



# Great Teaching, Inspired Learning

Analysis of responses to the discussion paper



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# Introduction

The NSW Minister for Education, the Hon Adrian Piccoli MP, released the discussion paper *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* on 31 July 2012. Consultation closed on 2 November 2012. The paper stimulated a serious conversation across schools and the broader education community about the policies and strategies needed to best develop and support quality teaching and learning in NSW schools.

The discussion paper was developed by Dr Michele Bruniges, Director-General of the NSW Department of Education and Communities, Mr Tom Alegounarias, President of the Board of Studies NSW and Mr Patrick Lee, Chief Executive of the NSW Institute of Teachers. It encouraged people to think carefully about the teaching needed to ensure that future generations of young people leave school able to lead fulfilling and productive lives in the 21st century.

The discussion paper provided a basis for large scale consultation with teachers, schools and their communities, educational stakeholders, providers of initial teacher education, student teachers, teacher unions, parents, business and industry. It sought responses to questions in five areas:

1. Inspired learning
2. Initial teacher education
3. Entry into the profession
4. Develop and maintain professional practice
5. Recognise and share outstanding practice.

This document reports on the feedback arising from an analysis of the contributions received over the course of the consultation.

## The consultation

The consultation strategy involved:

- a three month consultation period ending on 2 November 2012 to enable individuals and stakeholders time to engage with the issues in the discussion paper and to develop submissions
- a six week Have Your Say online consultation forum open from 24 August until 5 October, to encourage broad dialogue on the issues
- meetings to engage key stakeholder groups convened by the Minister and the authors of the discussion paper.

Following the Minister's public announcement of the consultation on 31 July, a multi-faceted promotional strategy was employed to encourage submissions from as many individuals and organisations as possible. The consultation was promoted to schools and the broader community through:

- a purpose built website ([www.schools.nsw.edu.au/greatteaching](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/greatteaching)) with links to the discussion paper, a video message from the Minister and links to online forums and to submissions received over the course of the consultation
- media releases, commentary in newspapers, messages on Facebook and Twitter and website links
- a range of communication strategies by the Department of Education and Communities to encourage responses from the government school sector, such as staff emails from the Director-General and Deputy Director-General Schools, and articles in internal publications, such as *Side by Side* and promotion on the *School A to Z* website
- promotion of the discussion paper on the NSW Institute of Teachers and Board of Studies NSW websites, as well as by the non-government school sectors and key education stakeholder groups.

## Responses to the discussion paper

At the end of the consultation period, 98 formal submissions had been received, and there were 577 comments made on the online forum.

The public submissions can be found on the website ([www.schools.nsw.edu.au/greatteaching](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/greatteaching)).

The greatest number of contributions was from individual teachers. Contributions were also received from schools, school systems, teacher unions, professional teaching organisations, universities and private providers of professional development. Individual parents, parent organisations, business and industry also saw the need to respond to the discussion paper.

The contributions took a number of forms. Some contributions responded directly to the questions posed in the discussion paper. Some responded to the broader areas under consideration and several others responded by providing their own discussion papers and research articles. In many cases, the respondents were selective in the issues they chose to comment upon, tailoring their responses to address their own particular interests.

## Analysis methodology

All responses from the online forums, emails and submissions were analysed and collated using a computer program to organise the feedback into discrete discussion areas. This enabled the identification of broad themes emerging from the feedback and issues of concern to respondents. These themes and issues are the substance of the feedback of this report.

# Feedback Inspired learning

INSPIRED  
LEARNING

Two themes were evident in the contributions that considered this area:

- the knowledge and skills needed by young people in the 21st century
- the teaching practices needed to develop young people for life in the 21st century.

## Knowledge and skills needed by young people in the 21st century

There was a large number of contributions setting out what they saw as the knowledge and skills needed by young people in the 21st century. The following is a summary of the essential knowledge and skills identified in contributions.

### Teachers need to prepare young people who are:

- able to manage their own emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing, including the ability to access their own feelings and to notice and make distinctions among other individuals
  - confident, independent, self-regulated autonomous life-long learners, demonstrating flexibility, adaptability and resilience when faced with change or disappointment
  - able to use strong foundational skills in literacy and numeracy to learn existing and emerging subjects and disciplines and explore the world around them
  - able to think critically and holistically, to examine, reflect, argue and debate, and to problem solve effectively
  - creative and imaginative, with the capacity to pose new questions and offer new or different solutions
  - able to show initiative and make informed decisions and plan when, how and what they do day-to-day and in the longer term
- able to demonstrate strong interpersonal skills and relate to others in meaningful ways, being empathetic to the needs of others, knowledgeable about their own society and sensitive to the complexities of other cultures and religions
  - able to collaborate, negotiate, work in teams and take leadership roles where necessary
  - able to take a world view, including the ability to look at issues from multiple perspectives
  - global citizens working ethically within their own society and globally
  - able to communicate effectively including through technology, with the capacity to access information and to determine the difference between fact and assertion, and understand the nature of proof
  - technologically adept and able to harness the power of technology to benefit their own learning, their future employment and life.



Some contributors provided goal statements to set out their priorities for learning. The majority of contributors wrote in broad terms articulating lists of knowledge and skills they saw as essential.

Several contributions provided organising frameworks for considering the required knowledge and skills, listing them under such categories as social, emotional, cognitive and strategic aspects of learning. Other contributions cited the knowledge and skills identified in international developments, such as those identified by the Assessing and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21s) project.

Several contributions saw the key characteristics of inspired learning identified in the discussion paper, *creative and critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration*, as being existing policy aspirations for student learning that have been reiterated in national education agreements from the 1989 Hobart Declaration to the 2008 Melbourne Declaration<sup>1</sup>, and other national and international reports.

Overall, the broad range of knowledge and skills identified in contributions indicate widespread support for students to receive a holistic education that encompasses strong foundational literacy and numeracy skills and subject content knowledge, personal development and self-awareness, interpersonal and communication skills, as well as the higher order cognitive, communication and technological skills needed to better prepare students for living and working in the 21st century.

## Teaching in the 21st century

Generally, the picture that emerges from the contributions is one of expectations of teachers that are broader than simply being masters of the content they teach and knowing how to teach it. Amongst the contributions were views about the ideal teacher that go beyond technical competency to the dispositions and values that excellent teachers bring to their work. The following is a synthesis of these ideals.

### Excellent teachers:

- are knowledgeable about contemporary theories and the practice of teaching and the content they teach, presenting it in ways that challenge, interest and engage students in learning, and igniting in them a natural curiosity that motivates them to learn
- are ethical in all aspects of their life and practice
- are interested in young people and empathise with them, demonstrating the capacity to cater for their aspirations and understand their views of the world
- are passionate about their work and want to share their knowledge and skills with students and colleagues
- have a vision about teaching and learning, value achievement and provide opportunities for students to achieve success
- are confident, have a calm demeanour, patience, a sense of humour, and an innate ability to communicate and lead
- are creative and innovative in their teaching, modelling the skills, dispositions, habits, values and behaviours they seek to develop in their students
- can communicate complex and often difficult ideas to those who are either very young or with limited background knowledge of the subject
- are excited when they see enquiry and critical response in their students because they themselves are lifelong learners who have not lost their own infatuation with the world
- create optimal classroom environments providing explicit instruction and formative feedback, enabling their students to take control of their own learning, and where errors are welcomed as part of the learning process, and high order questioning is the norm
- are able to assess learning to evaluate their teaching and the learning of students, understand how to use this assessment diagnostically to identify impediments to learning and adjust their teaching accordingly
- are resilient, open-minded and flexible in their approach to their teaching.
- are problem-solvers, able to adapt and adjust their learning to meet student needs
- are able to manage the classroom learning environment and student behaviour, consistently and firmly, demonstrating fairness and structure and consistency in their practice and personal behaviour
- organise their time and plan teaching activities and sequences that support learning
- are able to build rapport with students, value each student and treat them with dignity, seeing them as unique, addressing their individual social and academic needs and building on their special talents and capabilities in order to prepare them for life beyond the school gate
- value opportunities to improve their knowledge and practice, to learn from and work collaboratively with their colleagues to improve their teaching and that of others
- see parents as the child's first teacher, actively engaging them in the learning process
- engage with and work within their local and broader communities.

