



The Australian College of Educators Response to:

DEEWR Discussion Paper

Future Options for Alternative Pathways into Teaching

February 22 2013

The Australian College of Educators (ACE) is well placed to provide feedback on the DEEWR Discussion Paper: Future Options for Alternative Pathways into Teaching. The College was founded in 1959 to provide an independent voice for educators and to advance education as a profession. It is the oldest association in the country that represents educators across the nation. ACE members are drawn from both the government and non-government sectors of schooling and across all levels of education from early childhood through tertiary. It is the professional voice for educators. As a self-funding body, the College is clearly focussed on providing the best outcomes in education for young people and operates free of agendas that do not relate to good education. We thank DEEWR for providing ACE with an opportunity to provide feedback on the Discussion Paper.

Introduction

The DEEWR Discussion Paper, Future Options for Alternative Pathways into Teaching paper focuses on a relatively unproven need for alternative pathways, while ignoring the major issues that face Australia in assuring a quality national teacher education system.

The key questions to ask of future options for alternative pathways into teaching would seem to be:

- Are these options addressing the most pressing current threats to the quality of Australia's future teacher workforce?
- Are these options providing more effective programs for preparing teachers to meet standards expected of graduate and registered teachers than existing programs with a similar student profile?
- Are these options more efficient in preparing teachers for the demands of teaching?
- Are these options providing teachers who are more likely to make a career of teaching?
- Are these options attracting greater numbers of highly qualified career changers into teaching than current post-graduate programs?
- Are these options attracting more suitable applicants into teaching than current programs with similar purposes in similar institutions?
- Are selection processes for alternative pathways a valid basis on which to predict people who will be effective school principals and school leaders?
- Are these options providing a viable model that can be 'scaled-up' and applied more generally?
- Is the emphasis on alternative pathways tokenistic; that is, is its main purpose to give the impression that governments are paying serious attention to the problems arising from years running down teacher salaries and the status of the profession, while doing little?

Based on the evidence presented in the Discussion Paper, the answer in most cases would seem to be no. In some cases the answer is we just don't know. For none of these questions is there sufficient or convincing evidence to give a positive answer. In the case of claims to be a better way to recruit people who will make more effective educational leaders, they have as much validity as claims made by snake oil salesmen.

Will alternative pathways address critical current challenges in teacher recruitment and preparation?

The discussion paper rightly points to the importance of attracting academically strong candidates and preparing them well. Everybody wants this. It is not a special feature of alternative programs. Countries with relatively successful student achievement have attractive, better-paid teaching professions and do not need alternatives.

A basic question is whether so-called alternative programs are an effective and efficient way to meet this need. Or, whether current privileging of such programs is actually meant to distract attention from what is really important if Australia is to have strong teaching force.

The focus of the paper seems to be misdirected. More than 15 000 students graduate from Australian teacher education programs every year, but TfA has placed only 127 students. No mention is made about the need for governments to assist the former programs to attract academically strong applicants as well. Is this not far more important?

It is not clear what an ‘alternative’ pathway can achieve that regular pathways could not given the ability to pay an attractive income during training.

Australia does have a problem ensuring that entrants to teacher education program are from abler academic backgrounds. However, the problem does not arise from lack of alternatives; it stems directly from the fact that governments have failed to maintain relative salaries and status of teaching.

ACE’s position would be that we first need to clarify the most important needs so far as Australia’s teacher education system as a whole is concerned, then ask whether there is any evidence that so-called alternative pathways could better meet those needs.

There is nothing particularly clever or difficult about selling a program that offers graduates a substantial salary while they learn how to teach. Singapore pays all teacher education students a salary during their training and the effects are clear. Most Australian teachers trained thirty to forty years ago were paid substantial scholarships during training. By all means, let’s reintroduce such a system. It will certainly lift the competition for places. However, to offer a substantial salary but minimise the training required seems counterproductive.

The Discussion Paper does not provide action on the main factors affecting candidate choices - the status of teaching and long-term salary prospects. The research on factors affecting graduate career choices is clear on this. These are the reasons why fewer high quality graduates are choosing teaching. It is puzzling why there is no recognition of the central need for action to lift the relative salaries of teachers if the academic quality of candidates is to increase.

The paper needs to acknowledge that, ultimately, governments, both state and federal, are responsible for ensuring that salaries enable teaching to compete effectively from the pool of talent. While most of the actions suggested for attracting better candidates may have benefits, they are weak compared with actions that would substantially increase salaries for teachers who attain high standards of practice and professional certification. It needs to be pointed out that none of the top countries in international tests of student achievement see a need for alternative pathways. They make sure the regular pathways for recruiting, accreditation and registration ensure quality teachers. They do not regard these as “impediments”.

