



Information Sheet 5

THE NEED FOR AND BENEFITS FROM UNDERGRADUATE TEACHER TRAINING IN GIFTED EDUCATION

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Despite two comprehensive Australian Senate inquiries with wide ranging recommendations there still has not been a National approach to implementing the recommendations that teachers receive core training in gifted education. In the first inquiry:

the committee recommends to teacher training institutions that a pre-service training course include sufficient information about gifted children to make student teachers aware of the needs of those children and the special identification techniques and teaching strategies which the students teachers will have to use with gifted students (1988, p.177).

The second inquiry went even further stating that:

The Commonwealth should propose that State and Territory education authorities should require as a condition of employment that newly graduate teachers have at least a semester unit in the special needs of gifted children in their degrees, This should include training on identification of gifted children and the pedagogy of teaching them. (2001, p. xvi)

To date there continues to be a lack of commitment to ensuring that teachers are graduating with the specific knowledge and skills to teach students who are gifted in a meaningful and appropriate way in order for them to reach their full potential. There are only a few universities that provide gifted education in Australia and even fewer universities that offer a subject at the undergraduate level. Currently, there are only three universities (within NSW) providing a compulsory undergraduate subject in gifted education. Australia needs to embrace a national strategy for meeting the needs of students who are gifted that includes compulsory pre and post-service training in gifted education.

Without research-based evidence, many myths and misunderstandings prevail in education about these students. For example giftedness crosses all socio-economic and cultural boundaries; however, gifted programs in some schools do not always reflect this diversity (Thraves & Bannister-Tyrrell, 2017). Also, many believe that gifted and talented students will be fine on their own, yet neuroscience has proven that:

learning is the same as for all brains ... it is an unfortunate edu-myth that gifted students can teach themselves, they can't. With appropriate teaching, most of these children can become outstandingly capable and enthusiastic students, but like any children, they need adult guidance and encouragement along with appropriate intellectual challenges. (Geake, 2009, pp. 83-84)

Vialle and Quigley (2008) state;

that there would be little argument that the key to the success of any educational program is the teacher. Renzulli's (1968) survey of twenty-one experts in gifted education, for example, determined that the most important element in the success of programs for gifted students was the teacher (p. 85).

Research (Plunkett & Kronberg, 2007; Rogers, 2007; Rowley, 2012) in Australia has clearly shown the benefits for students who are gifted having teachers who have participated

in training in gifted education. Lassig (2009) demonstrated a link between training in gifted education and teachers' attitudes towards students who are gifted (high potential), talented (high performing) and gifted education programs.

More effective teaching strategies, which facilitate learning for students who are gifted are demonstrated by teachers who have undertaken, or are currently completing training in gifted education (Rowley 2008). Yet in Australia, whilst there is mandated training in other special education fields, little attention is paid to training in gifted education, due to a lack of training and understanding of the specific learning needs of this group of students.

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