

**Working Paper:
Evaluation and
Assessment in ITE**

August 2015

**The
Community
of Practice
for improving
initial teacher
education**

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Learning First conducted the analysis presented in this report. The interpretations of how these systems operate are the authors', and do not necessarily represent the views or official positions of governments or officials in the systems analyzed.

Learning First produced this working paper as part of the global Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Community of Practice (CoP).

This paper was written to help teams in the CoP think about the use of data for evaluation and assessment in teacher preparation. **This paper is a working draft and should not be cited.**

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Version last updated: 16 November 2017

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1 Introduction: why focus on evaluation of ITE?

Evaluation is important in the education sector for the same reason it is important in every other sector: it is a key part of improving performance. The focus on evaluation of initial teacher education (ITE) internationally is growing and is reflected in national and sub-national level policies and accreditation processes, such as the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation process in the United States.¹ This rising focus is a response to increasing global competition² and a desire on the part of ITE providers and institutions to comply with the evolving norms of the teaching profession.³

In many countries, the need to improve ITE is considered urgent. In Australia, a recent high-level advisory group (the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG)) recommended that the Australian Government ‘immediately’ act to ensure ‘standards for the quality of initial teacher education be set high, programs rigorously assessed, and requirements made transparent.’⁴

The lack of evaluative rigour identified by TEMAG is not necessarily specific to education, but is characteristic of higher education generally. For example, it has not been historically typical for Australian higher-education programs to meaningfully include quality of teaching indicators in course evaluations until recently.⁵ The ramifications of this for ITE, however, are more serious than for other sectors, because most schools do not actively consider where prospective teacher candidates received their qualifications as part of their recruitment decisions.⁶ The consequences of a lack of evaluative rigour around ITE flow directly into the classroom.

The ITE Community of Practice (CoP) will explore evaluation in more detail. The present paper is intended as a discussion piece to facilitate this conversation, not as an exhaustive or definitive strategy. The paper suggests that systems need to adhere to general principles of good evaluation including validity, rigour, utility, feasibility and transparency. To achieve this, systems need to be clear on the purpose or purposes of their evaluations.

To help determine the purpose of their evaluations, CoP members can ask themselves a few key questions, such as: how do my actions impact ITE in my context? And how do my actions affect the actions of different stakeholders in the system, particularly if new evaluative information is provided? These questions may be particularly important if the objective is for evaluative information to foster relationships (and feedback) between different stakeholders in the system that will lead to dynamic improvements. Answering these questions requires an understanding of the ITE system as a whole and its components elements, of what is happening inside ITE programs and institutions; and of which internal components of these programs and providers you want to influence to drive improvement.⁷

Once systems have established the purpose or purposes of their evaluation systems, they can make a series of key design decisions related to stakeholders and stakeholder involvement, the evaluative design framework, the assessment design and the selection of meaningful consequences. This paper will consider each of these decision points in turn and will canvass some of the choices that systems may make.

¹ Refer to the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation [website](#)

² See, for example, Chong, S. & Ho, P., 2009; and Hou, A. Y. C., n.d.

³ See, for example, World Bank, 2007

⁴ Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014

⁵ While performance-based research funding has been available to Australian higher-education institutions since the late 1980s, funding was not tied to teaching-related indicators until 2006. See Norton, Andrew, Sonnemann, Julie, & Cherastidham, I, 2013

⁶ Roberts-Hull, Jensen, & Cooper, 2015

⁷ Behn, Robert D., 2003

2 What are the principles of good ITE evaluation or evaluative instruments?

While there is general agreement on the importance of evaluating ITE, there is little consensus about what good evaluation of ITE actually looks like. A number of systems are held up as ‘bright spots’ of innovation in the ITE evaluation literature, but innovative practice should not be a proxy for good practice, even though some of these innovations may prove to be effective in time. The lack of knowledge and evidence around ITE evaluation prevents the emergence of universally-accepted principles of ITE evaluation.⁸

In the absence of established key principles of good ITE evaluation, there are high-level principles of evaluation more generally, as outlined below. Evaluations must be designed and executed carefully to measure the intended construct or objective. Results from the evaluative process should be both transparent and useful to reform efforts.

