced employees from other fields adjusting to learning as novice pre-service teachers.

Personalised selection strategies provided applicants with the opportunity to meet staff and visit the buildings in which they will take classes. There are, however, demands on time and resources. Deans and their staff implemented a variety of strategies to support a diverse range of students to enter ITE and their subsequent success.

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students presents specific challenges and requirements: communicating with communities and Elders and consideration of suitable professional experience placements. Communicating with families of 'first-in-family' students is required to enhance their study experiences.

While offering the opportunity to train future leaders to work in these communities, this approach to selection presents the risk that a school's employment of such a graduate may be viewed as meeting a goal of employing 'our' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or economically disadvantaged teacher. Indeed, this view can place additional pressure on the appointed teacher.

While entry standards are important, the standards of their graduates are central in providing direction for the work of schools or faculties.

The Deans wanted their successful applicants to demonstrate skills, acceptance, resilience and being a learner during ITE selection. They voiced the importance of considering the work of both the pre-service teacher and of the university staff and the knowledge, skills,

and capacities of the graduate rather than placing an over-emphasis on prerequisites, ATAR scores in particular, for entry to ITE courses or programs.

The perception of the status of teaching was a matter of concern for all Deans and all stated that it was something that would require active participation by key stakeholders including politicians, agencies and departments, and community champions.

RESULTS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AND GRADUATES INTERVIEWS

This analysis is presented in three sections: (1) a description of the interview responses with numerous excerpts used to illustrate examples of the key points made; (2) a summary; and, (3) accounts of one individual interview with a pre-service teacher or recent graduate per state/territory (see Appendices A, B, C and D for the accounts of individual interviews).

Previous Life and Work Experiences

Participants interviewed reported a variety of previous life and work experiences they brought to the selection process and the decision to apply for entry to ITE. These included parenting, fashion design, volunteering (typically with children), coaching, chef, IT software development and project management, the military, interior decorating, hotel training manager and human resources manager, scuba-diving instructing, travelling, working overseas and within Australia, and/or partial completion of a diploma or another degree or completion of a diploma or another degree more than 10 years prior to undertaking their pre-service teacher education.

Reaching the Decision to Teach

Life and work pathways often resulted in the decision to teach. Influences included training people new to the workplace in which they were the experienced worker; helping at their child's school; working as a teacher assistant; and coaching sport. Some interviewees referred to a more recent decision to teach stemming from a more mature view than when, as a younger person, they did not consider teaching or have the necessary academic prerequisites.

Sandy: 'I've had the majority of my career in the hospitality industry...did an apprenticeship...food and beverage, training manager, human resource manager. From there I decided education. [I] loved the training aspects [of hospitality].

Bonnie: 'I worked as a chef for 17 years and I did one year of Fine Arts...but it wasn't the course for me. Then I had my first child...and took a year off to be with [him during] which I really decided teaching was something I'd really love to do. I really enjoyed reading to him and teaching him things and seeing the world through his eyes, and that inspired me to start my Bachelor of Education.

Zoe: 'I really don't know if I would've ever thought of teaching when I was 18 and fresh out of high school. It was only being in my 30s that I felt I actually had the confidence to go into that.'

Joe: 'Supporting youth that have had educational and schooling difficulties as well [was influential].'

Previously Developed Skills and Characteristics that Contribute to Interviewees' Success

The attributes that interviewees credited with study and/or employment success included:

- **Being interested in learning, indeed committed to learning**

Tonia: 'I had the study skills [and] I've been in the classroom teaching...scripture and I've done volunteer work in schools.... I [am] a lifelong learner [and] my outlook is always curiosity and wanting to find out more about things.'

Zoe: 'Prior to...starting the application process, I took part in some volunteer work with kids. I worked as a teacher's aide for a term. I just wanted to really get an idea of whether it would be a job that I really wanted...and whether I could be suitable for it. I was able to put that in my application.'

- **A level of maturity accompanied by independence and confidence**

Greta: 'I think travelling matures you incredibly quickly...having spent 12 months on my own and looking after myself...I...became independent and mature.'

Hilary: 'I was told by the principal that one of the reasons they hired me was because of my experience in hospitality...they thought I'd be really good in dealing with parents in particular.'

Sandy: 'Coming straight out of school...going into a...Teacher Education program, to then go into a classroom, I don't believe equips people to be good teachers.'

Joe: 'I got the opportunity to also articulate that I am a mature-age student and while there are challenges that I'm very aware of with that, I also think that some of the maturity and discipline, and skills I've picked up along the way, which helped my success.'

- **Wanting to contribute to society**

Zoe: 'I hadn't thought about a real career and what...I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I started to think about what...I wanted to contribute to the community, to society... .An understanding of other cultures, 'In my general life, travelling, meeting people from different cultures...I thought presented well as attributes for teaching.'

