



A SUBMISSION BY THE

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION

TO THE REVIEW OF TEACHING AND

TEACHER EDUCATION

October 2002

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Summary and General Recommendations

The Review of Teaching and Teacher Education has the utmost potential to affect the lives of our students, the quality of our profession and our future as nation. It therefore must be regarded as being of the utmost importance. Unfortunately, the current Review does appear to have a narrow agenda and limits to its scope at the very time when great questions need to be addressed. Notwithstanding this, The Australian Education Union, which represents 156,000 teachers and education workers from all parts of Australia, is keen to contribute to the work of the Review.

A National Problem Requiring a National Solution

Teaching is the largest professional or occupational group in Australia. Therefore, who teaches and what they teach are critical national questions. The most important element in seeking to attract and retain teachers is to make teaching attractive and respected. An ever intensifying workload, less than adequate remuneration, conflicting public demands and expectations, low morale, a diminishing level of government support for public education and episodes of negative media coverage combine to render teaching a less than attractive option for many potential recruits.

Teacher supply is an emerging national crisis. There are indeed some shortages in Mathematics, Science and Technology education but any serious examination of the issue will recognise that the problem is more complex than this. There are shortages in many parts of the curriculum and the shortage affects children in all school years. Disadvantaged, rural and remote schools are all more likely to be greatly affected by teacher supply problems and hence it is a factor which exacerbates the already high levels of educational inequality in Australia.

Solutions to the teacher supply crisis need to be systematic and relate to the intellectual ethos of our nation and the perceived worth of the profession. Stopgap measures such as tinkering with some salary scales will provide no meaningful or sustained solution.

There is no single solution to the teacher supply problem as its causes are many and diverse. We need governments at all levels working in co-operation to develop policy which will attract the best and the brightest to the profession and then to furnish conditions of a material and moral kind to ensure that we retain high quality teachers in sufficient number.

Specific measures which should be introduced to enhance the recruitment and retention of such teachers include but are not limited to:

- **an increased number of places in teacher education at universities;**
- **appropriate induction and support in the early years of teaching;**
- **appropriate recognition of previous experience and learning for mature age entry;**
- **similar arrangements to attract former teachers back to the profession;**
- **recognising quality overseas teaching experience;**
- **examining career pathways for experienced teachers;**
- **exploring means for professional enhancement and renewal such as sabbaticals and 4 for 5 schemes;**
- **addressing those factors in superannuation policies which discourage the continuation of teaching without worsening any existing superannuation entitlement;**

- **considering the facilitation of part-time arrangements for those who wish to achieve a phased retirement;**
- **developing a national agreement about the portability of professional status and recognition to allow for teachers who are mobile to continue within the profession.**

Favourable consideration should be given to proposals, which involve:

- **a massive expansion of teacher education scholarships linked to emerging areas of national educational need;**
- **a planned system which reduces and eliminates the HECS debt for those teachers who teach for a sustained period of time after graduation, especially in harder to staff areas in Australia;**
- **advanced entry points for mature age students with relevant parenting and work experience;**
- **higher salary based on the achievement of advanced teacher standards as negotiated in formal agreements between unions and employing authorities;**
- **rewarding higher post-graduate qualifications which are relevant to teaching;**
- **incentives and improved conditions [including housing] for teachers in rural, remote and hard to staff schools.**

The AEU strongly cautions against piecemeal approaches to a global problem, which seek to “fix” some of the supply problem but which would fail to address the overall causes of the problem. Professional standards must not be eroded by reducing entry-level standards or by reducing the quality and depth of teacher training and preparation. Nor should consideration be given to the use of para-professionals to fill the place of professionally trained teachers. In addition, ultimately futile interstate rivalry and poaching will merely redistribute the shortages.

Indigenous Education

Any review into teacher education must address content issues with training courses. The area needing most urgent national attention in this respect is in the field of Indigenous Education.

The AEU believes that all teachers to be employed in the public education system must have completed a comprehensive sequence of Indigenous Studies in their undergraduate courses as a precondition to their employment. Such studies should include studies of Indigenous histories, languages and cultures, Indigenous teaching and learning processes and practices.