Figure 1 below outlines some principles of effective evaluation.

Figure 1 General principles of good evaluation

Principles	Description
Validity	In consultation with stakeholder groups, identify the needs that are being met by an activity (such as ITE), and the evidence that would suggest whether, how and the extent to which the needs are being met.
Rigour	Soundly and systematically apply appropriate, well designed data collection methods and interpretive strategies to provide clear and accurate information that can be relied on.
Utility	Provide timely, accurate and practical information that meets the needs of the range of stakeholder groups, and promote the effective use of findings.
Feasibility	Complete evaluation within practical constraints and available resources, and in a cost effective manner.
Transparency	Comprehensive, systematic and well justified recording and reporting of all aspects of the evaluation including choice of methods and analyses and the conclusions drawn.

Adapted from NSW DET General Principles of Evaluation⁹

3 How might good evaluation of ITE be implemented?

There is no universal blueprint for implementing good evaluation of ITE. There are, however, a number of key processes and decision points with which each system will grapple, as outlined below.

3.1 Determining the purpose of your evaluation

The key overarching objective of any ITE evaluation is improving ITE to better support student outcomes. Good evaluations, however, cannot be designed around this broad objective alone. To adhere to the principles of effective evaluation—particularly validity, rigour and utility—the evaluation needs to be

⁸ Allen, Michael, Coble, Charles, & Crowe, Edward, 2014

⁹ New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, n.d.

informed by a clear purpose.¹⁰ This purpose will be different depending on your position. For example, governments may undertake evaluations to compare ITE programs against an external standard and to provide prospective teacher candidates with information to support their enrolment decisions. Conversely, universities may undertake an evaluation of their different ITE programs with a view to achieving greater efficiencies by investing their funds in their most effective ITE programs. In both scenarios, the overarching objective of the evaluations is to improve ITE, but the underlying purposes diverge.

There are a number of possible purposes of evaluation. To encourage thinking and discussion within the CoP we have included a list of possible purposes of ITE evaluation below, adapted from Robert Behn's authoritative study of effective performance measurement (2003):

<i>To summatively evaluate</i>	The most commonly given reason for implementing an evaluative system, summative evaluation involves comparing performance against a standard and making a judgement.
<i>To control</i>	Refers to control over the behaviour of programs, institutions and employees and the comparison of behaviour against specified requirements.
<i>To budget</i>	Examining program structure and monetary and staffing allocation and considering changes to aid efficiency.
<i>To motivate</i>	Determining how to make individuals, programs and institutions work harder and faster.
<i>To promote</i>	Convincing the public that ITE providers and institutions are doing important work and, if applicable, using public funds effectively and efficiently.
<i>To celebrate</i>	Determining realistic yet ambitious performance targets that help foster a sense of personal and collective accomplishment.
<i>To learn</i>	Isolating significant deviances in performance from aggregate data and considering their causes and possible implications.

These purposes of evaluation are not mutually exclusive: most ITE providers will be able to identify more than one area of interest. The value of considering the purposes relevant to your context is in their design implications. Different purposes will command different design decisions, including different evaluative criteria, processes and consequences. These considerations are essential to conducting the evaluation validly, in a way that aligns with the intent and theory of change of the ITE program.¹¹ It is fine to identify more than one purpose as long as different evaluative processes are specifically tailored to suit each of these: 'one size fits all' evaluations jeopardize validity.

¹⁰ Liket, Kellie C., Rey-Garcia, Marta, & Maas, Karen E., 2014

¹¹ A theory of change reflects an institution or organizations beliefs about the consequences that a specific set of actions will have within the context of its authorising environment. Often conceptualised as a syllogistic sequence—if X, then Y—a theory of change links an organization or system's reform priorities with the specific strategies selected to achieve this mission.

3.2 Decision points

While there is no roadmap to implement best practice in ITE evaluation, something we may glean from experiences internationally is what the key decision points might be, and what options we might have at each stage.

