Chapter 3
Improving Initial Teacher Education in Australia:
Solutions and Recommendations From the Teaching Teachers for the Future Project

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ABSTRACT

Initial teacher education (ITE) programs are subject to agencies which shape and define them through regulatory accreditation processes (Lloyd, 2013a, 2013b). This chapter argues that the design of ITE programs needs to build the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) capabilities (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, 2008) of future teachers. After establishing that there are both accountability and improvement agendas, this chapter outlines the Teaching Teachers for the Future (TTF) Project, which involved all 39 Australian Higher Education Institutions providing ITE programs in Australia. The TTF Project was a 15 month long, $8 million project, funded by the Australian Government's ICT Innovation Fund which adopted an approach reflecting an improvement agenda. The TTF Project is discussed in terms of the TPACK conceptualisation guiding the project, and the research and evaluation of that project. The TTF Project's key outcomes are summarised, and these inform the presentation of solutions and recommendations.

INTRODUCTION: INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, there is very strong evidence of an ongoing quality teacher agenda, reflected in numerous reviews of initial teacher education (ITE) and the development of strategic approaches at the national and jurisdictional levels of each State and Territory. Specifically, in 2014, a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group was established to provide advice to the Australian Government on "how teacher education programmes could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom" (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014, p. 2). The *Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group Issues Paper* (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014)

acknowledges that additional reviews, inquiries and changes to teacher education have been undertaken in the following jurisdictions. These include reforms to attract quality teacher education students, and improve their preparation for teaching:

- **New South Wales:** *Great Teaching, Inspired learning: Blueprint for Action* (New South Wales Government Education and Communities, 2014).
- **Victoria:** *From New Directions to Action: World class teaching and school leadership* (Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2013).
- **Queensland:** *A Fresh Start: Improving the preparation and quality of teachers for Queensland schools* (Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2013).
- **South Australia:** *Building a Stronger South Australia: High Quality Education* (Government of South Australia, 2013).

These reviews, reports and initiatives illustrate the accountability and improvement agendas in ITE in Australia. In the report *Troubled Times in Australian teacher education: 2012-2013* (Lloyd, 2013a), ten interdependent tensions were identified in the context of a highly regulated ITE environment; namely, Authority, Knowledge, Graduate identity, Literacy and Numeracy, Entry and Participation, Early Years, Crowded Curriculum, Teacher Educators, Public Perceptions, Policy Pendulum. From her audit process, analysis, and related methodological approaches in her study, Lloyd (2013a) suggests that there is a need to "temper the identified tensions" (p. 8), and identified seven considerations for addressing these; i.e.

1. Establish a hierarchy of agencies, streamline the process,
2. Redistribute the responsibility, reduce duplication,
3. Reconsider the use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs) in accreditation,
4. Question the representation of teacher knowledge,
5. Break the nexus between qualification, registration and employment, extend the continuum,
6. Set expectations for teacher educators, expand the definition,
7. Frame the future with care.

These are directly relevant to this chapter. The reconsideration of the use of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teacher: Graduate Teachers* (AITSL, 2011a) and their integral role in the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (AITSL, 2011b) is of specific interest in terms of how ITE programs can be designed and implemented to enable the development of graduate capabilities which addresses Lloyd's identification of 'vital' knowledge that "Teacher education is premised on the concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1986, 1987) and more recently, Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006)" (Lloyd, 2013a, p. 60) . Her stance is supported by research findings (Agyei & Voogt, 2011; Drent & Meelissen, 2008) that have established that a "crucial factor influencing new teachers' adoption of technology is the quantity and quality of pre-service technology experiences included in their teacher education programmes" (Tondeur et al., 2012, p. 134). However, Tondeur et al. (2012) highlight that research findings, such as those reported by Sang, Valcke, van Braak, and Tondeur (2010) and Tearle and Golder (2008), have found that "beginning teachers feel they are not well-prepared to effectively use technology in their classrooms" (Tondeur et al., 2012, p. 134).

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