- **Time management/capacity to meet deadlines, self-discipline**

Sandy: 'Working within projects...doing the opening of a large hotel, project management skills...my life skills have given me the ability to juggle and manage...conflicting deadlines...skills to manage [my] own study. I had to be very disciplined.'

- **Approach to work and colleagues**

Bonnie: 'I approached the course like employment. If I was going to miss a tutorial I would always email the tutor and I only even missed them if my children were sick. And I would...catch up on the work. I had a very professional attitude. My work ethic was really strong, and I wasn't there to waste time.'

Hilary: A commitment to working with/ having developed skills and demonstrated a rapport with children and an understanding of people and children, for example, 'life skills...things like patience and understanding'

Tonia: 'When you [are on] professional experience, you have to very quickly integrate yourself into a team...to kind of slot yourself in [to a close-knit small team] without rubbing people up the wrong way was quite difficult. I think the people skills I [developed in] previous work helped there.'

Joe: 'Having to build relationships...dealing with different supervisors and different characters [in my previous field of work]...I felt I was really prepared for that.'

- **Experience in the field of working with children**

Trish: 'When my son was a three-year-old kinder [student], I volunteered...the kinder teacher asked me if I would...be an assistant...while the regular assistant went on leave. Every step of my children's journey...I was involved. I would say to the teachers, 'We're living miles away at the moment. Just use me to the best of your ability. And through that I built a really good rapport with the students and a great rapport with the teachers and they

gave me a lot of trust in helping students. I remember the first light bulb moment. I had a group of preppies...over the weeks...then there was one day, it was like bing-bing-bing-bing, and all of a sudden [I] saw these light bulbs go on in their heads and I was hooked from then on.'

Processes and Perceptions of Entry into Initial Teacher Education

- **Personal statements or essays**

The interviewees required to complete personal statements and/or undertake interviews saw value in the opportunity to take some initiative by asking questions of, as well as responding to, the interviewer/panel. The interview – more so than the writing of an application – is seen by applicants as providing them with an opportunity to ‘sell’ themselves and convince the interviewer/panel that they are worth selecting.

Ashley: ‘I got to share my actual experiences in person rather than just on a piece of paper.’

Joe: ‘It gave me the opportunity to articulate some of my experiences and passion that would support my application.’

- **Induction**

Ashley: ‘It gave me the opportunity to meet someone that was going to be one of my lecturers and tutors...and I got to be familiar with the uni...I got to see where my education building was.’

There is recognition of the particular costs involved with these selection strategies.

- **Mature-age perspectives**

Sometimes mature-age applicants feel isolated in the selection process.

Sandy: ‘Because I wasn’t a sort of mainstream student and being mature-aged, there were very few channels...and very few people for me [for seeking advice] ... I understand [regarding cost] but it can be very challenging trying to find the answers that you need.’

Joe: ‘I’d already experienced some pushback from family about having left [my previous career)...even the hint of me going back to being a student and being essentially unemployed for a few years’ time was not received well. When I was initially just thinking about it, I had mentioned it to some people, but I didn’t find it very positive, so [then] I kept it very quiet and I kept it to myself. ...[During the selection process, the university] gave me a lot of the confidence...[I had concerns] about returning to study after such a long time...[but now] I could see myself studying at and being successful as a mature-age student.’

- **Pre-Degree Courses or Workshops**

The opportunity to undertake a pre-degree course or series of workshops was reported favourably by interviewees who completed them.

Simon: '[I] received a letter which said, *congratulations, but you need to do UniStart*', which was really helpful...refreshing you on how to study...do research [using the library]...academic writing requirements, all of that was great.'

In addition to this type of learning, which typically addresses essay writing and related skills, personal competence in mathematics was mentioned by several interviewees.

David: The 'fundamental' value of undertaking a course that supported him with academic writing was evident when he said, 'I didn't go into my first year having to figure out how to write an essay. Academic writing, topic sentences, paragraph structure, essay structure....'

- **Balancing ITE entry standards for ITE with reference to personal experiences**

The group valued a balance between academic and non-academic selection criteria. Academic criteria alone were not seen as sufficient. Typically, they thought a broader approach to selection leads to a positive, wider diversity of teacher education candidates.

Ashley: 'Heightening the profile of teaching...making sure the standards are quite high...[and] passion'

Trish: 'It should be harder...life experiences [are valuable] ...'how could [younger students at university] not know this?'...History and politics and about what's going on in the world ...'They've got these amazing attributes that you can't learn in a classroom, regardless.'