<i>Stakeholder</i>	Who are the stakeholders that need to be involved, what are their respective levels of agency, what are their objectives and how does the regulatory context shape these factors?
<i>Framework</i>	What is the purpose of our evaluation? How does our evaluation design align with the aims of our ITE program and its theory of change?
<i>Assessment design</i>	What criteria, processes and mechanisms can we adopt to meet the aims of our evaluation?
<i>Consequences</i>	What will the formal consequences of the evaluative process be, and how will these be utilised to drive reform?

3.2.1 Stakeholders

Key considerations for designing an ITE evaluation include: who are the stakeholders who need to be involved; how do they need to be involved; and at what level of the system do they need to be involved? In the majority of international contexts, ITE evaluation will involve a number of different stakeholders, including schools and ITE providers (typically higher-education institutions), governments, states and districts, the teaching profession, teacher candidates and, in many cases, the media. Each stakeholder has different interests and levels of agency over the process of ITE evaluation. For reform to occur, all stakeholders must agree on the importance of implementing an effective ITE evaluation system.¹²

The agency of the different stakeholders is strongly influenced by the regulatory and legislative context of the system, which establishes the level of government centralisation and may imbue government and/or non-government agencies with the powers to develop ITE standards and to carry out evaluations. Governments and agencies may in some contexts also specify the criteria and procedures of the evaluation. This is not a one-way relationship: stakeholders can also influence this regulatory context to varying degrees.

The regulatory and legislative context will also influence which level of the ITE system is the focus of evaluative efforts for different subsets of stakeholders: namely, the program, institutional, sub-system or system level. Governments, for example, may have the agency to adopt a system-level focus, whereas ITE providers may only have the agency (and the motivation) to focus at the program level. Evaluative processes may exist at each of these levels within a single system, and each process may draw on broadly similar data.

Irrespective of system, sub-system and institution-level evaluations, however, program-level evaluation is an essential component of ITE evaluation. Only program-level evaluation will produce data that is sufficiently specific to facilitate reform: institutional-level aggregate data will not provide ITE programs with the impetus or a sufficiently targeted improvement plan.¹³

¹² Allen, Michael et al., 2014, p. 32.

¹³ Feuer et al., 2013

3.2.2 Framework

A further decision point is how to construct an overarching framework that determines what should be evaluated. The construction of the evaluative framework is a process closely linked to the purpose of the evaluation: only once you have determined what the purpose of your evaluation is can you establish broadly what should be evaluated, and begin to think about *how* to conduct the evaluation.

There is no simple answer to the question of what should be evaluated. Effective answers to this question, though, tend to consider three key points:

- the aims of the ITE program;
- a theory about how the program will influence teacher candidates and their students over time;
- the purpose of the evaluation.

An overarching evaluation framework formalises the intent and theory of change of ITE programs, and helps ensure the validity of evaluative processes. This framework should be developed early—ideally while the ITE program is being designed—to ensure alignment between the objectives, the theory of change, and the evaluative processes of ITE programs. If the program and evaluative framework are not designed in tandem, regulations, including external standards, can help secure alignment.

3.2.3 Assessment design

Once a framework has been established, the task is to operationalise it through the design of the related assessments, including the chosen criteria, processes and mechanisms. These criteria, processes and mechanisms can be mapped onto the teacher education pathway.

Figure 2 The teacher education pathway



Criteria

A key consideration in the design of ITE evaluation is the criteria by which programs, providers and systems will be evaluated. These criteria should be fundamentally linked to the overarching framework that establishes the focus of the evaluation. They should also be meaningful and convincing to stakeholders.¹⁴ Drawing on program logic theory, we can broadly identify three types of criteria: input criteria, process criteria, and output criteria.¹⁵

Input criteria are the criteria shaping the pool of possible teacher candidates. These align broadly with the selection into initial teacher education stage along the teacher education pathway, and tend to exist broadly outside the control of individual ITE providers. Input criteria may include:

- What measures are in place to attract candidates to the profession?
- Are there any mandatory entry requirements?
- Are there mandated caps on places?
- Are there limitations placed on entry by professional institutions?

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 32.