Retention

Teacher retention strategies which ought to be built into national employment practices to enhance the quality and standing of the profession include:

- **massively increased national investment in the professional development of teachers as part of contributing to the culture of continuous learning within professional pathways;**
- **the provision of high quality courses to retrain existing teachers to add to their ability to also teach in new and emerging areas of the curriculum;**
- **improved mentoring and induction programs, including time allowances for both beginning teachers and their mentors;**
- **training principals and other senior teachers in mentoring and induction skills;**

- **greater liaison between practice students, teachers and universities;**
- **access to support from universities for beginning teachers;**
- **Greater support, including financial assistance, for teachers supervising practice students.**

Composition of the Profession

There is a continuing need for the teaching profession to more accurately reflect the composition of contemporary Australian society. The profession must increasingly include Indigenous Australians and those of Non English Speaking Background.

The First Step

Governments at all levels must come together to address the needs of our young in education. Co-operative intergovernmental activity, systematic national workforce planning, the eradication of philistine tendencies which underscore elements of anti-teacher sentiment in Australia and a commitment to addressing the educational needs of all school children in Australia are the urgent tasks before the Review and the nation. Anything less will be a tragic missed opportunity for which our children will pay.

The AEU Submission

The Australian Education Union, which represents 156,000 teachers and education workers across Australia, is pleased to make the following submission to the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education. This submission follows both elements in the title of the Review Committee and therefore focuses on the training and subsequent professional performance of teachers. This section provides argument in support of our general position and provides supplementary recommendations.

In relation to the teacher supply crisis we need as a nation to address the questions of how we are going to attract more teachers and how we are going to make teaching more attractive to high quality potential recruits. The Australian Education Union has a long-standing interest in these issues and we commend for your detailed consideration our former contribution to the Senate Inquiry into the Status of Teachers, which considerably informs much of the contribution to this Review. We alert the Review also to the Senate publication *A Class Act*, which arose from the Inquiry, and in particular to the recommendations contained therein. Of special significance is the connection made by that report of the status and attractiveness of the profession and the consequent possibility of recruitment and retention.

A National Approach

It is imperative that a comprehensive, national approach be taken to the issue of teacher supply. “Local” solutions which ignore the larger agendas will only pass on supply problems to other parts of the country, other parts of the curriculum or worst of all, other children and students.

All education ministers have a responsibility to address and resolve the challenges we face as a nation. The MCEETYA process is perhaps the most suitable venue to tackle the teacher supply crisis. Governments need to draw together to map out workforce needs and to detect and determine what new and emerging areas of the curriculum need to be addressed in terms of resourcing and professional planning. Governments have a clear responsibility to inform universities as to what particular teacher training needs they should respond to in terms of the provision of teacher education places within their academies. Governments working together must develop long-range planning strategies in terms of teacher supply so that we break out of the current cycle of denial and reaction which has hitherto characterised debate around teacher supply in Australia.

A divided response to the teacher supply difficulties will shift but not solve the problem. Whilst interstate mobility and transfer is desirable, poaching of teachers from elsewhere is ultimately an exercise in futility. Solutions rely on governments at all levels taking their responsibility for attracting and retraining teachers. At any one time in Australia, we will need approximately 230,000 teachers for our schools and colleges. These 230,000 people must be of the highest quality. All children have the right to have teachers of the highest quality and any response to the issue which would disadvantage some children is to be avoided.

Governments at all levels will need then to question some previously assumed neo-liberal approaches to the role of government in respect of public education. If investment in education, including teacher recruitment, training and retention is regarded merely as a cost to government then long-term solutions cannot be found.

Governments have the key role to play as funders of universities and education systems, as managers of education systems, as providers of pre-service and in-service training and re-training, and as community leaders who comment on education and the teaching profession itself.

The AEU, which has branches and associated bodies in every state and territory and members within every community in Australia, believes that the teacher supply problem is even greater than is currently being admitted. There are teacher shortages in most parts of the curriculum and it is affecting students in all years from Kindergarten/Prep to year 12.

Certain areas of the curriculum including, but not limited to, Science, Mathematics and Technology education are seriously affected. This quite often shows up in the first instance in an inability of principals to have appropriately-trained teachers appointed to their schools to cover all of the curriculum requirements of their school timetable. It additionally manifests itself as a problem in an inability to locate appropriately trained teachers to fill short or longer-term casual vacancies caused by teacher absences. The NSW Teachers Federation, as one example, has conducted numerous detailed surveys of schools that indicate chronic teacher shortages in various parts of that state.