- **Many interviewees thought there is too much focus on the ATAR**

Bonnie: 'ATAR really only reflects perhaps one's ability to sit exams or memorise things. I think whilst we do want academically strong learners...[not] everything can be reflected in your Year 12 result. There's also communication, pedagogy...building relationships is core to it. So, I think, yes we do want academically strong teachers, but we also want emotionally strong teachers...because there's so much psychology involved in effective teaching.'

Hilary: 'I just don't think an ATAR score is very indicative of what kind of a teacher a person would be. I think just having an interview process...you can learn so much just from talking to someone and you can see...if they're actually passionate or if they want to really be doing this.'

- **Is there another way to demonstrate passion for teaching?**

Ashley: ‘Maybe if part of the application was actually filming themselves in a way...showing, somehow explaining their passion.’

- **The idea of a gap year before entry to ITE**

Trish: ‘A one-year gap or even a two-year gap or working in that industry [education] would be so beneficial.’

- **What is the right fit and right personality for teaching?**

This led, in most cases, to exploring the ideas about how to determine, and then test for, desirable personality traits.

Trish: ‘Intending pre-service teachers should have to answer questions such as: ‘So what led you to teaching? Why was it your first preference?’”

Karsan: ‘Kids are very precious and they deserve nothing but the best teachers. And I really think just as police officers need to go through a rigorous process to enter the force, whether it’s a psychological test [or other strategy], personally think that an interview, including a psych test, is probably desirable [for teaching].’

Joe: [Teaching needs] ‘a healthy balance between younger students who maybe don’t have much [life and work] experience but have got that passion...as well as having people with lived experience.’

- **Numbers of pre-service teachers enrolled in ITE and prospects of employment**

Anita: ‘I wonder why the need to have such a large intake of students: (a) if there's not enough places for them; (b) if it's not something they particularly want to do... So, I think an interview process would help with that. It doesn't even have to be face-to-face. It could be a written reason as to why they want to be a teacher, or something like that...pre-service teachers develop ‘this big idea that you're never going to get a job as a teacher, and there's too many teachers, all those sorts of things.’

Professional Experience Placement Issues

For some pre-service teachers, this is the first time they have interacted with children since they were children. If this time is late in the ITE program then the realisation that the decision to teach is not the right one means that the pre-service teacher already has completed a considerable part of the program. Some interviewees commented on the importance of early professional experience placements and the perceived higher drop-out rate just after placements.

Ashley: 'Teaching would have a high drop-out rate I believe because once they get on to professional experience they realise how hard it is.'

Simon: 'Maybe we should make [the first] placements...earlier, so that if people are unsure if teaching is for them, or not, [they] don't waste six, seven, eight months.'

Karsan: 'Having your practicum in the very first few months of getting accepted...having more observations done by more senior people...'

Expectations of Teaching and Conveying Them to Prospective Teachers

Simon: 'Everything else that's expected of you and the 10 per cent of your job that ends up being the teaching that you're passionate about. It's incredibly tough.'

Simon: Work outside school hours. 'They don't tell you about what goes on after 3:30pm [when] you walk out the door and say 'Thanks, I'll see you tomorrow' to your colleague teacher [teacher of your placement class]. ...You don't see what they've done from 3:30pm to the next morning. I think that would be invaluable if we could somehow incorporate that into our degrees. ...Maybe we need to have more time with actual teachers...[at] university.'

Reasons for Entering Teaching: Some Issues that Received Attention

- **Pressure to teach from others (e.g. family)**

Hilary: Some peers in ITE mentioned they were there 'because their parents wanted them to be there...teachers [should] really want to be teachers [and not] just doing it as a back-up.'

Greta: 'Often they're pressured to do something. Teaching is one [course] that people might...go to because it's...a lower entry score and it's still seen as...quite a respected career choice.'

- **Perceptions of teaching**

Interviewees mentioned the perception of teaching as a 9am to 3.30pm job with 12 weeks of holiday, the fact of having a low-ATAR entry standard, and that it was a fall-back position or last resort course preference all contributed to some teaching applicants being motivated by the wrong reasons to consider teaching as a career.

Zoe: 'I think...in Australian society, often teaching does not get the respect it deserves.'

Ashley: 'I'm not sure how people selecting teachers can do, but I think it's important for the image of a teacher to be improved.'

Trish: [State] politicians' understanding of education is a focus. 'I know a lot of them come from the education department, but maybe [some] haven't been in a classroom for a long time and maybe they should go back there before they make really hard decisions that affect everybody.'

Simon: 'Jobs where [teachers] are in a job for three months...contractual work, three months here, three months there...gone are the days where they are going to be in a job for 30, 40 years.'