¹⁵ See, for example, Newton, Xiaosia A., Poon, R. C., Nunes, N. L., & Stone, E. M., 2013 and Funnell, Sue C. & Rogers, P. J., 2011

Process criteria are the criteria examining elements within ITE programs or providers. These broadly align with the experience during ITE on the teacher education pathway. Process criteria may include:

- How are candidates selected into individual programs?
- What is the quality of the content of the course and how is it delivered?
- What are the requirements of the course, including passing/exit requirements?
- How are teacher candidates supported while on practicum?
- How many faculty members are there, and what are their qualifications/specialisations?

Outcomes criteria examine the impact of ITE programs or providers on teacher practice and, ultimately, student outcomes. Outcomes criteria may include:

- What is the impact of the program on student outcomes?
- What is the impact of the program on teacher evaluation results?
- What are principals' and employers' opinions of program graduates?
- What is the hiring/placement rate of program graduates?
- What are the employment destinations of program graduates?
- What are graduates' opinions on how well they were prepared?
- What is the attrition rate of program graduates?

There are benefits and limitations of using each type of criteria, each of which need to be considered in the design of ITE evaluation processes, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Benefits and limitations of input, process and output criteria

	Entry	Process	Output
Benefits	<p>Can help raise the status of the teaching profession</p> <p>Consistency across ITE providers</p>	<p>Can identify possible gaps in the content of teacher preparation program coursework and clinical work</p> <p>Can help faculty understand and implement research-based preparation processes</p>	<p>Measures can be more tangible and therefore provide a more attractive basis for accountability actions</p> <p>Can provide ITE program providers with evidence-based feedback on how well they are preparing teachers</p> <p>May incentivise teacher preparation programs to develop and maintain collaborative partnerships with schools</p>
Limitations	<p>May attempt to limit entry to the profession in ineffective and/or inefficient ways</p> <p>Tend to be influenced more strongly by short-term political fluctuations</p>	<p>The research base on effective practices in ITE is not robust enough to build a high-stakes assessment for accountability based on measuring processes</p> <p>There may be multiple and varied pathways to effectiveness</p> <p>Process measures may discourage innovation</p> <p>Process measures may require complex qualitative measures that are difficult to score reliably across providers</p>	<p>Time lag means that feedback may not be indicative of current program quality</p> <p>May be validity issues associated with small sample size</p> <p>Data collection capacity of systems may limit possibility of linking teachers to specific ITE programs and student outcomes</p> <p>Teacher evaluation systems and measures of value-add may not be sufficiently robust on their own</p> <p>Outcomes likely to be influenced by a number of factors external to ITE programs, such as school-level and home-level influences</p>

Adapted from 'Evaluating the effectiveness of teacher preparation for support and accountability'

Box 1 Limitations of criteria and how they mitigate them

The benefits and limitations of input, process and output criteria are not static but are subject to fluctuations associated with regulatory requirements and other evolving system preferences and priorities.¹⁶ For example, limitations can be amplified if the consequences of an evaluation are severe. This is known as Campbell's Law, whereby qualitative social indicators are subject to greater corruption and distortion the more they are used for the purposes of social decision making.¹⁷

To account for such limitations, it is important to ensure a number of different input, process and outcomes criteria are selected as part of any ITE evaluative framework. Each kind of criteria will have particular limitations, for example, outcomes criteria do not necessarily always tell us enough about the quality of ITE programs on their own, because changes in teacher practice may not be directly or immediately translated to improvements in student outcomes. This does not mean we should ignore outcomes criteria, just that we should use input and process criteria too, to mitigate its shortcomings.

It is up to each system to decide the relative importance of different criteria: there is no empirical rule for weighting certain criteria more heavily than others.¹⁸ The choice and relative weights of each criterion should reflect the aim and theory of change of the program and system.

Procedures

The selection of criteria informs the decisions about the procedures and mechanisms developed to collect the relevant information. Evaluations can be internal, driven by the ITE provider itself, or external, driven by outside stakeholders. Internal evaluations often include the self-identification of strengths and weaknesses using evidence.¹⁹ External evaluations can utilise self-evaluation as a first step. In Spain, for example, an external ITE evaluation committee begins its review by contrasting its own findings with those of the internal review, conducting further investigations if this contrast yields contradictory results.²⁰ The typical procedures and mechanisms established to collect the data necessary to complete evaluations are outlined in Table 2 below.

