

Growing and Nurturing Educators

Literature Review Summary

Pathways to Teaching



Introduction



Higher education-based models of teacher education increasingly face competition from school-based and employment-based pathways. In Australia these pathways are used to enhance the higher education experience by placing greater emphasis on students being immersed in contexts where they are most likely to be working. This Literature Review Summary identifies common approaches to teacher preparation and explores some of the challenges and effectiveness of these.

Pathways to teaching

All teacher preparation pathways in Australia support the development of both theoretical knowledge and practice-based learning.

School-based pathways occur in several different forms:

- **Fast tracking programs** aim to place suitably qualified candidates in schools earlier than higher education programs would normally allow. This enables any shortfall of teachers to be met in areas of particular need.
- **Residencies** typically run for approximately one year and **internships** are generally on a shorter-term basis but timing varies considerably. Some residencies and internships offer scholarships, stipends or salaries.
- **Teacher traineeship programs** enable schools to select trainees and where relevant the institution providing the students qualification. An example of this in the UK is the School Centred Initial Teacher Training program.
- **Employment-based pathways** for graduate students, such as Teach for Australia, provide a short teaching course (approx. 6 weeks) before placing

students in schools while coursework is completed part-time. Those changing careers may be attracted to this pathway as it minimises potential loss of income.

- **Other programs** aim to expand the diversity of teachers in the profession or prepare education students to teach in specific contexts including low socio-economic areas or remote communities. Entry requirements have a more focused selection criteria, such as requiring students of a particular background or that they have a passion for social justice.



Hunter Valley Grammar School

Challenges of school-based pathways

While these innovative school-based pathways are becoming increasingly prevalent some challenges exist.

- The coordination required between higher education institutions and schools can be complex. However, synchronous and asynchronous online study allows flexibility for education students and is becoming increasingly common.
- When schools are geographically dispersed there can be difficulties for education students to connect with others in similar circumstances which can lead to feelings of isolation.
- The decision regarding the distribution of financial burden between students, schools, higher education institutions and the various levels of government is complicated.



Carinya Christian School Gunnedah

Effectiveness of school-based pathways

The vast number of variables involved in teaching and learning make it difficult to ascertain the impact of school-based pathways in terms of school students' academic success. Nevertheless, there are other ways to assess pathways to teaching, such as teacher preparedness and diversity of candidates, although research is limited.

1. Higher education-based teacher programs

- **Preparedness for realities of teaching:** Australian schools operate in diverse contexts. Even when teacher education programs focus on preparing students for high poverty situations, many teachers feel challenged once they face the realities of teaching in disadvantaged schools. Factors that influence teachers' feelings of preparedness include prior experiences in contexts similar to the school where they are employed and the extent to which they are required to teach out-of-field.
- **Importance of degree length:** An Australian study found a one-year Graduate Diploma was less effective in terms of teachers feeling prepared than a two-year Master or a four-year Bachelor degree. American studies concur but whether this impacted education students' learning depended more on the quality of preparation than the length of qualification.

2. Residencies and internships

Mentoring and collegial support appear to be key in retention rates for residencies and internships. Residency programs tend to attract more diverse teachers. However, this could be due to the higher number of career changers in these programs.

3. Employment-based pathways

- **Teach for America/Australia:** There has been little difference identified between Teach for America graduates and other

novice teachers. In Australia, studies have found principals and school students are generally positive about Teach for Australia graduates. The Teach for Australia program has a high workload and due to teachers' inexperience can initially be stressful. However, principals reported that after six months, Teach for Australia graduates were at a similar standard to other early career teachers. In addition, more Teach for Australia graduates achieved proficient status after their two-year placement than beginning teachers in their first two years.

- Uncertified teachers starting employment as a [stopgap for emergency shortfalls](#), do not initially perform as well as certified teachers. However, over time they become comparable to early career teachers holding an education degree.

Wyatt-Smith, C., Holloway, J., Alexander, C., Harris, L., Day, C., & Marcy, A. (2022). *Reviewing the Evidence Base: Attraction, Pathways and Retention - A Focus on Pathways to Teaching*. Sydney, Australia. Association of Independent Schools New South Wales and Australian Catholic University.

Access to full Literature Review here:




Shearwater, The Mullumbimby Steiner School