Another distressing feature of these shortages is that they are much more likely to occur in disadvantaged communities, in rural and remote communities, in schools serving Indigenous communities and in the outlying suburbs of our cities. Taken together, this characteristic of the crisis, correlates entirely with existing patterns of educational disadvantage and therefore teacher shortages are likely to rob children in need of a full range of educational experience. Teacher shortages make the disadvantaged profoundly more disadvantaged. There is a further reminder within this data for all policy makers that the teacher supply crisis is about much more than a few subject areas and more accurately it has features relating to socioeconomic class, Indigeneity and geographic isolation.

Any purported solution which focused exclusively on some secondary subject areas would wilfully disregard the larger nature of the problem. The resolution of the issue will not be found simply in getting more teachers of a particular subject background but in addressing questions of training and subsequent distribution as well. However, a sound general approach to the teacher supply problem will resolve the difficulties being experienced in the fields of Science, Maths and IT education.

At times, schools have had to resort to the covering of classes by teachers who are teaching out of their area of training and experience. Whilst this stopgap measure deals with the problem superficially, it renders the educational experience for students [and teachers] profoundly unsatisfactory.

It is also noteworthy to observe that the TAFE system, which caters for 1,300,000 students, is having problems of teacher supply in some areas and that governments will need to address the needs of those students as well.

Some Solutions

The nature of the teacher supply crisis points us to the nature of the solutions required.

The shortage of teachers in hard to staff schools requires the development by employing authorities of a system of incentives to teach and stay at these schools. In remote communities, the lack of adequate housing is often a large disincentive for teachers reluctant to leave places with more adequate housing and social services. Financial incentives which reward teachers for staying within

a school community for an extended period of time also have begun to draw interest from employers. Schemes which give preferment for transfer to teachers who have stayed in a difficult to staff locality has also assisted in providing staffing continuity within certain school communities.

In primary education, given that teacher training tends to be more generalist and less subject or KLA-specific, the lack of appropriate staffing can be addressed by a deeper re-training of existing staff who may have not had sufficient pre-service education in emerging areas of the curriculum. Hence, contemporary approaches to cross-curricular literacy teaching, new methods in numeracy teaching, greater capacity for specialisation in Science or Technology-based instruction can perhaps be more adequately gained by an ongoing commitment by systems to the provision of high-quality in-service and retraining courses to meet the needs of schools and the adaptive curriculum within primary schools. The solution in primary education is not about a massive re-emphasis on the creation of specialist teachers but about enhancing the broadly-based skills and confidence of all teachers as well as addressing specific supply difficulties.

It is also now clear that the supply of teachers to public schools has been adversely affected by the behaviour of some private schools and systems. Most teacher training is conducted at public expense, along with students' private effort through HECS. However there is much anecdotal evidence from principals and employing authorities that some private schools seek to skim or headhunt from the public system. Successful young teachers or experienced teachers are often offered employment within private schools without regard for the impact such practices have on existing public schools or public school children. It is also timely to consider requiring private systems of education, which receive billions of dollars every year from the public to devote some part of that funding to the cost of training those teachers who end up in their systems.

It would be foolhardy to consider matters relating to issues of teacher supply without having regard to the number of teacher training places universities provide. As universities are recipients of public funding, albeit on a diminishing base, there is still a responsibility for them to be responsive to public policy and national priorities such as the supply of a sufficient number of quality teachers to meet the needs of the nation and its children. Governments have a reciprocal obligation to provide both the resources and the persuasion to universities for them to offer an adequate number and classification of teacher education places to meet this need. The existing tales of universities turning suitably qualified applicants away from teacher education places at a time of a teacher supply crisis is both telling and bizarre.

A Fundamental National Priority

The AEU believes that all teachers employed in the public education system in Australia should complete a comprehensive sequence of Indigenous studies as a minimum requirement for their employment. To be a teacher in contemporary Australia, one must know about Indigenous students, their communities, their needs, their heritage, appropriate pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of Indigenous students and their communities. This applies to all who would earn the worthy title of teacher and whether they will teach in schools with large Indigenous enrolments or not. Every Australian student should have teachers who are knowledgeable in these essential areas.

The AEU seeks to ensure that all undergraduate teacher education programs, within an agreed time-frame, build in significant and assessable mandatory Indigenous studies units.