16 Feuer et al., 2013

17 See Campbell, Donald T., 1979

18 Allen, Michael et al., 2014

19 For example, formal processes of ITE evaluation in Finland begin with a self-evaluation at the program level. See Tatto, Krajcik, & Pippin, 2013

20 Eurydice, 2006

Table 2 Typical evaluative procedure types²¹

Procedure	Description	Example
Site visits	A stakeholder external to the ITE provider visits the training site/s for the purpose of collecting data (may be from interviews, observations, etc...).	In Israel, a committee is appointed by the Council for Higher Education to conduct site visits and interviews with the heads of ITE providers for the purposes of an external evaluation.
Interviews	An internal or external stakeholder conducts interviews with stakeholders including government departmental bodies, statutory authorities, schools and principals, and/or stakeholders and agencies internal to the ITE provider being evaluated. These interviews may also involve requests for data including graduation rates, attrition rates, etc...	In Finland, the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council conducts follow-up interviews with ITE providers after considering their self-evaluation.
Tests	Internally or externally administered, teachers sometimes undertake tests of their knowledge on exiting ITE to determine the scope and depth of their learning. These are sometimes referred to as 'licensure' tests.	The Philippines require teacher candidates to sit an externally-administered licensure exam after they complete their ITE to determine their readiness for employment. ²²
Observations	Observations associated with internal or external evaluations can include observations of faculty teaching, observations of teacher practicum and/or observations of teachers after they have completed ITE.	The cycle of evaluation in Singapore involves observations of teacher practice.
Surveys	Surveys can be extended to schools and principals and graduates of the ITE themselves to gather information about their experiences, including whether the type of training received by the teacher candidate adequately prepared them to work in schools. Surveys can also collect data relating to employment and retention. Surveys of students are also becoming more common.	The Australian Schools Survey—conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research—collects a range of information about the teacher workforce, including whether new graduate teachers feel their ITE course prepared them adequately for their professional duties. ²³
Curriculum analysis	Evaluations may include reviews of the ITE curriculum against certain criteria. This is usually to check whether an ITE provider is covering externally-mandated topics.	The National Council on Teacher Quality examination of the mathematics preparation of American elementary teachers included an analysis of syllabi including course textbooks. ²⁴

3.2.4 Consequences

It is essential that meaningful consequences are attached to the ITE evaluation processes in order for them to truly influence ITE and to support student outcomes. If meaningful consequences are not included, efforts to design and implement evaluative processes may fail to achieve the intended reform goals.²⁵ While the literature suggests similarities in the evaluation processes of ITE providers globally, there is relatively little information on how the results of evaluative processes are utilised by institutions. A number of systems, however, have committed to investing in evaluative measures with consequences. Some of the most common consequences of evaluation include:

- The implementation of a plan for improvement;
- An additional review/evaluation requirements;
- The provision of funding and/or administrative support;
- Implications for reaccreditation;
- Availability of external evaluation results.

3.2.5 Case study: Korea²⁶

Korea has been selected as a case study due to its recent history of implementing rigorous ITE evaluations in response to the considerable growth in the number of ITE providers in recent years.

Stakeholders

Korea is a relatively centralised system: the Korean Ministry responsible for school education (the Ministry) has considerable control over ITE.²⁷ There are only ten providers of elementary ITE in Korea, though there has been a recent increase in the number of providers offering secondary ITE, as well as growth in the number of courses offered by those providers. This has sparked a renewed focus on ITE evaluation, which has been established in legislation since 1998.

The Ministry has devolved operational responsibility for ITE evaluation to the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), along with several prominent education academics. Together, KEDI and the academics develop the evaluation criteria, and organise the teams that evaluate ITE programs and the institutions that run them. Each program is awarded a grade from A to D, and each carries specific consequences (discussed below). These grades are also provided to the Korean media for publication. ITE providers can appeal the outcome of their evaluation and accept another evaluation that focuses on their areas of weakness, though the ultimate outcome of the evaluative process is at the discretion of KEDI and the assisting academics.