- **Importance of mentoring**

One interviewee emphasised the concept, and importance of, being mentored during an ITE program saying: 'Maybe...an apprenticeship into teaching...mentoring and you're working and getting paid while you're still learning.' This might be viewed as similar to the hospital intern (Medicine) or a legal practice course (Law).

SUMMARY OF TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENT AND GRADUATE INTERVIEWS

Interviewees reported coming from a variety of previous life and work experiences that influenced strongly their decision to teach. Maturity was seen as key to some interviewees' decisions to teach as they did not contemplate teaching when younger.

The students and graduates interviewed articulated links between their life and work experiences and how they presented themselves, their skills and their passion for teaching in their initial ITE applications and during the selection process.

Characteristics and skills interviewees credited with success in teacher education and, in some cases, employment as teachers were:

- Being interested in, and committed to, learning
- A level of maturity accompanied by independence and confidence
- Wanting to contribute to society
- Understanding other cultures
- Time management/capacity to meet deadlines and self-discipline
- A work ethic
- A commitment to working with children
- Demonstrating previous rapport with children and an understanding of people and children
- Skills developed and experience working with children.

Interviewees required to complete personal statements and/or undertake interviews, or those who thought that these interviews should be part of the selection process, noted how the two-way communication provided opportunities to:

- Demonstrate, in person or in writing, their passion, commitment and skills
- Reflect on their choice of profession
- Initiate questions to develop their understanding and to seek further information, and,
- During induction, meet peers and staff.

The interviewees were positive about pre-degree courses or series of workshops that they said provided valuable support for subsequent study.

When considering additional selection strategies, interviewees emphasised the need for balance between academic and non-academic selection criteria, which was also a positive way to increase diversity in teaching.

Some interviewees, when talking about desirable or essential attributes for teaching, mentioned that it was important to consider new ideas about how to determine, and test for, these attributes.

In contrast, influences that impacted negatively on people's decisions to apply for teaching were:

- Others' expectations (e.g., pressure from families/parents)
- Perceptions of teaching workload (i.e., teaching is a 9-3 job with 12 weeks holidays)
- A lower ATAR entry standard in recent years
- The view of teaching as 'a fall-back position' or last resort preference.

Interviewees said there was a need to ensure potential applicants had the correct information about what a career in teaching entails. Professional experience in ITE courses was seen as crucial in allowing pre-service teachers to determine if they were a good fit for teaching. This should happen early in the course.

Several interviewees referred to the role of the individual teacher in demonstrating the professional qualities that are required as well as to the leadership that community leaders, for example, politicians and business leaders, can provide to help raise the status of teachers and teaching.

THEMES EMERGING FROM DEANS AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AND RECENT GRADUATES

- A balance of academic and non-academic selection strategies into ITE is essential. There are pre-service teachers, who would not have been accepted into ITE if they had applied from secondary school, who later excel in their courses.
- Institutional context, costs and the demands of implementation influence ITE selection strategies, which are considered carefully along with institutional priorities. Pre-service teachers and recent graduates interviewed for selection into Initial Teacher Education see value in the opportunity to present themselves as other than 'a score' but appreciate the need to have viable strategies. All participants in this project expressed commitment to, and were passionate about, teaching. They wanted selection strategies that identify fine, and the best-suited, candidates into teaching.
- Graduate standards were seen as more important than ITE entry standards. Both sets of standards are required, but the unanimous view was that more emphasis should be placed on the graduate standards that recognise the capacity of committed and passionate pre-service teachers to continue developing required skills and attitudes and to learn and apply new knowledge with the support and input from ITE course staff.
- Teaching needs to be more highly valued in the wider community; a concerted effort is required to address this. A variety of community leaders are key to influencing this effort. Interviewees raised the question of how some of these leaders understand teaching and schools.
- The word 'passion' or similar was mentioned by almost all participants. This may indicate the role that emotions play in both the decision to become a teacher and then to commit to teaching longer term, in addition to more easily recognised teacher attributes.

- Deans, pre-service teachers and early career teachers all commented on the unreliability of written evidence, like personal statements, applications and references. Their comments were supported by the survey findings.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated current stakeholder perspectives on the recurring theme of who is permitted to enter Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The study, commissioned by the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) and the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training (DET), was conducted early to mid 2017. It focused on selection processes not based on the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). The study took place after the TEMAG Report was released and when AITSL had codified the recommendations including those relating to entry into ITE. These initiatives have been considered by ITE Providers and the resulting changes can be seen in the data presented in this report.

As mentioned earlier, the mixed-methods approach used the UA questionnaire and also included interviews with two key stakeholder groups: Deans and Heads of Faculties/Schools of Education (four interviewees) and pre-service teachers and recent graduates (13 interviewees). The interviews provided more detailed information about the mechanisms and perceptions of the selection process.