In this context, Indigenous Studies are referred to as studies about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. The AEU believes that teacher education programs should be developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In this manner, Indigenous Studies would include as a base:

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, prior and subsequent to invasion;*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching and learning processes;*
- *The development of teaching practices which meet the needs of Indigenous students;*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages;*
- *Teaching practices which meet the needs of ESL/EFL speakers.*

The AEU recognises that there is ample research which signifies our failure as a nation to provide teachers with the professional skills and knowledge required to work effectively with Indigenous peoples. Further, lack of access to this sort of pre-service training has contributed to the low level of learning outcomes achieved by Indigenous students.

This Review into Teaching and Teacher Education has an opportunity to achieve a landmark in our shared history by leading nationwide policy and practices in teacher education which would improve the quality of knowledge and understanding for all Australian school students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. It would certainly make for a better Australia.

The Attractiveness of Teaching as a Career

The foregoing discussion and our references to pre-existing reports has dwelt on issues relating to adequate salaries, conditions, status, and the public perception and esteem of the profession. Yet there is more that can be said and done in relation to making the profession attractive to the large number of high quality recruits the nation requires.

It is feared that senior school students are quite aware of the conditions under which their own teachers work and the modest compensation teachers receive in return. Students observe at first hand their own teachers' often low morale, intensified workload and high stress levels along with the conflicting demands made upon teachers. All students would be aware of the philistine remarks about teachers made by some political, community and media figures and they set this against the lived experience they have had of the conditions under which teachers work.

Far too many gifted students recoil from this cocktail of ignorant comment and modest reward when choosing their own career futures. Whilst the teaching profession collectively and individually is subject to this thoughtlessness and contumely many potential teachers will shy away from taking up the challenges of the profession. All politicians and political parties have it within their grasp to substantially lift the conditions under which teachers work and to improve the quality of the discourse in relation to teachers and the standing of the profession.

One of the elements of the solution to teacher shortages will be the recruitment of teachers from relevant industry and private enterprise, including some who have formerly trained and/or worked as teachers before. These teachers are highly unlikely to join a profession with working conditions inferior to the one they are considering departing, or, as in the case of former teachers, with the very conditions which caused them to leave the profession in the first instance.

Some more concrete advances can be made by moving forward, in a nationally co-ordinated manner, towards programs of universal teacher registration, the development of teaching institutes and the insistence on the highest possible standards for teachers in qualification and performance.

Pathways into Teaching

Short term fixes which provide for inadequate pre-service or in-service training, large scale recruitment from developing countries or interstate poaching will all fail. Inadequately trained teachers will inevitably come to grief in the short term. Problems will arise in the classroom or in the overall quality of their performance. Professional standards must not be jeopardised in order to provide a hurried, cosmetic solution by “filling” a vacancy.

In particular, Australia should not do what has been tried in some overseas experiences and seek to massively recruit teachers from developing countries trained in areas of curriculum shortfall in Australia. Not only has this proved to be professionally unsatisfactory, it has also taken from developing countries a key part of their expensively educated intelligentsia which are badly needed by the developing nation. Such a neo-colonial strategy would be globally tragic and represent an abrogation of the responsibility of Australia to provide and pay for the solution to our own educational problems.

Supplementary Recommendations

The AEU would support a range of solutions to our teacher supply needs that should include:

- *a system of HECS-debt diminution and elimination for graduates who enter and stay in the teaching profession;*
- *reviewing the higher cost of HECS in areas such as Science with existing teacher shortages;*
- *a significant increase in substantial teacher education scholarships;*
- *supporting the consideration of the re-introduction of bonds in return for guarantees of employment;*
- *enhancing the recognition of prior learning, including child-rearing and relevant industry experience for mature-age entrants who also possess professional education qualifications into the profession;*
- *facilitating the re-entry into the profession of Australian teachers who have taught overseas;*
- *the provision of intensive, high quality language and system-orientation courses for potential recruits from overseas with appropriate qualifications;*
- *providing material and other support for teachers willing to teach and remain in hard-to-staff schools as a fundamental step in systems’ staffing operations;*
- *examine the applicability across Australia of existing schemes such as the Victorian teacher scholarships scheme, Northern Territory bursaries, South Australian Country Teacher Student Grants Scheme and the media recruitment campaigns in NSW, WA and Victoria;*
- *analysing the effect of private school systems headhunting from public schools;*
- *developing policies, which require private systems of education to devote significant amounts of the public funding they receive to train teachers for their own systems.*

Science, Technology and Mathematics

A solution for the problems besetting the areas of Science, Technology and Mathematics is to be found within an overall solution addressing the circumstances teaching and education finds itself in. It would be unwise public policy which addressed the needs of a subsection of the curriculum and not systematically and simultaneously address the general issues of teacher supply. If we take a student-centred approach to these issues, as we should and must, it will be noted these learning areas continue to have an under-engagement of girls at the very time we need to ensure that all

students are fully prepared in these key areas. In Queensland, as but one example, 29% of Year 12 students completing Physics are girls and only 23% completing Information Processing and Technology were girls. Meanwhile, female participation in Information Technology courses in Australian universities continues to fall.