<sup>1</sup> MCEEDYA, 2008. *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young People*. [http://www.mceedy.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/National\\_Declaration\\_on\\_the\\_Educational\\_Goals\\_for\\_Young\\_Australians.pdf](http://www.mceedy.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf)

These ideals capture the breadth of views in the contributions. Few contributions moved beyond this descriptive approach to discuss specific pedagogies seen as delivering the knowledge and skills needed by students in the 21st century. However, three pedagogic approaches were identified amongst the contributions.

The first is 'values pedagogy'<sup>2</sup>, which takes a more holistic view of the role of education beyond a focus on striving for academic excellence. 'Values pedagogy' seeks to build on the integral relationship between values and quality learning environments, and their combined impact on student achievement and wellbeing. The research cited indicated that a focus on building character and supporting student wellbeing leads to increased academic achievement. A values focus is a characteristic of the Finnish education system and is perceived to be a contributing factor in its success.

Other contributions promoted the Department's 'NSW Quality Teaching Model', first introduced in NSW government schools in 2003-04. The Quality Teaching Model identifies three dimensions of teaching or pedagogy<sup>3</sup> that have been linked to improved student outcomes:

- pedagogy that is fundamentally based on promoting high levels of intellectual quality
- pedagogy that is soundly based on promoting a quality learning environment
- pedagogy that develops and makes explicit to students the significance of their work.

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2 Lovat, T. & Toomey, R. (Eds.), (2009). *Values education and quality teaching: The double helix effect*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

3 NSW Department of Education and Training. *Quality Teaching in NSW public schools*. Series of publications 2003-2005.

[www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/areas/qt](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/areas/qt)

The third approach a number of contributors raised was work being undertaken by the Assessing and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21s) project<sup>4</sup>. The ATC21s project is led from the University of Melbourne, supported by Cisco, Intel and Microsoft and a number of partner countries, including Australia. ATC21s is an international research project that is proposing new ways of assessing 21st century skills and encouraging teaching those skills in the classroom.

## Considerations

**A large number of contributions identified contextual factors that should be considered in planning for implementation of new policy directions. Three themes were evident amongst these contributions.**

- *The need to raise achievement levels generally and for specific populations:* contributions from within and outside the profession put forward arguments for changes to teaching practices to raise student achievement levels. Of particular concern were the achievements of specific populations of students, in particular students with special needs and those with learning difficulties, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from remote and isolated communities and students at risk of disengaging from school.
- *The capacity of schools and teachers to respond to change:* a significant number of contributions queried the capacity of schools to respond to issues raised in the discussion paper given the pressures and responsibilities of their teaching role and administrative accountabilities.
- *The need for schools to better reflect broader changes in industry and employment:* contributions from respondents external to the profession took on broader viewpoints noting that while schools are responding to the broader social and cultural changes, they are less responsive to broad changes occurring in industry and employment. They identified two issues that emerge from this.

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4 [www.atc21s.org](http://www.atc21s.org)

The first was that schools are perceived to be relatively unresponsive to the changing employment needs of young people. Evidence supporting this claim is data demonstrating the disproportionate effects of the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC) on participation in employment and education and training of young Australians aged 15-19 years of age. Although the overall effects of the GFC on Australian employment were mild, the impact on 15-19 year olds was equally severe as in those OECD countries most affected by the GFC<sup>5</sup>.

However, the arguments from contributors about the need to better prepare young people for the workforce went beyond providing better for the transition of young people from school to employment, to the need to develop the higher level thinking, communication and relational skills required by business and industry. By way of example, a contribution from industry noted the current lack of quality middle managers is impacting on business growth and industry's capacity to compete successfully on the world stage.

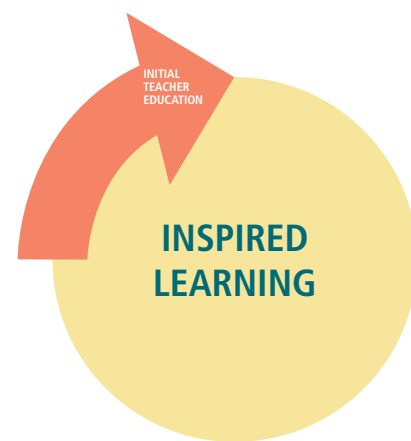
The second issue was that some contributors perceived schools to be slow to introduce organisational changes and management practices seen as commonplace and necessary in contemporary business and industry environments. These contributors saw this reluctance to change as having implications for schools' ability to respond to change and to address the unique contextual circumstances of their students and communities.

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5 Sweet, R., 2011. *The impact of the GFC on the Australian youth labour market: OECD comparisons*. Cited in the submission from the NSW Business Chamber.

# Feedback

## Initial teacher education



Discussion of issues in initial teacher education generated more commentary in the contributions than any other issue. The major themes emerging from the commentary relate to the quality of graduates, the adequacy of supply across the range of teaching contexts and the preparation of teachers. While to some extent these appear as discrete themes they are interrelated.

### The quality of graduate teachers

Several contributions commented that recent changes, including the introduction of the graduate standards, Masters of Teaching courses, mature age entry and other initiatives meant today's teacher graduates are better prepared than any generation before them. Nonetheless, there was a broad consensus in contributions from teachers, schools, educational stakeholders and business and community organisations that attention needs to be given to the quality of graduates of initial teacher education programs.

Of great concern to contributors was the quality of graduates at or just above the minimum standard. Consequently, the majority of contributions focused on discussion of minimum ATAR entry scores, minimum literacy and numeracy skills and suitability for teaching.

#### Minimum ATAR entry scores

Views about minimum ATAR scores expressed by contributors were polarised. Generally, parents, teachers, schools, school education authorities and community stakeholders expressed strong support for establishing a minimum ATAR score for entry into teacher education programs.

Those contributors who supported the establishment of a minimum ATAR saw this strategy as a means of raising the quality of entrants and the status of teaching as a profession, and consequently to attracting high achieving students. A common view was that increasing the ATAR for teaching would make it more prestigious. One contributor

argued that the 'downgrading' of ATAR scores sends the wrong message to the community and does not inspire confidence in the teaching profession.

Universities and several other contributors opposed this stance arguing the ATAR was not a valid predictor of future success at university or of 'great teaching', and that it was impractical to establish such a restriction on entry to teaching. They argued that a focus on the quality of those who enter teacher education is dismissive of the value adding role that universities play, hence the focus of quality deliberations should be on the output of initial teacher education not its inputs.