The survey and interview data showed institutional variations in non-academic selection strategies. Decisions about strategies and mechanisms used were the outcomes of institutional missions, context, and strategic priorities. For example, these included the use of prior experience to address equity issues of disadvantaged groups and the use of bonus points for participation by under-represented groups. In all situations, the data suggested that the selection of candidates provided additional support that increased the likelihood of successful applicants succeeding in their ITE courses and subsequent employment as teachers.

The study – particularly the interviews – identified strengths and weaknesses of different selection mechanisms and strategies. Weaknesses typically related to how much additional time was required and the resultant impact on workloads and budgets. Strengths identified included the opportunity for staff and applicants to meet and follow up on any inconsistent evidence provided by applicants in, for example, written documents required for selection.

Interviewees were concerned by the relative weighting of attributes, dispositions or experience at the point of entry to the ITE course. The respondents pointed to the potential for an overly rigorous bar precluding candidates who could otherwise develop successful teacher qualities during their ITE course.

All respondents were concerned by the impact of the perceived low status of teaching on those who would otherwise consider a teaching career. They suggest a broad community effort – involving the teaching profession, community leaders, ITE providers, and schools – to raise the public standing of teachers.

Finally, the study has provided data that show ITE providers use a variety of rigorous approaches to select candidates for their teaching courses. The strategies employed depended on institutional missions, context, resources and sensitivity to equity and access participation issues.

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APPENDICES A, B, C and D

Accounts of individual pre-service teacher or recent graduate interviews

APPENDIX A: DAVID (TASMANIA)

David said he left school with a 'rubbish ATAR' in the 20s. He then took a '10-year gap year' to travel, work, and find out who he was and what he wanted to do. His goal? To become a teacher by building on skills acquired over the previous decade and graduating with First-Class Honours.

David said: 'I decided to be a teacher because I was teaching scuba diving, and I enjoyed the dynamics of it – the backwards and forwards, the banter you get to have with your students...

'If it wasn't for those previous experiences, then I wouldn't have realised that I was good at teaching or even wanted to be a teacher.'

Instructing scuba diving may have involved 'a lower level of teaching'; however, David said, it was a 'life and death' environment with specific challenges.

'If you can teach people under the water, you can teach people in a classroom. You can *talk* to people in a classroom, you've gotta put hand signals in under the water,' he said.

The process of applying to become a teacher education student, however, was not smooth sailing because David was advised that his scuba-diving instructor certificates and experience were not enough. To enrol in a degree, David would need to successfully complete a suite of general studies units. While he was disappointed to learn this, the advice did not deter David from focusing on making his commitment to teaching a reality.

When David received his first set of general studies units' results, he was fast-tracked into a Bachelor of Education. In hindsight, David realised that the academic skills he had acquired, and learning had had gained through the general studies units, were 'fundamental to being able to go on.'

He said, 'I didn't go into my first year having to figure out how to write an essay...academic writing, topic sentences, paragraph structure, essay structure, no worries...easy.'

It is likely that David's ease with studying for the degree also played into his admission to the Honours units, which led to completion of his dissertation.

When considering what criteria or strategies he would add to the selection process, David said it was crucial for someone to learn about themselves from 'past experience' not only 'academic experience'. David says he 'wouldn't have got in' if his low ATAR had been the sole selection criteria for entry into teacher education.

He observed that relying solely on an ATAR score could not take into account non-academic traits, 'especially [those derived from] human "contact".'

He explained that relationships are the basis of teaching yet when selection is 'assessed totally on ATAR scores...your actual ability to relate to others isn't even considered.'

David's admission into teacher education allowed him to demonstrate his ability to become a high achiever. He considered his Honours research a further valuable opportunity that emphasised the importance of relationships in teaching.

'Everything I've learnt from my degree or my Honours project is that, without the affective domain, the cognitive domain can take over,' he stated.

David identified weaknesses in narrow, academic-only, selection criteria that overlooked the vital development of communication skills and productive relationships for learning and teaching. Furthermore, he described the important contribution of the life and work experiences that underpinned his capacity, commitment, efficacy and belief in his plan to become a teacher.

David completed his degree in 2016 and was employed as a full-time teacher in 2017.

APPENDIX B: ZOE (VICTORIA)

Zoe, from Victoria, finished high school almost 20 years prior to entering ITE without sufficient entry scores to enter university so she ‘just went in to the workforce...hospitality...working in shops, in retail, being an assistant manager.’

For the five years before her education degree, Zoe worked at a comedy agency where she developed many skills but ‘hadn’t thought about a real career and what [she] wanted to do with the rest of [her] life.’