The Review needs to examine the data and research affecting these choices including the role of leadership, the modelling and inspiration girls at school level receive in the classroom and beyond, the perceptions of the nature and usefulness of these subjects and any endemic processes which discourage girls from participation in these elements of the curriculum.

Practice Teaching and Initial Teacher Placements

The problem of successfully retaining teachers in the profession, once they have completed training and been appointed, points to another locus of policy consideration. The average age of teachers leaving the profession, prior to conventional retirement stages is, according to NSW DET research, 29. This represents a colossal financial and human loss. Therefore, sound public policy must address this stage of a teacher's career and build in factors which will enhance success and retention in the initial phases of a teaching career.

There is a need to invest more in the practicum and allow for more time for teachers-in-training in classroom situations. As well, there is a need for increased investment in the time of supervising teachers to assist the student. This will provide more time and financial recompense for the supervising teacher and lead to greater levels of initial teacher confidence at the start of a career.

There is also an opportunity to enhance the school-university partnership allowing for more time for school and university staff to work together and allow for interaction between the institutions.

Having built upon this in the latter years of undergraduate training, policies which increase teacher satisfaction in the earlier years of a career need to be forthcoming. Hence, sound practices of induction and mentoring should characterise the beginning of a teaching career. This would entail:

- a well-planned mentoring relationship from the first day of a teachers' appointment;
- the provision of release time for both beginning teachers and their mentors;
- support mechanisms such as consultancy, group meetings of beginning teachers, interaction with training universities.

For mature age entrants to the profession, other approaches in addition to the above will be required including the recognition of prior experience and learning, advanced entry points and relevant accelerated progression.

For very experienced teachers it is important to examine whether there are arrangements, including superannuation conditions, which compel teachers to leave the profession prior to them desiring to leave. This is not to argue that any worsening of existing superannuation conditions should be contemplated but rather to indicate that some teachers might be encouraged to leave teaching at 54 years and 11 months for example because of prevailing superannuation rules.

Both younger and experienced teachers might also be encouraged to remain in the profession if greater portability of entitlements existed which allowed teachers to move around Australia but remain as a teacher maintaining salary position and status. Additionally, sabbaticals and 4 for 5

schemes have allowed teachers to stay within the profession whilst still exploring possibilities for personal and professional growth.

Other Professional Development and Enhancement

Issues relating to shortages of areas of teacher supply can also be partially addressed by examining existing practices in the provision of in-service professional development. As new areas of knowledge and inquiry emerge it is inevitable that changing demands are made on the teaching profession in terms of consequent curriculum delivery. The current sporadic mismatch between the curriculum needs of students and the training backgrounds of some teachers has often been addressed by teachers working outside of their area of training and experience.

This is a sadly cosmetic exercise and may fill in a timetable but it is educationally unsatisfactory for teacher and student alike. A grand opportunity exists for governments and employing authorities to effectively “intellectually re-tool” the teaching profession by providing existing teachers with the chance to retrain in high quality PD courses which meet the changing needs of schools and systems.

At the Federal level, there is a need for a national PD program, which helps to equip teachers with the skills needed to embrace the changing needs of the school and society.

Additionally, the AEU would in principle, subject to appropriate negotiation, support higher salary levels based on the achievement of advanced professional standards within frameworks established in formal agreements between employing authorities and teacher unions.

Consideration needs also to be given to the recognition of the achievement of relevant additional post-graduate qualifications through advanced standing and pathways within the salary scales for teachers.

Importantly, in a dynamic and changing environment of new fields of knowledge and inquiry it will be essential for all levels of government to encourage and facilitate the development of a culture of continuous learning within the profession. The AEU notes that the Terms of Reference of the current Review includes consideration of innovative programs and understands that this will be more fully dealt with in subsequent parts of the review, at which point the AEU will further comment.