In their view, the state has responsibility for establishing the minimum standards of practice to be achieved by graduates, and universities have the responsibility of ensuring whoever exits from a program of initial teacher education is able to meet those standards.

#### Suitability of entrants to teacher education programs

A number of contributors raised the need for a suitability assessment to weed out from teaching those entrants to initial teacher education lacking the necessary aptitude and commitment to young people. The common view was that ATAR is a crude measure for selecting people with the personal characteristics and aptitude needed for successful teaching.

Interviews, curriculum vitae, experience in community service, voluntary work in schools or with child-based services were all seen as having the potential to add value to the selection process. Several contributors raised the example of the



interview process used by the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Newcastle as a process worthy of investigation.

The University of Melbourne contribution indicated that it was trialing a teacher-selection tool. Preliminary evidence from these trials indicates that those who are the brightest in achievement outcomes from undergraduate studies have better profiles in personality, attitudes and other desirable criteria for teaching.

Despite the concerns about selection at the point of entry, some contributors saw suitability assessments being best placed early in the program to cull out those who did not have the interest, aptitude, disposition, confidence or empathy for students demanded by the role. Proponents of such an assessment saw it being linked to an early professional experience session.

### Literacy and numeracy standards

Low literacy and numeracy skills of graduating teachers were also a concern for a number of contributors. Evidence from the Productivity Commission's *Schools Workforce*<sup>6</sup> report suggesting that average literacy and numeracy skills of those entering teacher training courses have diminished was cited as confirming the need for some form of intervention.

Some contributors commented on current NSW and national policies in this area. Currently entrants to NSW universities are required to attain at least Band 4 English or its equivalent to be enrolled in a course of initial teacher education. At the national level, Ministers for Education recently endorsed the proposition put forward by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) that all teacher education students should be in the top 30 percent of the population in terms of literacy and numeracy regardless of the subjects taught.

6 Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2012. *Schools Workforce*. p.12. [www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/education-workforce/schools/report](http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/education-workforce/schools/report)

## Considerations

- The recruitment of teachers with neither the aptitude nor disposition needed to teach is undesirable from a number of perspectives, foremost are the implications for the quality of teaching provided to young people in schools and their future life chances. Further, the employment of such teachers has opportunity cost implications for schools and school systems due to foregone opportunities for improvement and increased pressure on management and support structures. It adds also to perceptions of teaching as a low status profession creating an environment where teaching becomes a less attractive career option for high achieving individuals.
- There is evidence amongst the contributions of a culture of entitlement, that is, completion of an initial teacher education degree entitles the holder to employment as a teacher. As a result, the majority of contributions to the discussion paper focused on ways to ensure the quality of entrants to initial teacher education programs.
- At the present time, the Commonwealth Government's *Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2011* establishes universities as independent self-accrediting authorities best able to determine who enters university and graduates with appropriate qualifications. A number of contributors indicated the proposal to establish minimum ATAR scores is inconsistent with this legislation.
- ATAR scores are a function of supply and demand for a program. Where demand for a program is stable, any increase in places causes a reduction in minimum ATAR scores. The effect is magnified if fewer high achieving students enter the program. Conversely, raising minimum ATAR scores would limit the number of places in initial teacher education.
- The Commonwealth and NSW governments are committed to raising participation in higher education and, in particular, participation of young people from lower socio-economic and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Much of this planned increase in participation is likely to be in teacher education due to its popularity, perceived low cost and social utility. Raising ATAR scores would impact negatively on these broader higher education goals.
- Research cited in some contributions indicates that ATAR scores are more closely related to socio-economic status than future success at university. They indicated that the establishment of minimum ATAR scores would impact disproportionately on communities with low rates of higher education participation. This would severely affect the student cohorts of regional universities and have consequences for teacher supply in regional areas.
- Raising minimum ATAR scores would also impact on the recruitment of Indigenous teachers, and the role of teaching as a "first in family" entry point into higher education. Raising minimum ATARs would in effect reduce the diversity of new entrants to the teacher workforce.
- The relevance of ATAR scores to the selection of students for entry to programs is decreasing as alternative pathways to teaching increase in popularity. A contributor provided the results of a recent survey of 2011 entrants to initial teacher education programs. These data indicate that fewer than 20% of the almost 1000 respondents to the survey commenced their initial teacher education course directly from school<sup>7</sup>. The ATAR is not directly relevant to mature age entrants or to people given advanced standing from TAFE and other vocational qualifications. However, some contributors raised concerns also about the quality of graduates entering initial teacher education via these pathways.
- The expansion of pathways into teaching is addressing the concern of a number of contributors about

7 Warren Centre, 2012. *Draft report: Who are Australia's future teachers?* Report prepared by Ian Gibson, Macquarie University for the Warren Centre. <http://thewarrencentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/wc1858-0-IGibson-TEQ-FinalReport-August2012-Embargoed.pdf>

the limited employment and life experience of many teachers.

- Although a number of contributors urged consideration of suitability assessments to determine personal suitability for teaching, any such measures need to be transparent, fair, free of bias and defensible. Some contributors questioned the need for and defensibility of suitability assessments once a student has entered a program.
- One contributor noted the need to broaden selection processes to take into account all personal attributes, as well as their background skills and knowledge. They suggested that consideration be given to investigating the potential of processes that triangulate a range of evidence focussing on the prospective students' 'motivation' for becoming a teacher, 'disposition', that is their confidence and empathy for young people, and 'capacity' as measured by ATAR scores.
- At present, literacy and numeracy standards for teachers are established at the point of entry to the programs. Although students who do not meet these standards are assisted by universities to meet the standards through bridging courses, concerns remain about literacy and numeracy standards of new entrants to the profession. There were concerns amongst contributors also with the practicality of the new national benchmark, not the least being the absence of population wide measures of literacy and numeracy standards.

## The supply of graduate teachers

The discussion paper raised the issue of teacher supply, suggesting a mismatch between supply and the needs of schools is leading to an oversupply of teachers graduating from primary teacher education courses and an undersupply in some secondary teaching areas – predominantly science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and in some geographic areas.

Given that ATAR scores are a measure of supply and demand for teacher education places, it is not surprising that contributions to issues of teacher supply were polarised along the same lines as the discussion of minimum ATAR scores.

### The supply of teachers

A common viewpoint in contributions from teachers, schools and amongst educational stakeholders was that the overall number of teachers being trained should be reduced and aligned better with the needs of schools.

Consequently, many contributors proposed capping the number of student places to rein in what was perceived as an oversupply of teachers, particularly primary teachers. This oversupply was seen as contributing to a lowering of the quality of teachers graduating from initial teacher education courses and, as a result, a lowering of the status of the profession. Hence, reducing the intake would raise ATAR scores and result in a better candidature.

Other contributors proposed that issues of supply and demand for teachers be approached through employers and universities planning collaboratively to align graduate numbers with workforce needs.

Contributions from universities took issue with claims of oversupply. High employment rates amongst graduates were cited as evidence of continuing demand for teachers.

Several contributors urged caution in any approach to limiting the number of teachers trained, commenting that in the absence of accurate workforce planning

data, there was the potential to create teacher shortages.

