

**0410**

## **A developmental approach for reform of initial teacher education**

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### **Background**

Evidence linking student performance in schools to the quality of teaching in their classrooms has made governments more aware of the need to raise the quality of initial teacher preparation. Governments are concerned that existing teacher education programs do not prepare graduates with the critical skills they need for teaching in today's schools. Data about the high numbers of teacher graduates who leave teaching in the first three years of employment supports the view that their overall professional readiness and resilience for teaching is low.

These concerns about the suitability of teacher education programs have generated different responses from stakeholders involved in the teacher education enterprise. Higher education providers have been prompted to seek stronger research evidence regarding the design and delivery of initial teacher programs and what works (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) while governments and statutory teaching authorities have looked to ways to increase the school-based component of teacher education to improve teacher readiness (Education and Training Committee of the Parliament of Victoria, 2005; Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training 2007). In Australia, England and Scotland, preservice teachers are now spending more time in schools during their pre-service training. School-based career change teacher preparation programs are also becoming an accepted solution to the problems of teacher supply for schools and districts with high levels of disadvantage. Support for the American inspired Teach First program, which selectively supplies high-performing graduates to teach in disadvantaged schools, has also grown and eleven countries are now using or investigating this program for pre-service teacher development (Teach First, 2009).

Teacher education providers are challenged by a number of these issues. In particular they are concerned that governments implement changes without sufficient evidence to show they will deliver the improvements being sought (Darling-Hammond and Haselkorn, 2009). Added to this, allocation of resources to new initiatives such as school-based post graduate programs and the Teach First initiative have not included additional funding to the higher education sector to help them improve their contribution to teacher education. Providers feel concerned that their effort to maintain quality teacher education over many years, despite consistently low budgets, has not been appreciated or addressed and that their role in teacher education has become undervalued (Ure, 2009, Grossman et al, 2009).

### **Research Questions**

This paper presents a review of the organisation and management of teacher education and the impact of this on the design and delivery of programs. It examines stakeholder expectations for teacher education programs and differences in perceptions about quality of program design the assessment of teacher development. The discussion points the need for an improved understanding about initial teacher development by all stakeholders to improve programs design, implementation and assessment procedures.

### **Methods**

A review of the literature on teacher development suggests that differences in understanding about the quality and utility of programs could be improved through the application of a developmental model for teaching linking five dimensions and four phases of teacher development. The model provides a coherent framework for stages in the development of knowledge, for, about and of teaching and learning with the use of evidence and professional guidelines to support teaching and learning.

## **Frame**

The multidimensional model for teacher development provides an explanation of the stages of teacher development. It presents a holistic account of teacher development and an improved framework to link elements of pedagogy with the development of teacher knowledge and practice.

## **Research findings**

The model creates an overarching agenda for a review of teacher education programs and suggests that reform of teacher education might be achieved through a shared response among stakeholders that takes account of:

- the need for a clear vision for the purpose of teacher education
- the values to be fostered in teacher education programs
- the needs and roles of stakeholders in teacher education
- the purpose of different teacher education programs
- a framework for understanding how teacher development might be addressed in different types of teacher education programs
- the construct of assessment and accountability for teacher education programs

While this paper does not directly address the issue of resources there is some suggestion of a need for greater appreciation of both the academic and school teaching time that is required to support integrated teaching and learning situations using placement procedures that are typical of a (clinically) practice-based professional preparation program.