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The School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University is proud to host the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Initial Teacher Education (ITE) *Creating Futures Summit Series* with a spotlight on issues related to the teaching profession. The Summit Series provides professional learning that is relevant, engaging, and proactive and enables Griffith University to deepen collaborations with our valued partners while setting agendas on key issues. The *Series* brings together a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in teaching futures.

March 11, 2020 is the day the world as we know it changed with the World Health Organization [WHO] (2020) officially declaring the viral infection emanating from the novel coronavirus COVID-19 a global pandemic. From the outset there was a cascade of wide-reaching effects as the world ground to a halt. Streets, workplaces, schools and public spaces were devoid of human life as physical distancing became the primary weapon to avoid transmission. Human frailty was exposed as anxiety and the threat to survival led to clashes for what we have come to take as normal – access to commodities such as toilet paper and pasta. The world we were preparing young people for changed.

With regard to teachers' work and schooling, ninety-one percent of school students worldwide, that is 1.6 billion children and young people, experienced school closure, in some cases for more than 12 months. UNICEF declared that "[T]he numbers are unprecedented, the implications enormous" (Miks & McIlwaine, 2020). Emergency education was invoked, including features such as: learning from home with carers as supervisors; rapid digitisation as staff modified learning to match the learning environment; staff professional learning at an accelerated rate estimated equivalent to 3-5 years to cope with the changes; a rapid progression to digital pedagogical approaches; stripping curriculum to the essential core and reinventing learning programs. A legacy that remains is the ongoing need for mental health programs designed to address burgeoning student and staff wellbeing and mental health issues (Pendergast & Dobson, 2021) now commonly referred to as *the shadow pandemic* (McGorrie, 2021).

As we emerge from this liminal space, we consider what has been popularly coined the *new normal*. There is an appetite—and need—to embed innovative learning design that has led to new ways of doing things foregrounding learning and teaching flexibility, the development of 21c student capabilities, and a continuum of learning from schooling to further education and professional learning. As a response, schools are exploring new ways of educating their students creating new learning spaces afforded through blended, online and hyflex teaching contexts. To afford these contexts a shift in classroom pedagogies is needed that requires changes in teacher and student roles, engineering learning design for online engagement, restructuring learning spaces and rethinking discipline.

Professional learning for all staff in schools is critically important, along with ensuring our initial teacher education programs prepare graduates for this different environment. The role of all those that make up the profession—education systems, school leaders, teachers, home carers, initial teacher education providers and preservice teachers continues to draw on new and different skill sets and attributes.

In this moment lies an opportunity to have *conversations that matter*. To collaborate, connect and collectively prioritise our preferred new normal through innovative disruption. Assumptions about initial teacher education can be considered and reframed. Hybridity, flexibility, adaptability, and relational capital, built through collaborations within and between institutions, sectors and key stakeholders during the initial period of disruption, now provides a fertile field for growth and innovation.

While there are questions for which there may not be obvious answers, the Summit will be an opportunity to engage in conversations that matter, considering ways of working, learning and collaborating. Of central concern will be the newly emergent social, psychological and pedagogical needs of young people in schools and the educators who work with them, as they navigate the new normal ahead. Our aim is to discuss, debate and design actions of priority and aspirations of value. Our processes will explore what change is desired, what should be the same, where snapback is to be avoided, and how we can most effectively contribute to a strengthened profession. Our outcomes will point to strategies that ensure initial teacher education continues to flourish, and that graduates are prepared to survive and thrive as future members of the teaching profession.

### **References**

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