Despite the current orthodoxy that oversupply is leading to a lowering of teaching standards, several contributors saw any oversupply as an opportunity to raise the standard of teachers and teaching. Oversupply means wider choice in recruitment and the opportunity for employers to review their employment practices to ensure that only the 'best and brightest' are employed.

### Meeting the needs for teachers of science and mathematics

Although some disadvantaged and isolated and geographic areas remain hard to staff, shortages of secondary mathematics and science teachers remain an issue, not just in NSW but nationally and internationally. Increasing participation in high levels of mathematics and science is seen as essential to maintaining the economic advantages that arise from technology and innovation.

Several contributors made significant representation on this issue focusing their concerns on falling participation in calculus-based mathematics, physics and chemistry. Participation in general mathematics and biology was reported to be steady or increasing.

Evidence was presented of a reinforcing cycle where low participation in higher levels of mathematics, physics and chemistry at the HSC leads to fewer high achieving mathematics and science students choosing teaching as a career. The subsequent shortages of mathematics and science teachers impacts on the quality of teaching of these subjects in Years 9 and 10. This convinces these students that they are boring or difficult so these students reject HSC study of them, leading to a further reduction in participation rates in these subjects.

A structural issue noted by one contributor as also impacting on the number of students choosing to study calculus-based mathematics, physics and chemistry was the strategising by students in their choice of HSC subjects as a means to preserving their chances of a high ATAR.

## Considerations

- A number of arguments about the implications for the Commonwealth's goal of increasing participation in higher education, outlined in the discussion of ATAR scores, apply also to consideration of the arguments for limiting students entering programs of initial teacher education.
- In this context of increased participation, teacher education was reported to have supplanted the BA or the BSc as the basic general higher education degree. The double degree model of teacher education is seen as providing a sharper and more assured entry point to employment than, for example, the BA.
- There is an absence of reliable workforce planning data that takes into account on the one hand, the full range of employment opportunities for teachers in NSW, Australia and internationally, and on the other hand, the likely attrition and retirement rates of teachers and the demand for teachers arising from increased student numbers. As a result, the issue of oversupply is seen to be contestable.
- Cited as evidence of a balance between supply and demand for teachers was data from the *Graduate Destinations Survey*<sup>8</sup>, showing relatively stable rates of full-time employment after graduation from initial teacher education programs.
- While all stakeholders and sectors agree that more needs to be done to attract high achieving students into teaching, the reality is the higher the ATAR, the wider the career choices available. Given that the proportion of students entering initial teacher education programs direct from schools is decreasing, there are strong arguments for implementing strategies to attract high achieving career changers. These people bring with them the benefit of experience working in careers outside of schools.

- Contributors noted that the shortfall in teachers of science and mathematics has arisen from the lowering of the quality of teaching in these areas. They identified a self-reinforcing cycle that is now impacting on related studies in engineering and technology. They called for greater attention to be given to the quality of mathematics and science teaching in the lower secondary school years.

## The preparation of teachers

While there were differences in the forms of teacher education promoted amongst the contributions, there were two broad areas of consensus on the preparation of teachers. Regardless of whether teacher preparation is offered as part of an integrated program of study or as a postgraduate qualification, in addition to content and educational studies, contributors called for:

1. more meaningful study of the practice of teaching, including classroom and behaviour management, and the pedagogies that best support learning
2. greater emphasis on the quality of the professional experience.

### The form of degree

At the most basic level of argument is the form of the degree undertaken. A number of contributions, predominantly but not exclusively from the primary schools sector, responded negatively to the suggestion that all programs of teacher education be postgraduate only. Extended immersion in educational theory, pedagogy and professional experience over a four-year period was seen by these contributors to be a better preparation for teaching as it provides the opportunity to integrate study of the content with educational theory and teaching methodologies.

Initial teacher education providers generally argued for retention of the eclectic range of models currently available. One contributor who was providing postgraduate programs only argued for introduction of the Finnish model involving postgraduate courses at Masters degree level. This contributor commented that this form of teacher education was proving to be more attractive to high achieving students.

There was no support from contributors, other than from the program's administrators, for introduction of the *Teach for Australia* program in NSW schools.

<sup>8</sup> Graduate Careers Australia, 2012. Graduate Destinations Report 2011.

<http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/mediacentre/newsandmediareleases>

## Educational studies

Generally, amongst the contributions there was widespread support for the current broad-based teacher education curriculum providing a balance between knowledge and skills and theory and practice. The foundation of this curriculum has been the Graduate Standards set out in the NSW Professional Teaching Standards. The impact of the transition to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers will not be evident in initial teacher education outcomes until the first students graduate from revised courses.

However, a significant number of contributions expressed concerns about the relevance of some aspects of current courses and the low level of attention given to practical aspects of teaching, such as programming and lesson planning, content knowledge, classroom and behaviour management and broader understanding of educational issues, including working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Some contributors sought a more explicit focus in initial teacher education programs on community and parental engagement strategies, positive behaviour management strategies, special education, and physical activity in primary schools.

For other contributors an issue needing to be resolved was the potential overcrowding of teacher education programs, leaving them unable to adequately address core requirements.

## The professional experience

There was agreement across the contributions with the need to improve the quality of the professional experience provided for student teachers. A number of submissions commented that the in-school experience was where learning how to teach occurred. Consequently, there were a number of perspectives advanced about the most appropriate forms of professional experience.

### Professional experience should:

- occur early in the teacher education program to enable:

- the student to determine if teaching is the career for them
- an early assessment of the student's suitability to teach

- involve a range of experiences in a variety of schools
- involve an extensive period of engagement in a school to experience the range of teaching roles beyond the classroom, through either internships or apprenticeship models
- involve a placement at the beginning of the school year to learn how to establish classroom routines at the beginning of the year.

The need to raise the quality of the professional experience was also an issue that generated much support in contributions.

### Strategies for improving the quality of the professional experience advanced in contributions included:

- specific mentor training for supervising teachers to ensure a focus on developing the school readiness of the student teacher
- the need for senior school staff to take a more active role in ensuring the quality of the professional experience
- the identification of a professional experience coordinator with a role in developing a mentoring and learning culture within the school
- greater attention to the placement of student teachers to ensure they are mentored and supervised by the best teachers
- a more collaborative approach between schools and universities in the conduct, management, administration and assessment of the professional experience
- the use of retired principals to support and mentor student teachers
- more direct and rigorous application of the graduate standards in the development of student teachers

and the assessment of professional experience outcomes.