She ‘started to think about what she wanted to ‘contribute to the community, to society’ so, after seeking advice and information and volunteering in a few different fields, Zoe focused on goals of ‘teaching and education.’

Zoe had already started a psychology degree, which satisfied the numeracy and literacy test requirements of her teacher education course application. However, she also needed to explain why she ‘wanted to apply...what skills [she] thought she could bring, what personal attributes [she] had’ so Zoe undertook volunteer work with children and also worked as a teacher’s aide for one school term.

‘I wanted to really get an idea of whether it would be a job that I really wanted...and whether I would be suitable for it,’ she says.

Zoe thought that being ‘proactive’ in undertaking work in the education system would strengthen her teacher education application.

On top of that her prior work experience gave her ‘a bank of skills that would translate to teaching – a rapport with kids...time management...working alongside [colleagues] harmoniously...confidence.’ Her life experiences of ‘travelling, meeting people from different cultures’ would present well as an attribute for teaching.

When asked to consider strategies that could be added to the selection process, Zoe’s first response is a ‘face-to-face interview.’ She would also have been ‘really happy to write a personal account’ of why she wanted to be a teacher and why she would be appropriate; this would have helped to confirm her commitment to teacher education and her skills. She

says it would be valuable to take the strategy 'a step further' with an interview in which she had to provide a 'convincing' case for the selection panel and *herself*.

Zoe also suggests some form of 'psychological evaluation' or a 'survey that [a] student can fill out that might give an indication of their personal attributes.' When seeing a careers counsellor, Zoe completed a 'personality test' that pointed her towards teaching, counselling or psychology.

Zoe says potential teacher education students could demonstrate 'commitment' by undertaking work experience or volunteer work, even though these are not easy to fit in around full-time jobs.

With professional experience placements, Zoe emphasises the need to help students realise earlier, rather than later in their course, if they are suited to teaching. She notes that pre-service teachers tend to drop out of teacher education courses 'after placements' when they realise 'no, this is not for me'. She says it would be better if students could 'get a taste of that earlier' so they could say 'this isn't right for me, I'm going to try a different avenue [to another career].'

Zoe says the opportunity to 'really sell' herself during the selection process was far more valuable than being selected on the basis of an academic score. When told her state government was reviewing the sole use of the ATAR in selection, she says: 'I think there needs to be a combination of raising the...ATAR score, but then also developing some system that shows what kind of person this score is.' Zoe reiterates the importance of personality; being able to develop a rapport with students and knowing 'what is it about education you like...why [do] you want to be in education.' She says selecting students solely through a score cannot answer those questions.

'In Australian society, often teaching and education doesn't get the respect it deserves, and I think, by raising the bar, it will create a career that is looked upon as being something that you want to achieve,' Zoe says.

APPENDIX C: ASHLEY (NEW SOUTH WALES)

Ashley, from NSW, 'always knew she wanted to be a teacher one day.' From when she was a five-year-old she says teaching was a goal 'inspired' by her kindergarten teacher and being 'exposed' to family and friends who worked in education.

Years later, she followed through a recommendation, by teachers from my school, to 'find out...about how to actually enter into teacher education.' This may be viewed as a connection between a long-held goal and action to realise this unwavering 'dream'.

She learned she was selected into teacher education when guaranteed an offer, *regardless* of her final Year 12 results, through her university's *early entry* program. To qualify for the offer, Ashley wrote a 500-word statement about her 'personal qualities' and was interviewed by a teacher education academic.

She says: 'The interview was a great opportunity for me to...show my passion for teaching and be recognised as more than a number. I got to share my actual experiences in person rather than just on a piece of paper.' It also provided her with the opportunity to meet one of her potential lecturers and become familiar with the university's layout.

Ashley 'hadn't had much experience with children before the interview' other than work experience in Year 10. However, in the interview, she 'pushed' skills developed through reception work, sporting involvement and school leadership roles that included 'working with adults...communicating...building leadership...team work...working with others...confidence to interact.'

On several occasions, Ashley has been able to identify and embrace opportunities to develop personal and professional skills and begin professional networking. For example, her 'leadership skills' enabled her to 'take more initiative' on her placements. These then led to her following up on opportunities, highlighted by her university, to work with children.

'I've furthered those skills by getting employment roles in the field. I've done work with children in NRL [activities],' Ashley says.

Ashley was offered a casual position at one of her placement schools. She says doing 'quite a lot of [work] there' helped her considerably with 'behaviour management skills' and also provided ongoing connections with 'some really experienced teachers.'

Ashley says 'passion' is key to teaching and suggests that passion could be demonstrated by potential students 'filming themselves' presenting, as well as through course application interviews.

Strong communication skills are also vital to teaching. 'You could write the best lesson plans, but if you can't actually communicate with the children, or parents, or other school staff....' she says.