Recent evidence shows a further decline in ATAR scores for teacher education students. This has been a long-term trend for which governments should be accountable. The decline matches the decline in teacher salaries relative to GDP per capita over the same period of time.

The Discussion Paper might have noted the considerable international research showing a strong relationship between teacher pay and student performance across countries. A recent paper by Peter Dolton, et al. in the journal *Economic Policy* (Jan. 2011) concludes:

Our results suggest that recruiting higher ability individuals into teaching and permitting scope for quicker salary advancement will have a positive effect on pupil outcomes.

The authors go on to say:

To provide some idea of the scale of the effects we find our coefficients suggest that a 10% increase in teacher pay would give rise to around a 5–10% increase in pupil performance. Likewise, a 5% increase in the relative position of teachers in the salary distribution would increase pupil performance by about 5–10%. These effects are significant and robust to the estimation procedure we use and the different identification assumptions we make to facilitate each estimation technique.

In another study, the same authors showed that the number of high quality graduates in England who choose teaching moves up and down as relative salaries for teachers move up and down (Chevalier, Dolton & McIntosh, 2007).

The authors argue that each country gets the teachers it wants and deserves. Or, each country gets the teachers it is willing to pay for. The evidence is that Australia has been less and less willing to pay for high quality teachers. It has maintained reasonably competitive salaries at the entry stage but these rapidly become uncompetitive with other professions after five to ten years. It is this comparison that matters when high quality graduates make their career choices, not the starting salary. Where Australia falls down in comparison with high achieving countries is in the ratio of salaries at the top of the scale to that at the bottom. Whether alternative methods for recruiting students into teaching exist or not is largely irrelevant to improving the quality of applicants to teacher education programs or the quality of the programs themselves.

The meaning of “alternative pathways”

The term “alternative pathway” is used approvingly as if it has a distinct and commonly understood meaning, but on close analysis this does not appear to be the case. There is a need to clarify what is meant by “alternative pathway”. What it is and what it is alternative to is not clearly defined. This becomes clear later in the paper when several teacher education programs, like the MTeach at Melbourne University, the accelerated program at Griffith, and long standing career change programs are described as alternative when they are clearly not.

What exactly is the nature of the alternative being discussed here? Does it mean a method of teacher education? Is it just a different agency for or method of recruiting future teachers?

It is certainly not a distinct or different method of preparing teachers. Many programs have emphasised the value of practice-based, clinical-based, and school-centred for many years, so that does not seem to be what distinguishes the meaning of alternative. The best of these programs also build a strong partnership between schools and universities. The main problem in going to scale with this well-established trend in teacher education has

been funding and finding suitable places in schools, not the lack of alternative pathways. And one of the main reasons for this is the excessive number of teachers in training.

Later in the paper, the term ‘Alternative Pathway Program’ is used. Does this mean “not a university teacher education program”? No, that cannot be right as so-called courses/programs for students in alternative pathways such as TfA are provided by a university.

Perhaps the term simply refers to contracting out to recruitment agencies other than government education departments or universities. Which raises the question, how have we come to the point where this is thought to be necessary? Why is the government contracting out for recruitment services rather than strengthening the capacity of universities to attract and enrol our ablest graduates? Is government advocacy for alternative pathways meeting the real need?

Advocacy without evidence

As a free advertisement for Teach for Australia, this document must be rated a success. As an attempt to provide a serious, balanced, well-argued, research-based analysis for future policy options in teacher education, it falls well short of what is needed at a time of some crisis in terms of sustaining a high quality teaching workforce.

A tendentious, and at times illogical, line of argument and reasoning pervades this poorly researched paper. At times it reads as if is an advertisement for the services of one self-interested business, when an impartial and disinterested presentation style would have been more appropriate.

Many examples of key loaded words appropriated to serve the purposes of this paper could be cited but here are a few: “flexible”, “impediment”, “effective”, “regulatory”, “barrier”, “employment-based”, workforce “imbalance”, and so on.

Words like “flexible” are used frequently as if they describe a distinctive characteristic of “alternative pathways”, but the term turns out to be vacuous and unjustified. It appears designed to persuade rather than inform.

“Employment”-based is a similarly feel good word, which on analysis conveys little, other than the obvious – that participants are paid money while being trained, while those in non-alternative pathways are not, even though they too spend extensive periods in schools.