## Considerations

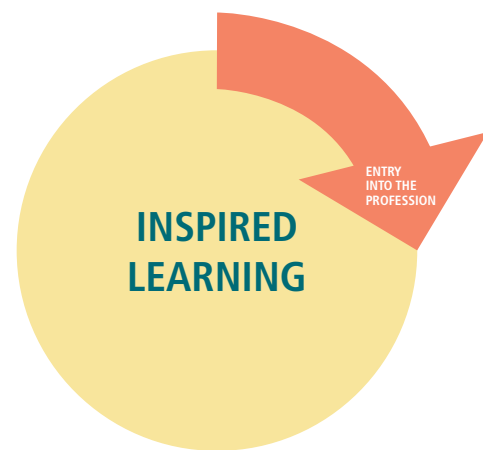
- There were a number of contributions to the discussion paper from students and recent graduates. These tell the story of the highs and lows of their preparation. In one case, the preparation was deemed by both schools where the student undertook their professional experience as being good enough to offer employment after graduation, but not good enough for the student to be sufficiently confident to take up the challenges of these roles. This contribution epitomised issues about the value to beginning teachers of their initial teacher education programs and consequently the need for better preparation.
- Although the Graduate Standards set out what graduate teachers should know, understand and be able to do, and all courses of initial teacher education are approved on the grounds that they do, contributors still expressed concerns about the relevance of course content to what happens in schools. However, the extent to which such commentary relates to the outcomes of superseded courses is not known.
- The large number of contributors supporting the proposition that teacher educators should have relevant and recent in-school experience suggests that teachers and schools do not believe that teacher educators are sufficiently in touch with the practices of schools and teachers.
- The response of initial teacher education providers to the proposition that stronger links and partnerships should be developed between schools and providers, as occurs in other professions, did not involve extended engagement of provider staff in schools. Rather, many argued for greater involvement of teachers in the academic life of institutions. Other contributors expressed a view that, in many instances, the level of current engagement goes no further than the provider contacting the school to arrange the professional experience placement.



- The professional experience is the ideal context for building stronger links with schools, however the opportunities for engagement between teachers and teacher educators through the professional experience are not being realised. Generally, the professional experience is treated as an add-on, rather than being integral to teacher preparation, providing opportunities for students to test theoretical aspects of courses in practice. In the contexts where there is limited involvement of initial teacher education teaching staff in the professional experience and an absence of adequate training for mentors and supervisors, student teachers' exposure to effective practice is limited to the practices of their mentor or supervisor.
- Anecdotal and research evidence provided in contributions from school systems and providers of initial teacher education suggests that the quality of mentoring and supervision of student teachers is at best uneven. As one contributor noted, even within explicit guidelines, supervising teachers approach their role from diverse orientations, dispositions and perspectives. Perspectives on assessment vary from 'hard', summative, gate-keeping assessment to formative, developmental mentoring approaches.
- Many contributions from schools and teachers present the professional experience as a further burden in their busy schedules. Real improvement in the professional experience will need an attitudinal shift amongst teachers and schools and providers of initial teacher education. Teachers and schools need to view student teachers as teaching and professional learning resources that bring opportunities for teachers to learn mentoring and supervisory skills and contribute to their own development.
- Universities need to see schools and teachers as full partners in the preparation of teachers. The quality of the mentoring and supervision provided for student teachers is fundamental to the quality of teachers that graduate from initial teacher education programs.
- An issue raised in some teacher contributions was that school level recommendations to fail a student at the professional experience were often overturned or ignored by the initial teacher education institution. At the same time, the quality of the professional experience reports from supervising teachers is highly variable and consequently, the reliability of some assessments may be problematic. While the majority of contributions called for an increase in the extent of professional experience, there were also concerns with the capacity of schools to meet increased demand for places. Research undertaken by one Catholic Diocese indicated that the extent to which schools offer professional experience is variable. Schools where the staff are mature and the teaching often less demanding generally take fewer students than schools where the challenges are greater and the range of experience of teaching staff is wider.
- The difficulties of arranging professional experience placements for students to schools in rural and isolated communities, and the subsequent implications for recruitment to schools in these communities, was raised by a contributor as an issue needing specific support and attention.



# Feedback Entry into the profession



Although some contributors were of the view that providers of initial teacher education are responsible for developing 'job-ready' graduates, the majority of contributors recognised the first years of teaching as a critical stage in developing new teachers to achieve their professional independence. The feedback about 'entry to the profession' arising from contributions was primarily about two key areas:

- Support for newly appointed teachers
- Effective mentoring.

## Support for beginning teachers

There was widespread support in contributions for the need to provide better support for beginning teachers. The difficulties faced by new teachers in contemporary schools, and the perceptions of relatively high attrition rates amongst teachers in their formative years, were amongst the reasons advanced for a more focused approach to supporting new teachers.

### The forms of support advanced in contributions included:

- ongoing internship and apprenticeship models of support
- the appointment of trained mentors to work in a collaborative teaching partnership with the beginning teacher
- orientation to teaching programs and school-based induction programs
- reduced teaching loads
- extension of the current probationary period in government schools from one to three years
- participation in peer and collegial networks
- more judicious allocation of classes to ensure newly appointed teachers do not end up with the most difficult teaching assignments
- targeted professional learning for new teachers.

A number of contributions commented on the NSW Professional Teaching Standards and the current accreditation

arrangements overseen by the NSW Institute of Teachers (the Institute). Some contributions were supportive of the policies and processes of the Institute, seeing them as providing a helpful framework for developing newly appointed teachers. Other contributions saw the arrangements to be burdensome and too focused on compliance.

In relation to induction of newly appointed teachers, some school-based contributors saw their role as being limited to providing formal and targeted induction programs, focused on providing an orientation to the school and its policies.

There were differences in the views of contributors as to the professional learning needs of beginning teachers. Some contributors did not see their needs as being different to other teachers in the school. Others saw the need for professional learning targeting the specific needs of beginning teachers. These needs included development of programming and planning skills, and classroom and behaviour management strategies.

A number of contributors commented that the current arrangements for developing newly appointed teachers are failing new graduates who take up casual teaching in their first years. Lack of access to professional learning and mentoring to develop their practice in their formative years is leading to the situation where some casual teachers are being accredited prior to their first permanent appointment. Consequently, any support for new graduates is no longer available to them when they receive their first full-time appointment.

Almost all contributors supported the proposition in the discussion paper that teachers returning to teaching after an extended period be obliged to take part in some form of retraining program.

## Mentoring

Although there was almost unanimous support from contributors for newly graduated teachers to be supported by a mentor teacher, there were differences in how the role was conceived.

There was broad agreement on the need for mentors to be trained to undertake the role, and that the main focus of the role was developmental rather than appraisal. However, while some contributors saw the need for mentors to be accredited at the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher levels, other contributors saw no value in mentors being accredited. These contributors argued, in part, that the numbers of accredited teachers was currently and will continue in the future to be insufficient to meet the demand for mentors. This shortfall would be critically evident in schools with high numbers of beginning teachers.

A number of contributors suggested roles for mentor teachers.

### Teacher mentor roles would include:

- classroom observations
- lesson conferencing
- modelling of effective practice
- team teaching
- collaborative planning
- reflective discussions
- coaching
- school-based professional learning.

The broad range of roles of mentors prompted other contributors to give consideration to the characteristics of an effective mentor.

### Effective mentors should have:

- curriculum and pedagogical expertise
- high level content knowledge

- high level interpersonal skills
- skills in quality lesson observation and formative feedback
- a thorough understanding of the professional teaching standards and the NSW Institute of Teachers accreditation requirements
- an understanding of their school's context and the learning needs of its students.

## Considerations

- Greater awareness of the importance of quality teaching, and the generational change in the teaching workforce occurring now and over the next decade, are focussing schools and school systems on the need to effectively support new teachers.
- Amongst the contributions from schools and teachers there is a range of perspectives on the development of beginning teachers. The experiences of some beginning teachers conveyed in their contributions indicate that the practice of beginning teachers being given the most difficult teaching assignments and being left to 'sink-or-swim' remains alive and well. As are probationary periods where the first and only support beginning teachers receive is their notification of placement on a so-called improvement program as a means of facilitating their exit from the school.
- Research was also provided by a contributor highlighting the professional and emotional pressures on beginning teachers, with the most difficult areas for them being classroom and behaviour management. The research provided evidence of the benefits of collaborative teaching partnerships that provide supportive opportunities for beginning teachers to view and model good teaching practice.
- These two perspectives highlight the need for schools to develop a culture where teacher development is encouraged, expected and supported. This was evident in some contributions where classrooms were being de-privatised, collegiality was encouraged, professional learning plans were being

developed and enacted and lesson observations were the norm.

