

Submission on Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

The focus of the InSpEd submission on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) was the education of students with disability and special education needs. We argued that the presence of students with disability in mainstream classrooms means that all teachers need some preparation for the inclusion of these students in their initial teacher education and that the day-to-day practices of classroom teachers impact all students, including those at risk of learning failure through disability or other factors.

We recorded our support for the following points made in the discussion paper produced by the *Teacher Education Expert Panel*:

- Evidence-based teaching practices and the scientific theories supporting them;
- The use of evidence-based practices for all students in addressing the needs of students with disability or learning difficulties;
- The use of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) based on constant and regular formative assessment as a framework to provide targeted intervention for learners who do not progress at the same rate as their peers;
- The debunking of myths in education, including neuromyths.

In response to a question relating to other evidence-based practices that should be prioritised in initial teacher education programs we responded with the following:

- All teachers must have knowledge of the relevant legislation and standards and some capacity to make adjustments to meet student needs and some skills in collaboration.
- Collaboration is much more intensive when planning for students with disabilities and should include students, families, other professionals and teacher assistants. This additional content should be included.
- Content on peer assisted learning (PALS) could also be included as a way of providing more explicit instruction and practice for students with special education needs.

In response to a question asking how accreditation standards and procedures should be amended we responded with the following:

- Beginning teachers should demonstrate competency in a classroom setting. This would involve an observational assessment completed by independent observers and based on a clear description of the behaviours and competencies required.

In response to the question about ensuring consistent, robust delivery of evidence-based teaching practices we suggested that given that many children with intellectual disability and autism are now in mainstream classrooms, it is important to have a member of the expert advisory panel with both a teaching and research background in the area of special education.

In response to a question about the value of establishing centres of excellence, we suggested that it would be difficult to find practicing teachers with the skills to demonstrate the recommended research-based practices and also mentor trainee teachers through coaching and feedback.

In response to a question relating to national frameworks we suggested that there would be difficulty finding mentors with the required knowledge and skills in evidence-based practice. This was also flagged as a barrier to effective student support in practicum placements. In order to assist trainee teachers to integrate theory and practice we suggested that funding would be needed to support school and academic staff to provide the necessary support.