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More support needed for new teachers to avoid exodus

A survey has revealed one in five new teachers feel under-prepared for the reality of teaching when they enter the profession.

The *2008 New Educators Survey* of 1545 new teachers showed 21 per cent rated their pre-service education as 'poor or very poor' and only a third rated it 'satisfactory'.

"Not only are new teachers under-prepared when they enter the classroom, close to half have never received mentoring or ongoing induction and nearly a third have been asked to teach outside their area of expertise," AEU Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos said.

"These findings illustrate how ill-conceived the Federal Government's plans are with respect to fast-tracking graduates into teaching by providing only six weeks of training.

"A recent AEU national poll revealed that 59 per cent of the public opposes the Rudd Government's plan to fast-track graduates from areas like commerce, law and science into teaching without completing a formal teaching qualification.

"Letting people into the classroom who are not properly qualified to teach is a mistake and is simply a 'quick-fix' solution to solving teacher shortages.

"The key to maintaining high standards in public education is by ensuring that every teacher has a formal teaching qualification.

"In the interest of all students, we must safeguard high quality, high standard pre-service and in-service teacher education and training, mentoring and support.

"This requires an increased investment in teacher education and training to better prepare our new teachers and enable them to deal with the reality of the 21st century classroom," Mr Gavrielatos said.

"Over 50 per cent of new teachers surveyed also said they planned to leave the public education system within the next ten years.

"Despite many new teachers showing great dedication for their profession - workload, pay, class sizes and behaviour management continue to drive new teachers out of the classroom.

"To successfully attract quality new teachers to the public education system, we need to better prepare and support them so they can make a long term contribution to the education of our children," Mr Gavrielatos said.

Other key results included:

- Workload, pay, class sizes and behaviour management ranked as the top four concerns for new teachers.
- 50.9 per cent of new teachers had completed a 70-80 day practicum through the pre-service education, though 39.7 per cent were only 'satisfactorily' supported throughout their practicum.

- 86.5 per cent did not think their training adequately prepared them for dealing with difficult parents and colleagues.
- 41.9 per cent said that they took part in mandatory Indigenous Studies units, but 75 per cent felt inadequately prepared to meet the needs of Indigenous students.
- 31.7 per cent had never been involved with behavioural management professional learning.
- 51 per cent believed they were not given adequate information about teacher working conditions and rights upon employment.
- 51.6 per cent of those working outside their area of expertise were secondary school teachers.
- Of those planning to leave the public education system in the next ten years, 50.3 per cent were first year teachers.
- 43.6 per cent were employed on fixed term contracts of six weeks or more.

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