- This involves a difficult cultural shift for some schools and one that can only occur with the leadership and support of the executive and principal of the school. As one contribution noted, there is a need to move beyond the use of lesson observation for appraisal, to seeing lesson observations as both an entry into and means of developing teachers. Lesson observations are not the sole purview of school executives; all teachers need to take up opportunities to learn from others, and to learn the skills of evaluating and critiquing practice that underpin effective mentoring.
- While many contributions from schools and teachers acknowledged the benefits of such practices as evident in Singapore and other places, they indicated that such practices need time in the school day.
- The development of increasing capacity to mentor and lead colleagues is already a fundamental premise underpinning the NSW Professional Accomplishment and Professional Leadership standards. Increasing capacity to mentor also underpins the expectations of teachers meeting the higher levels of the new Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
- These observations highlight a significant issue with the current accreditation arrangements, that in many cases, those people with responsibility for implementing accreditation arrangements do not themselves have to be accredited, and consequently, they have limited ownership of the professional standards and quality improvement agenda.
- A number of contributors raised issues arising from compliance with the Institute's accreditation requirements in the context of accreditation at Professional Competence/Proficient Teacher level and the maintenance of accreditation requirements. There were two main issues.

The first is that in some cases the issue is not the Institute's requirements, but the school or school system's interpretation of the requirements.

In many cases, the schools or systems have over-compensated to ensure that they meet the compliance requirements. In such cases, the focus is misplaced from ensuring the beginning teacher's development, and the reliability and validity of the judgement of competence/proficiency to ensuring that the documentation meets compliance requirements. The culture of prioritising compliance over development is also evident in maintenance of accreditation arrangements, with examples cited by some contributors of new scheme teachers attending irrelevant professional learning programs 'just to get their hours up'.

The second issue is the view that current compliance requirements are burdensome. For many schools and teachers, workload issues are exacerbated by the duplication of data management systems across the Institute and school systems. A case in point is duplication by school systems of the Institute's systems for recording participation in professional learning. As a result, many schools and teachers are faced with having to record information twice; once to meet statutory requirements, and the other for their own or their system's purposes.

To some extent, duplication of reporting systems has occurred as a consequence of schools and school systems seeing value in tracking the participation in professional learning of all teachers, both existing and accredited. This is not possible through the Institute's systems, which cater only for accredited teachers. However, the result has been to increase the burden on teachers and principals needing to record and certify participation.

- While regulation and compliance were viewed as negative aspects of the current accreditation requirements, the reality is that without such regulation the professionalisation of teachers to bring about the cultural and behavioural changes envisaged as arising from the establishment of the Institute would not occur.

- Several contributions indicated that the one-year period established in government schools for teachers to be accredited at Professional Competence/Proficient Teacher level is insufficient. They called for a decoupling of the current industrial-based probationary requirements from the period available for accreditation.
- A number of contributors advanced reasons for the apparent high attrition rates amongst beginning teachers. In addition to those encouraged to leave as they are deemed not to meet the required standards and those who leave because they feel inadequately supported, research was cited indicating there is also a group of highly effective teachers who leave. These new and enthusiastic teachers with high aspirations and strong technical skills find it hard to accommodate their aspirations in schools. They find their preferred approaches to teaching difficult to enact in what they perceive to be conservative educational environments. Unable to or unwilling to compromise they leave.
- Several contributors who had entered teaching after successful careers in other professional fields wrote about their early teaching experiences. One contributor reported that despite being more qualified in their area of teaching than all others in the school, and having years of professional practice in that field, they were deemed not to have the experience needed to teach senior students in that field. Such stories are not uncommon.
- Lastly, one contributor reported on research indicating the result of absent or inappropriate support for beginning teachers is an increased potential to reinforce a range of poor teaching practices that become more difficult to ameliorate the longer the practices continue. Inability or failure to ameliorate these poor practices impacts on the learning of students in their classes over the person's teaching life.

# Feedback

## Develop and maintain professional practice

Contributors provided a wide array of perspectives on the issues associated with the development and maintenance of professional practice. Central to these perspectives was the principle of keeping quality teaching and student achievement at the core of the school's business.

Arising from the contributions were four identifiable areas of discussion:

- School leadership
- Professional learning
- Professional standards and accreditation
- Teachers not meeting the required standards.

### School leadership

Many contributors commented on the critical role of school principals and school leadership teams in actively setting directions to maximise the personal, academic and social development of all children in the school. Amongst these directions are the perspectives they bring to teacher development, and the capacity to incrementally move staff to improve pedagogy and student outcomes.

Contributors described the different characteristics amongst principals they had worked with from the 'disengaged and retiring' to the 'highly motivated and engaged' – the former seeing the quality of teaching and learning in their school to be a function of the quality of teachers appointed by some far-off authority, and the latter taking a deep and personal interest and responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

Consequently, many contributors saw significant and effective teaching being a pre-requisite for the appointment of principals. Others supported this stance, but also saw the need for other capacities.

### The characteristics of effective school leaders identified in contributions include:

- a deep understanding of teaching and learning, including the capacity to lead others to develop, improve and engage in transformational pedagogies
- emotional intelligence
- an understanding of developing cultures



- understanding of complex systems and how power and authority work
- adaptive capacities to engage with new and unfamiliar situations
- strong interpersonal skills.

Most contributors rejected the view that principals should simply grow into the role, seeing the need for specific leadership development prior to and soon after taking up the role. Shadowing and mentoring, coursework, action research, networking and engagement within professional associations, and structured leadership development programs designed against the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* were amongst the strategies proposed.

A number of contributors thought that principals should possess some form of postgraduate qualification at least to the level of a Masters degree.

Other contributors felt that, although necessary, experience and capacities in educational leadership are insufficient preparation for principals. These contributors recognised the need for managerial and leadership training, particularly as the principal is the main interface between the school and its community. Several contributors proffered commercial leadership development programs as a means of developing the leadership capabilities of future school leaders.

## Professional learning

Almost all contributors saw participation in professional learning as being essential to developing and maintaining professional practice. However, there were a range of views and approaches about the most effective forms of professional learning.

Many contributors argued for centralised approaches to professional learning, seeing such provision being fundamental to implementing state-wide changes, such as the introduction of the new national curriculum. Other contributors questioned the value of some systemic professional learning, particularly those forms that target individuals and are offered away from the school. Systemic initiatives that target whole schools were seen to be more effective in

achieving the teacher 'buy-in' needed to change practice.

On the other hand, many other contributors argued that the focus of professional learning should be at the school level because schools and teachers are being best placed to understand their own development needs. These contributors argued for schools and teachers taking responsibility for their own professional learning as being both necessary and empowering.

### Characteristics of effective school-led professional learning put forward in contributions included the:

- identification of school-wide development priorities
- assessment of individual professional learning needs against the school's priorities
- development of individual professional learning plans
- alignment of teacher development plans with performance appraisal
- increased collaboration and teacher collegiality
- opportunities to apply new practice
- opportunities for lesson observations, team teaching and mentoring.