The terms “impediment” and “barrier” are also used tendentiously, in ways they would never be used if talking about a respected profession.

Page 5 “Imbalance”

“The 2012 Schools Workforce research report released by the Productivity Commission highlighted that teacher workforce issues have the potential to compromise student

outcomes as they can limit the capacity of education authorities to supply quality teachers in all classrooms.”

It is not at all clear what this means – how can a “workforce issue” limit the capacity of education authorities.

Examples of tendentious or misleading representations

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... overcome barriers to entry to the profession . . .

What barriers are we talking about here? Does this refer to the expectation that entrants to the profession have graduated from accredited preparation programs and demonstrated that they have met standards for registration. Barrier for whom? Would one ever apply this attitude to any other profession. The Paper seems to set aside a long history behind why the state sets up these “barriers” in regulated professions in the public interest.

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“There is an ‘opportunity-cost’ for graduates with degrees other than education to consider in making the decision to enter teaching. Graduates, for example, need to consider the salaries and working conditions that would be associated with other career choices and the fact they will not be receiving an income while undertaking their initial teacher education..”

The claim being made here is spurious. All students entering graduate level teacher education programs have degrees in fields other than education.

In addition, any graduate entering a professional preparation program, whether it is psychology, medicine, law, whatever, expects that they will not receive an income during training and before they have qualified. The term ‘*opportunity-cost*’ is not applicable and is used inappropriately. This section needs to be deleted.

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*“The Queensland Department of Education and Training has implemented an initiative partnering with Griffith University to pilot a new “accelerated pathway program” to enable pre-service teacher education completion in one and a half years. It provides professional preparation for teaching and is designed **for high quality graduates from non-education backgrounds** wishing to teach in secondary schools.”*

This is a similarly deceptive misrepresentation. All graduates applying for postgraduate training are, of course, *from non-education backgrounds*. Also, there seems to be a not too subtle slur on education courses here. (It’s not obvious how a one and half year program can be described as “accelerated”, when the traditional Dip Ed is only one year.)

Specious arguments are made that would never be applied to other professional preparation programs. Would one ever claim that there are “opportunity costs” for graduates who have to undergo training to become doctors, engineers, architects, etc?

What seems to underlie this line of thinking is either ignorance about the knowledge base necessary to effective teaching, or disregard for it. There is a substantial knowledge base that graduate teachers should know about teaching and learning subject matter and the research shows that teachers well equipped with it are more effective. It is less likely that student teachers will have the opportunity to pick up this knowledge in a deep and substantial way while coping with the daily demands of teaching or short bursts of course work.

Australia does have a problem ensuring that entrants to teacher education program are from abler academic backgrounds. The problem does not arise from lack of alternatives; it stems directly from the fact that governments have failed to maintain relative salaries and status of teaching

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It is important to point out that the NCATE report cited is not talking about transforming teacher education through alternative programs such as Teach for America. It is documenting innovative trends in mainstream teacher education. Terms such as “Clinical”, school-centred, school-based, professional practice schools, and so on have been around for many years. Dozens of Australian reports and inquiries since the 1970s have documented the research showing the benefits of well-planned induction and mentoring programs, but governments have done little to fund their recommendations.

1. The case for alternative pathways

The paper does not establish that there is a need for alternatives to current programs.

Comments

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Once again, the implication that only “programs” such as Teach for Australia” aim to recruit high performing graduates is misleading. All programs aim to recruit the best students they can get. The problem is that, in this pursuit, they are severely handicapped by the relatively unattractive salaries governments are willing to provide.

Discussion points

The paper does not provide convincing evidence for the benefits of “alternative” pathways. No rigorous research has been conducted comparing the performance of TfA graduates with similar students completing other programs. No research has been conducted on how much better prepared TfA applicants would have been if they had trained in regular programs.

It is unfortunate and simplistic to create the impression of polar opposites between alternative and traditional, as if they are different methods of preparing teachers. Teach

for Australia is not a particular, or different or unique model for preparing teachers. It is mainly a method for recruiting applicants for teaching. And the evidence is that it is not a more effective method for doing this compared with what universities are doing now, or could do if they offered a salary during training. The University of Melbourne, for example has more applicants for its MTeach Program than there are for TfA. And the profile of the 700 students in the MTeach program is no different from that of TfA students. Monash University has five times the number of applicants for its Dip. Ed. program as there are places.