When asked about ways to raise the teaching bar, Ashley says people need to know 'what they are getting themselves into because...once they get on...professional experience they realise how hard it is so...informing people what they are really in for is important.'

Ashley says it is possible that people view 'teaching as a back-up plan' for careers and that the 'image' of teachers needs to be improved because teachers are 'shaping future generations.'

People often see teaching as 'a nine-to-three job with 12 weeks of holidays, but it's more than that, it's so much more,' Ashley says.

APPENDIX D: KARSAN (SOUTH AUSTRALIA)

The dot-com boom of the late 1990s usurped Karsan's original intention to teach.

'The Internet was taking off and my family often said to me, 'You need to get into computers. It's where the money is, it's where the industry is going.' And I did it based on that,' he says.

After rejecting a teacher education offer, Karsan went on to complete a Bachelor of Information Technology – a course in which his success outweighed his levels of enjoyment. He transferred to Arts and became 'complacent' as he majored in Multimedia and Professional Writing.

However, during his time working in IT at a university, this self-dubbed 'people person' discovered he liked training staff more than he liked working on computers.

'My passion lay with helping people out and seeing the learning that happened,' Karsan says.

His wife, who comes from a family of teachers, was 'very encouraging' when Karsan mused over teaching but working to support a family with children impeded his goal for a time.

Karsan's university job did, however, give him access to a line manager and the institution's School of Education, with whom he discussed managing work and potential study commitments.

He says: 'Both parties were very accommodating and the university also has a study assistance programme, which lends itself very well for me to be able to study and work in the same School of Education.'

Karsan applied to the Tertiary Admissions Centre as a mature-age student. 'I matriculated in 1997 and then I studied until 2003, so my results [were] superseded.' Nevertheless, the university determined that Karsan's units still equipped him for teacher education.

Karsan says his pre-application conversations with the Admission Centre, Head of School and Director of the Unit meant that he 'didn't have any misconceptions about being

accepted. It was just my ability to be able to successfully complete it, given the amount of time and the challenges of having a young family as well.'

He chose to do a Master of Teaching majoring in Primary and Middle education, because he wanted a cross-section of specialisations.

'I wasn't quite sure whether I wanted to focus on Primary or Secondary, so I thought Primary, Middle are probably the best shot because it casts the biggest net over the range of kids' he says.

Studying part-time 'was the best thing' for Karsan because he could 'really digest and think about what I was learning.'

Karsan says the skill transferable from teaching adults to teaching in schools was 'more about the language...than the practical aspect' of his experience,

He was 'able to use explicit teaching to show students how to approach a subject. 'You need to click on this ... the type of training manuals that I would come up with...I was also one of the key people to make FAQs or audio files or little videos to show [university] staff how to do something,' Karsan says.

When it comes to attracting suitable teacher candidates, Karsan says, "an interview, including a psych test, is probably desirable.' Also important is supporting pre-service teachers to make informed decisions about whether teaching is for them. This, he says, should include 'having your practicum in the very first few months of getting accepted into whatever program it is.'

The placement experience, he says, is 'more than just a mentor teacher watching you. The vested interest isn't with the pre-service teacher. It's with the class. I think having more observations done by more senior people' to identify at-risk students early is more important than the money the student 'brings in for the university.'

'Kids are very precious and they deserve nothing but the best teachers,' Karsan says.

APPENDIX E: THE SURVEY

Survey: Initial Teacher Education Selection Methods

In the context of considerable public discussion surrounding selection into Initial Teacher Education, the Australian Council of Deans of Education wants to update data regarding approaches in use for determining admission into initial teaching courses that recognises personal qualities as well as academic achievement. These include but are not limited to interviews; a portfolio; or a written statement. In this survey, you are asked to consider the same questions as those you may recall completing a few years ago.

While information on selection based on secondary education, higher education, VET or mature age is available from the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) *Initial Teacher Education: Data Report May 2013* and subsequent publications, this information is quantitative only and does not provide any contextual information that can explain why particular selection methods are used.

The ACDE has commissioned Professor John Williamson and Dr Christine Gardner to replicate the survey (commissioned originally by AITSL and conducted by Universities Australia) of selection methods for Australian Initial Teacher Education Programs. The purpose of the survey is to provide the rich description that can add to explanations of and nuance the quantitative data and give insight into the diversity and contexts of processes that HE providers use in 2016 for selection into ITE programs.

The report will be used to provide advice to the ACDE who will then consider further use of the report to inform communications with other bodies. The ACDE may publish the report on its website but no institution will be identified. **Please return this survey to projectmanager@acde.edu.au (Ms Anne Szadura, ACDE Officer) by Thursday, September [date] 2016.**

How to Answer the Survey

To provide context each university is asked to nominate the broad descriptors for **Location** and **Size of ITE Cohort**

There are then eight specific questions.