Opportunities for teachers to engage in continuous and substantial learning about their practice, observing and being observed by their colleagues in their own classrooms and those of their colleagues, were seen as being best practice in teacher development. However, many contributors commented that the greatest impediment to establishing these practices was time within the school day.

Several contributors focused on developing their school as a community of learners, raised the importance to them of having a person on their staff with the time and responsibility for coordinating initiatives aimed at building the capacity of teachers in the school.

A number of contributors raised the issue of postgraduate study, seeing their effort and commitment to gaining higher-level qualifications being largely unrewarded

and, in some instances, denigrated. Despite this, a significant number of contributors called for systems to be established to increase the numbers of teachers undertaking postgraduate study and for it to be recognised and rewarded.

The place of technology in teaching and in professional learning was a significant issue for a number of contributors. There were three perspectives. First, the development of capacities to support the use of technology as a teaching and learning tool was identified as a professional learning need in itself. Some contributors held strong views that it was a teacher's professional responsibility to be up to date with the use of technology in education. In their view, failure to keep up to date with technology was grounds for questioning the teacher's continuing employment.

Second, technology was seen as an enabling tool - not just through its use as an information conduit for providing professional learning, but a means of allowing teachers to develop and use the 21st century knowledge and skills envisaged for students (that is, creativity and critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving).

Third, one contributor commented that there was a need to focus on the new pedagogies essential to leveraging the full potential of technology, rather than using technology to drive pedagogy. Evidence of such practices is emerging with teachers and students participating in collaborative networks to problem solve, network and learn, with these networks being facilitated through technology.

## Professional standards and accreditation

Views about standards and accreditation were strongly put by contributors. Generally, they were treated as separate issues.

Some contributors saw professional standards being an essential element of the reforms to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They saw the deeper purpose of standards being about professional growth. As such, they supported their use to guide professional learning and teacher development.



Several contributors, however, saw the professional standards as limiting in that they had the potential to restrict more sophisticated understandings of the ongoing development of teachers. They also felt that the developmental continuum represented by the current NSW and Australian Teacher Standards does not adequately reflect the ongoing learning that occurs beyond attainment of competence/proficiency over the first five to seven years in the classroom, as teachers continue to develop and refine their practice.

Issues raised in contributions about accreditation were in three main areas: the current maintenance of accreditation arrangements for 'New Scheme Teachers'; the application of the higher-level standards; and the accreditation of all teachers.

A number of teacher contributors raised issues about the current maintenance of accreditation arrangements. While some felt that the compliance requirements were an unwelcome impost, others argued for a broadening of the definition of what constitutes professional learning to include activities such as collaborative partnerships amongst teachers and mentoring. Other contributors commented that the current processes for approval of professional learning providers did not adequately recognise the role that schools play in meeting the professional learning needs of their teachers.

A number of contributors argued against the need for mentors and supervisors to demonstrate their capacity through attainment of the higher-level standards. For many, it was a matter of cost benefit; the time and financial costs of achieving accreditation at the higher levels outweighing the potential benefits of being employed as a High Achieving Teacher (HAT). However, a contribution from a school employing a HAT saw accreditation at the higher levels paying immediate benefits in terms of teacher development, both for the HAT and other members of school staff.

There were divergent views on the question of whether all teachers should be accredited. On the one hand, a significant number of teachers and other

contributors opposed the suggestion that all teachers should be accredited. Many of these focused on the cost of accreditation, seeing accreditation as an unnecessary impost on teachers who had proven their merit over many years of teaching. Opposing these views were contributions from other teachers supporting the need for all teachers to be accredited, justifying such action as a means to ensuring all teachers meet standards and participate in professional learning based on the standards.

A few contributors argued that all teachers should come under the umbrella of the Institute's requirements to foster the nurturing and sustaining of the full continuum of the professional life of each teacher, as expressed in the *Australian Performance and Development Framework* developed by AITSL. They recommended, subject to agreement on addressing industrial issues and resourcing to provide professional time for accreditation processes, that accreditation for all teachers be phased in from 2014.

A contribution from the early childhood education and care sector raised the issue of the professional status of university-trained teachers working in long-day-care centres and preschools. The contribution argued that the lack of access of teachers in the early childhood and care sector to the accreditation structures available to teachers in the school education sector was impacting on the professional status and standing of teachers in that sector.

## Teachers not meeting the required standards

A significant number of contributors commented on the issue of teachers failing to meet the required minimum standards. Some contributors noted that, most commonly, teachers deemed not to be meeting standards have difficulty with classroom and behaviour management. Their incapacity to maintain order in the classroom creates an environment where students become disengaged from learning and learning suffers.

Amongst the contributions were a number of viewpoints about current processes for removing underperforming teachers from public schools. A number

of contributors called for the processes to be streamlined and shortened. In their view, processes for removing underperforming teachers in government schools were too complex and took too long.

Other contributors saw the current processes to be fair and appropriate processes for removing underperforming teachers, giving them time and the necessary support to adjust their practice prior to any decision to terminate employment.

A third viewpoint from teachers who had been subjected to the processes was that the focus of many school executives using the process is on justification of the decision to terminate employment, rather than on providing effective support to ameliorate concerns.

## Considerations

- The discussion of the need to build a culture focussed on teacher development considered in the prior section applies equally to the issues considered in this section. Principals have an instrumental role in leading such cultural change. Without their leadership such cultural change will not occur.
- Almost all contributors agreed with the proposition that professional learning was an essential ingredient of teacher development. There were differences, however, in views about what constitutes an appropriate balance between personal and employer responsibility for professional growth. For some, professional learning is the responsibility of employers and, as such, should be resourced by them and delivered within the school day. Others have taken on significant responsibility for their own professional learning, including through postgraduate study with little recognition or reward.
- Professional learning takes many forms. Some is formalised through postgraduate study, programs developed and offered by school systems, commercial programs and activities planned by schools. Other professional learning that arises from collegial and collaborative activities can be implicit and incidental, but no less

powerful. A key issue for all forms of professional learning is its impact on practice. Too much of what passes for professional learning has little impact on teachers' practice or students' learning. Its main purpose is the transmission of ideas, but it is lacking in the necessary follow-up, knowledge and skill development, opportunities to critique, test and practice what is learned to change practice.