The importance of building strong links between theory and practice in professional preparation programs is well documented. (see ACER's evaluation of the Bachelor of Learning Management Program ten years ago on the DEEWR website). It is important to point out that these links are not necessarily strong just because student teachers are mainly based in schools. In fact, there is a danger that they will be less strong if they are given a heavy teaching load and left to sink or swim in a theoretical vacuum.

The basic features of effective teacher education programs are well established and should be present in any accredited program – it is not as if alternative programs necessarily have them and regular programs do not. (They are: coherence; clear links between practice and theory; well- trained supervising teachers; strong, equal partnerships between schools and universities; consistent use of standards in providing feedback; and so on.)

However, it does not provide action on the main factors affecting candidate choices - the status of teaching and long-term salary prospects. The research on factors affecting graduate career choices is clear on this. These are the reasons why fewer high quality graduates are choosing teaching. It is puzzling why there is no recognition of the central need for action to lift the relative salaries of teachers if the academic quality of candidates is to increase.

2. Current Approaches

Comments

International approaches

It is not correct to call all these different programs listed for England (not the UK, certainly not Scotland!) “alternative pathways”, unless this term means anything one chooses to call alternative.

This is a very limited and highly selective review of international approaches. No research is provided. No justification is provided as to why Australia should go down this path. The most successful countries in international tests of student achievement (Finland, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, etc), do not need to use alternative pathways. Shouldn't we be looking to more successful countries for our model?

Australian approaches

As indicated, the programs listed are not “alternative” in any meaningful sense. The MTeach at Melbourne University, for example, is the regular teacher education program for postgraduate students. In fact, there is considerable overlap between this program and that of TfA students, further muddying the meaning of alternative.

Current Australian Government funded alternative pathways.

This section of the Discussion Paper contains similar misleading statements to those listed earlier.

Dot point one: Once again, *all* programs enrol students from non-teaching backgrounds. To keep repeating this vacuous statement makes us feel that there is a deliberate and not so subtle intent to deceive or belittle mainstream student teachers and teacher education. Is this what a government discussion paper should be doing?

And all programs aim to attract high performing graduates. It’s not as if this is the exclusive province of TfA. However, giving a program the capacity to offer attractive salaries during training when others are not seems to be stacking the odds unfairly. All programs would be more attractive if students were paid a salary while doing them.

Why not make all programs “employment based”? This is another loaded term used as though it were a meaningful description of the methods of training teachers and as if it something exclusive to TfA. All programs could be employment based if the money were available, but still differ in their theory and practice of teacher education. In fact, all teacher education students in Singapore are employment based in that they become civil servants in effect.

Dot point 2: Why should we be impressed by a program that only aims to retain high performing graduates for only two years? Shouldn’t policies that aim to attract, prepare well and retain high performing teachers have much more priority?

Dot point 3: We are not clear how or why this claim is a distinctive or exclusive feature of TfA, or whether it is in fact true.

It would be more honest to say that TfA has about 800 applicants per year, rather than giving the total over the past three years. More students are applying each year for the mainstream teacher education program at the University of Melbourne than TfA. The numbers may also be misleading as students apply for more than one program.

Our information is that the academic profile of student characteristics in the TfA program is much the same as the mainstream program, negating the claim that this is a special strength of TfA. We are also lead to believe that TfA students are less likely to have degrees in arts and science fields relevant to successful teaching.

It needs to be said that the scope of the evaluation questions and the evidence that could be collected in the ACER evaluation was circumscribed. It is not surprising at all that people in schools are grateful for the opportunity to have high achieving graduates in their schools. They like them no matter what program they come from.

No rigorous comparative data about the professional knowledge and performance capabilities of TfA students relative to similar students from similar programs has been collected. This is the kind of data that should be being collected for all teacher education programs so that we have a sounder basis on which to evaluate programs and to make accreditation and registration decisions.

Teach Next

Multiple forms of programs for career changers have been organised by state and territory governments over many years. They have an important place, but it is misleading to label them “alternative” as if we were talking about something new and distinctive.

3. Discussion: Features of different pathways

Discussion points

- One feature of TfA that should be supported is to reinstate scholarships for teachers in training.
- The second point is unanswerable – no evidence to base a view on.
- The use of the term “barriers” should be avoided.
- Future leadership is important for all programs not just alternative ones, but the main focus, of course, should be on producing graduates who can meet high teaching standards.