Framework

The development of the current Korean ITE evaluation framework was instigated in part by dramatic growth in the number of ITE providers and associated concerns about teacher quality. A key purpose of ITE evaluation in Korea is to evaluate ITE programs summatively against a standard. While the majority of ITE courses were developed prior to the implementation of the current evaluation system, ITE providers are

21 Table adapted from Totto et al., 2013

22 Philippines Government, 1994

23 See, for example, Australian Council for Educational Research, n.d.

24 See, for example, Greenberg & Walsh, 2008

25 Allen, Michael et al., 2014

26 This case study has been adapted from Jensen, Hunter, Sonnemann, & Burns, 2012. The information contained herein refers to the 3rd KEDI evaluation of ITE providers, Korea is currently undertaking the 4th evaluation. The basic framework remains the same but some details have changed.

27 Ibid.

incentivised to align their course aims and theory of change with the standard, both in preparation for and in response to the KEDI evaluation.

The Korean evaluative framework has three key areas of focus that shape assessment criteria and processes for all ITE providers. These are: management and environment, the program offered, and outcomes.

Assessment design

Criteria

Each of the three areas of focus contains specific criteria with a pre-determined weighting, adding to a total of 1000 points.

The management and environment focus includes criteria related to:

- the development of the program over time;
- the teaching staff;
- facilities (including practicums and the use of model classrooms);
- general administration and financial management.

The teaching program focus includes criteria related to:

- the management and organisation of the curriculum;
- the specialisation and experience of academics teaching the courses;
- the learning environment;
- connections with schools and other education institutions.

The outcomes focus includes criteria related to:

- the enrolment rate of teacher candidates;
- the readiness of teacher candidates to teach in schools;
- the strictness of graduation criteria;
- the employment rate of graduates;
- the satisfaction rate of graduates.

*Procedures*²⁸

These criteria are operationalised as part as a four-step procedure:

1. The providers are informed of the focus of the evaluation and how it will operate, with a large focus on self-evaluation. In the following months, each ITE provider undertakes a self-evaluation and collects the information required under the guidelines supplied by KEDI.
2. Each provider submits a self-evaluation report to KEDI for analysis by the expert teams assembled. The analysis highlights issues and raises questions to be followed-up during site visits.
3. The expert teams visit each provider and undertake an evaluation. Two groups visit each provider. The first, consisting of four people from KEDI and academics from other institutions, undertakes an evaluation of the accuracy of the self-evaluation. The second group (the size of which varies depending on the size of the provider) evaluates the practical teaching offered by the institution.

28 Adapted from Jensen et al., 2012

The groups operate simultaneously, conducting interviews, observations and collecting qualitative data, and normally complete their evaluations in one day.

4. KEDI collects all information and data collected during each phase of the evaluation process. It then collates the findings and determines final grades, which are sent to the providers and to the Ministry.

3.2.6 Consequences

The evaluation of ITE in Korea confers a number of different consequences. Firstly, the grades (from A-D) received by each provider are made available to the media and are published for public access. Secondly, there are positive or negative outcomes attached to each of the grades:

<i>A grade</i>	A substantial financial reward;
<i>B grade</i>	No reward but no sanction either;
<i>C grade</i>	Student numbers reduced by 25% in the following year;
<i>D grade</i>	Student numbers reduced by 50% in the following year.

The severity of the penalties associated with the C and D grades is such that providers receiving these grades typically face closure. While this approach to ITE evaluation is relatively new in Korea and the policy area is still developing, the reforms have already produced some positive impacts, including increasing the policy focus on ITE and increasing 'information flows between the institutions, schools, the Ministry and potential teachers.'²⁹

4 Where to from here?

For systems wanting to implement new ITE evaluations, or to reform existing ones, there are a number of reflective questions linked to our illustrative framework that could be useful:

- What is the primary purpose of the evaluation in your context? How does it follow the broader objectives of ITE?
- How will it change the ITE system? Which stakeholders will be affected by changes to the evaluative process? Who needs to be involved?
- What should be evaluated? What are the aims of the ITE program in question? What is the theory of change of the ITE provider?
- What evidence sources will provide the most useful and reliable information?
- How can you collect these evidence sources? How will you analyse and combine your data to make a judgement about program quality?
- What are the likely intended and unintended consequences?

²⁹ Ibid, p. 65

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