Each of the eight questions asks in what circumstances your university uses a particular method of selection, and; why you do or do not use that particular method of selection. We are seeking short responses rather than in depth analysis at present. The answers should give a clear summary of the reasons why certain methods may be used and others not.

Example answers could include such phrases as

Circumstances of use	Why? /Why not?
required / mandatory	evidence / no evidence of effectiveness exists
low SES	low / high cost
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	aligns with our program goal
International students	low / high predictive power
regional / remote students	Established method
mature age	only for undergraduate / graduate entry
Primary / secondary/ early years course	used in combination with
Postgraduate / undergraduate	

Contextual Questions

What is the location description of your ITE operation?

Metropolitan	
Regional/rural only	
Both metropolitan and regional/rural	

What is the overall size of your ITE cohort by number of students enrolled?

Fewer than 1000	
1000-2000	

More than 2000	
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Survey Questions

Question 1.

In what circumstances do you use bonus marks in selection?

None	
Minority	
Majority	
All	

Circumstances of use?

Why? / Why not?

Question 2.

In what circumstances do you use essays/personal statements from applicants for selection?

None	
Minority	
Majority	
All	

Circumstances of use?

Why? / Why not?

Question 3.

In what circumstances do you use applicants' prior experience for selection?

None	
Minority	
Majority	
All	

Circumstances of use?

Why? / Why not?

Question 4.

In what circumstances do you use interviews with applicants for selection?

None	
Minority	
Majority	
All	

Circumstances of use?

Why? / Why not?

Question 5.

In what circumstances do you use experience relevant to teaching for selection?

None	
Minority	
Majority	
All	

Circumstances of use?

Why? / Why not?

Question 6.

In what circumstances do you use psychometric testing of applicants for selection?

None	
Minority	
Majority	
All	

Circumstances of use?

Why? / Why not?

Question 7.

In what circumstances do you use written applications for selection?

None	
Minority	
Majority	
All	

Circumstances of use?

Why? / Why not?

Question 8.

Do you use any other selection methods for initial teacher education selection?

Yes	
No	

Which methods?

Why? / Why not?

APPENDIX F

Interview items – Deans

1. Your institution is one of a few that reported employing a selection process that involves use of [e.g. interviews, bonus points, psychometric testing, ...depends on context/survey response].

Please describe:

- How this works in your context,
- Groups of students targeted by this recruitment strategy
- Characteristic of students attracted to apply to your institution who might not apply normally, and,
- The advantages and disadvantages of using this strategy.

2. Can you tell us about a student who entered their Course via an alternate pathway and successfully completed the Course?

- What particular aspects of their success stood out?
- What challenges did they face?
- What did your School/Faculty do to support them?
- Do you use these successful examples as part of your marketing?

3. Please describe broadly your experience, to date, with students who have enrolled through alternate selection pathways.

- Positive experiences?
- Challenges?
- Supports?
- Comments related to particular groups who form a focus for your faculty/school?

4. Is there anything else you would like to add to the broad question of how we can attract the most suitable people into teaching?

APPENDIX G

Interview Items – Pre-service Teachers and Early Career Teachers

1. Please tell me about the process you went through for selection into your Initial Teacher Education Degree/Program/Course. Please mention any specific selection strategies in which you participated and your view of the usefulness of any of these. (Prompts: application, interview, test etc/ provided me with opportunity to present my strengths, confirmed my interest in and commitment to teaching)
2. [Added part way through interviews] When you first thought about applying for entry to Teacher Education did you actually think this would be a real possibility for you? (Prompt - Did you know of others or talk with others from your community who had had applied successfully for entry to Teacher Education?)
3. Please describe two or three prior work/family/other experiences that you had before you applied for selection and that you may have presented during the selection process. (Prompts: work, family, other/ responsibilities, experience with children and young people, workplace skills...)
4. Now that you have nearly completed your first (or later?) year of study, in your view please describe how useful these two or three experiences or skills have been in your progress in your Degree/Program/Course? (Prompts: commitment developed in previous work/ approach to my learning developed during previous study / communication skills needed for previous work, family relationships)
5. Please consider these experiences again and talk about any link you see between these and your learning during your professional experience placement/s to date. (Prompts: commitment developed in previous work/ approach to my learning developed during previous study / communication skills needed for previous work, family relationships)
6. During thinking about your study and learning this year, do you consider there are other aspects of your prior learning or prior experiences that could be useful for those who are selecting teacher candidates to take into account?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add to the broad question of how we attract the most suitable people into teaching?