Comments

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*. . . evaluations of alternative pathways programs internationally **can** give some indication of the likely success of different approaches in meeting Australian Government policy objectives.*

Can? They might – they might not. This statement could mean anything. No supporting evidence is provided – in fact we doubt that evaluations do give such an indication, or even can, given the vastly varied meanings of alternative, especially in the USA. There is a tendency to reify the concept of ‘alternative’ as if it refers to a well-defined ‘good’ thing with commonly agreed characteristics. It seems to be designed to give the impression that TfA will meet Australia’s policy objectives for a stronger teaching profession when in fact it is appears to be distracting public attention from the wider lack

of serious and comprehensive policies committed to lifting the attractiveness of teaching as a career.

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“The effectiveness of these programs in addressing critical workforce shortages and providing a source of high quality entrants will be determined, in part, by the number of places offered in alternative pathways and the level of take-up by eligible participants in shortage areas.”

This is a difficult sentence to understand. It seems to be assuming that programs like TfA have already demonstrated that they are more effective than existing mainstream programs with similar students. This is simply not known. Also, to imply that “effectiveness” is simply a matter of how many students are enrolled is a misuse of the term.

Middle Paragraph:

In October 2011, education ministers agreed to a new nationally consistent approach to teacher registration. One issue to be addressed was the provision for an ‘alternative authorisation to teach’ which, in limited circumstances, enables people who are not eligible for full registration to be employed in roles that would otherwise require registration. This provision can facilitate participants in alternative pathways to teach prior to receiving graduate qualifications in education. Although some success has been achieved in allowing ‘permission to teach’, state and territory legislation and regulation still appears to restrict access to these pathways in many jurisdictions.

Once again, there is an insidious implication that hard-won quality assurance arrangements are getting in the way of effective teacher education, when in fact they are getting in the way of what looks like a special interest group. It is hard to imagine any similar agency, using similar arguments, would get past first base in any other profession. It is hard to understand how our policy makers bought this nonsense.

Next paragraph:

In particular, some standards require applicants to post graduate teaching courses to have completed either a major or sub-major sequence of study in a specific discipline.

It is hard to understand how this statement ever made it into the paper. Is the government seriously suggesting that future teachers of history, science, mathematics, etc. do not need to know deeply the subjects they will be expected to teach? The research to support this is clear – deep knowledge of subject matter is a necessary condition for effective teaching. Acknowledgment of this can be found in all sets of standards for teaching.

This has been confirmed in the experience of both Teach for Australia and Teach Next, where both regulatory and legislative issues as well as standards for entry into postgraduate teacher education courses have impacted on the overall number of

participants. This has limited capacity to scale up these initiatives to a level where they would be effective in reducing teacher shortages.

As the Productivity Report makes clear, Australia does not have a teacher shortage problem, except in a small number of subject areas. In fact it has an oversupply problem. It does, however, have a problem in attracting and retaining sufficient teachers from the top 20 percent of high school graduates. Australia's main problem is that our governments are failing to meet their responsibility to lift salaries to a level that enables teaching to compete with other professions for the best graduates.

It is improved status and long-term salary prospects more than any other factor that will lift the academic quality of entrants to teaching.

It would be great if all teacher education students could be offered a salary during training, but unrealistic. TfA does not offer a model that can be 'scaled up'. The cost of training each person in the TfA program is many times the cost of students in equivalent programs.

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*In detailing the academic achievements of participants in its paper, **A future for employment-based pathways into teaching: a case for their expansion in Australia**, the Teach For Australia organisation supports its claim that the Teach for Australia program has attracted high quality participants. The paper outlines that Teach for Australia participants have an average Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) of 96, whereas in contrast, only 5 per cent of students entering traditional teacher training in Australia have ATARs over 90. In its evaluation of the Teach for Australia program ACER notes that the rigorous and multi-faceted selection process has identified high quality participants.*

These claims sound reasonable, but are not justified. There is nothing particularly clever or difficult about selling a program that offers graduates a substantial salary while they learn how to teach, and claiming credit for it. Most Australian teachers trained forty years ago were paid substantial scholarships during training, when teaching recruited from the ablest graduates. However, to offer a substantial salary while minimising the theoretical and research-based training required seems very odd

By all means, let's reintroduce such a system. It will certainly lift the competition for places. That is certainly not something that high achieving countries do, nor well-established professions with a complex knowledge base like teaching. Future primary teachers in apprentice type programs like TfA, for example, are not likely to have an opportunity to study the research on learning to read after six weeks of training and while coping with a 0.8 teaching load.

There seems to be an implicit rejection of the idea of a knowledge base for teaching in the TfA model, when in fact recent research is clearly showing clear links to better student outcomes. It is unlikely that teachers coming through a theoretically weak training program with little in depth knowledge of the research on teaching and learning

in the relevant content areas will be able to provide credible professional leadership in schools.

Able students also want to be in high status, exclusive programs that have similar students, as demonstrated by countries like Finland, Singapore and Taiwan, among others. Singapore pays all teacher education students a salary during their training and the effects are clear.

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These include the high quality professional experience gained by participants through clinical models as well as access to professional mentoring and support. As these are elements of many alternative pathways, it suggests that graduates from alternative pathways may be better prepared for teaching than those from traditional coursework based pathways.

There is no evidence to support this suggestion. Once again, tendentious rhetoric.

Many programs have combined clinical, school-centred, practice-based experience with course work for many years.

4. Objectives for alternative pathways

Discussion points

- It might be more appropriate to discuss the role of the Australian Government in ensuring and maintaining high quality entrants to mainstream teacher education programs and high quality training.
- The same applies to state and territory governments, who should also ensure that their accreditation bodies insist that universities maintain high cut-off scores for entrants to teacher education programs.
- Schools need resources to provide high quality supervision and teacher-mentors need special training.

Comments

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The Paper states:

Based on the discussion in this paper, the objectives in supporting alternative pathways could include:

- *overcoming barriers to entering the profession, particularly for career changers;*

We do not see this as a problem currently. There have been many fairly successful career

change programs in recent years. If removing “barriers” means poorer preparation for teaching, then it may become a problem.

- *attracting high quality entrants and people who may not otherwise have considered teaching, including both new graduates and mid-career professionals, into initial teacher education;*

Enough has been said about such spurious assumptions - it needs to be recognised that governments and the salary levels offered are ultimately responsible for the difficulty providers have in attracting academically strong students.

- *diversifying the teaching workforce to ensure it reflects the diversity of the student population;*

Another spurious implicit claim. We do not believe alternative programs are necessary to achieve diversity.

- *producing teacher education graduates with extensive practical experience who meet the high standards of professional knowledge required for entry to the profession;*

Surely this is an aim of all teacher education programs – not just alternative programs.

- *recruiting teachers who have strong leadership potential;*

Likewise, this should be a factor in selecting students for all programs (but doubtful that anyone has the ability to do this in valid and reliable ways)

- *maximising the retention of new teachers in the teaching profession; and*

Once again, this should be an aim of all programs, but achieving it will depend much more on reforming career paths and better salaries than anything that Alternative programs can achieve.

- *providing opportunities for targeted teacher recruitment in a way that addresses critical workforce shortages in areas such as mathematics, science, technology and languages and in particular geographic locations.*

We do not see evidence that alternative programs like TfA can do much to achieve this – instead we may need to do what is usually done to meet a shortage, offer higher salaries – create a stronger market for teachers with these skills

Other policy considerations include identifying alternative pathway options that are:

- *effective and efficient;*
- *sustainable in the long term;*
- *able to be integrated with the mainstream teaching profession;*
- *enjoy a level of support from teacher employers; and*
- *can be sustained without the need for ongoing Australian Government intervention.*

These, except the last, clearly need to be government objectives for all teacher education programs.

Conclusion

The Discussion Paper focuses on a relatively unproven need for alternative pathways, while ignoring the major issues that face Australia in assuring a quality national teacher education system.

Several reports from the Australian Government indicate that, although many high achievers consider teaching important and challenging, they do not pursue a career in teaching because salaries, promotional pathways and status are limited relative to other professions.¹ These are the really significant barriers for our ablest graduates in considering teaching as a career, not the lack of alternative pathways.

Finland has ten applicants for every training place in teacher education. It has no need to even think about alternative pathways. It focuses on making sure existing programs are as rigorous as possible. It does not have the wide salary disparity Australia has across the professions, meaning that teaching is able to compete with other professions for the ablest graduates. As a result, Finland is able to place high levels of trust in its teachers and spends less on weeding out weak teachers and on ineffective bonus pay schemes aimed at motivating teacher effort.

Reference:

Chevalier, A., Dolton, P. & McIntosh, S. (2007). Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in the UK: An Analysis of Graduate Occupation Choice from the 1960s to the 1990s *Economica*, [Volume 74, Issue 293](#), 69–96.

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ACE represents members with a wide range of views. The opinions expressed in this paper may not be shared by all ACE members.

¹ **Attitudes to Teaching as a Career: A Synthesis of Attitudinal Research (DEST, 2006)**