- There was considerable discussion in contributions about the Institute's accreditation requirements. A number of these raised concerns with the requirements, seeing them as being an added impost for busy teachers.
- Some contributors sought to raise doubts about the validity of accreditation citing instances of 'New Scheme Teachers' fast tracking through their careers into roles for which they had neither the 'wisdom of experience' or the 'emotional intelligence' to fulfil. What was not considered were the reasons for them being able to fast-track, including their ability to articulate a clearer vision of quality teaching practice than others when interviewed. Consequently, it could be argued that accreditation was contributing to raising the standards of teachers and teaching.
- There were contributors arguing both for and against extending the accreditation arrangement to all teachers. At the moment around half of the teachers in NSW have some form of accreditation. While it could be argued that there should be no change to current requirements as eventually attrition will lead to all teachers being accredited, the reality is that if there is no change, accreditation will not be universally applicable in NSW until teachers who commenced teaching in 2004 reach retirement age at around 2040.
- However, putting aside the issue of universal accreditation, there were a number of criticisms from contributors regarding the processes of the Institute and its functions. Some contributors argued that apart from regulation the Institute does little for the profession. This is true to some extent as the functions of the Institute are tightly controlled by its enabling legislation.
- From the contributions received, the intent of the current arrangements for dealing with underperforming teachers in public schools is not being realised. In the absence of a development focused culture and the capacity to develop teachers not meeting standards, many schools use the arrangements to facilitate the exit of underperforming teachers from the school or school system. Consequently, they appear to be onerous and to take too long.
- Despite the concerns of teachers and the community expressed in contributions about the need to remove underperforming teachers from classrooms, the culture of 'moving on' underperforming teachers continues. Employers are slow to take responsibility for removing teachers from the profession on the grounds of failing to meet or maintain standards. Although some teachers who have not achieved professional competence in the prescribed period (three years for full-time teachers and five years for part-time or casual teachers) have lost their right to teach, no teacher who has achieved accreditation at professional competence has had their accreditation withdrawn on the grounds of failure to maintain the standards.
- As one contributor noted, if we get it right – that is, encourage the right people into teaching, train them properly, support and mentor them through the early years – then we should have little need to deal with poor performance. The fact that we do need to deal with poor performance is evidence that the quality control measures underpinning teacher development have failed at some stage of the teacher's development.

# Feedback

## Recognise and share outstanding practice

There was broad consensus amongst contributors for the need to identify, develop and recognise outstanding teachers. Three themes were identified in contributions commenting on this section of the discussion paper. These were:

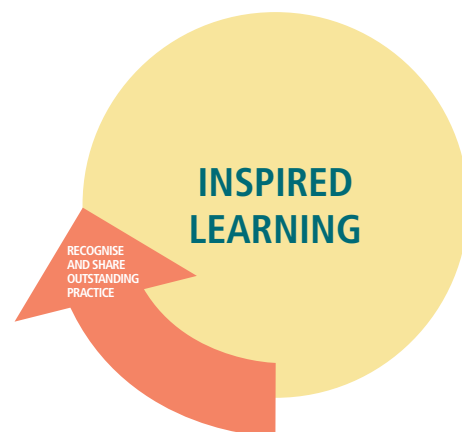
- Identifying and developing excellent teachers
- Encouraging, recognising and rewarding excellence
- Incentives.

### Identifying and developing excellent teachers

There was a view amongst many contributors that it was easy to identify the excellent teachers in any school. Yet few contributors put forward any criteria on which to base their choice and, in any case, the criteria used by teachers in the same school would be different. Some would choose the best disciplinarian, others the person who achieves the best results and others the person who is most liked. Students and parents would also have diverse views and criteria. Those who work in schools have all experienced the teacher who is a 'demigod' to some and a 'pariah' to others.

Other contributors saw the need to take into account a range of indicators such as personal attributes and leadership capacity, as well as the ability to take difficult actions in regard to fellow staff, motivate staff, manage the range of social and professional interactions with students, and demonstrate resilience and self-assurance. One could argue, however, that these are the characteristics of school leaders, and not necessarily the characteristics of excellent teachers.

One contributor ventured to say that currently the identification of teaching excellence was 'hit and miss', with teachers either 'self-nominating' or 'being tapped on the shoulder'. Several contributors saw the lack of a considered approach to identifying excellent teachers as an issue needing to be addressed by school systems and employers in order to meet educational and school leadership needs in the future.



Few contributors recognised the higher levels of the professional standards as being criteria for identifying excellent teachers. A significant number suggested the need to develop criteria for excellent teachers. Commonly, there was confusion between the processes of accreditation and the criteria established by the higher level standards, with a number of contributors making reference to the 'ability to complete paper work' being insufficient to judge teaching excellence. Given the very small number of teachers accredited or going through the process currently, it is difficult not to assume that little of this commentary was based on personal or first-hand experience.

The MET project<sup>9</sup> funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was proffered by one contributor as a model for identifying excellent teachers. This project triangulates evidence from student assessments, assessment of the teacher against standards and external review to identify excellent teachers. These are all forms of evidence that apply to the current accreditation processes.

<sup>9</sup> <http://metproject.org/>

Contributors identified a number of impediments to teachers undertaking higher levels of accreditation. These were the costs associated with being accredited and perceptions that the process of accreditation is onerous and lacking in real cost benefits. Time was also a significant impediment to some contributors with excellent teachers generally undertaking a broad range of other duties outside of the classroom. One submission made the point that the processes needed to be 'rigorous not onerous'.

There were a number of suggestions from contributors for assisting teachers to develop the knowledge and skills needed to develop high-level expertise. Some suggested the possibility of short term secondments to universities or short term school exchanges to broaden the experiences and knowledge base of teachers. Others saw the need for release time and additional professional learning funds to be provided for teachers undergoing accreditation. Some contributors saw the possibility of teachers who had achieved accreditation at the higher levels acting as mentors for new candidates.

## Encouraging, recognising and rewarding excellence

There was a wide range of views from contributors about how to encourage, recognise and reward excellence. At a foundational level, contributors saw the need to align performance appraisal systems to the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and to the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*.

For some, an impediment to people taking up opportunities for higher accreditation was a lack of information about the process.

There was support within contributions for higher level accreditation to be a requirement for teacher promotion. However, there would need to be some form of transitional arrangement, with such a requirement remaining a desirable criterion, until there were sufficient numbers of highly accredited teachers available to make it a requirement.

The issue of financial reward for teachers receiving higher levels of accreditation was contentious. There was little support amongst contributors for a reward payment being paid to those achieving higher accreditation without some form of additional responsibility or duty being attached to the payment. Extra payments were seen by many contributors to be divisive and unfair.

Some raised concerns there are many excellent teachers whose personal circumstances are an impediment to them devoting the time needed to achieve higher accreditation and thus receipt of potential reward payments. These views discount the value to teaching excellence that the process of accreditation might add, and are difficult to reconcile given the support in contributions for teachers who complete postgraduate qualifications to be recognised and rewarded.

However, several submissions put forward the potential for new salary levels to be created over and above current maximum salary levels for teachers. Access to these levels would only be available to those achieving the higher levels of accreditation. There was strong opposition to the introduction of any merit-based pay scheme on a number of grounds, not the least being the difficulty in agreeing on and determining what constitutes merit.

Several submissions put forward the view that short-term positions be created in schools for teachers with higher levels of accreditation with attached responsibilities for raising the quality of teaching in the school or cluster of schools. The current HAT positions were cited as an example. However, they agreed that funding should be allocated to the role rather than the position, so that when the role or funding ended the position would no longer exist. Funding would also end if the person failed to meet maintenance of accreditation requirements.

There was broad agreement amongst contributors that recognition of teaching excellence does not have to be financially based. A number of contributors stressed the importance of system and peer level awards as important forms of public recognition for teaching excellence. Other forms of reward, which are non-financial

but have resource implications, were short term study leave and sabbaticals, experience acting in higher level roles, and flexible staffing of positions to enable showcasing of expert teachers and sharing of best practice.

## Incentives

The question of incentives was a broader issue raised in the discussion paper, with questions being raised as to what incentives should be available to encourage not only teaching excellence, but to assist manage the difficulties that arise from subject and geographic related teacher shortages.

Broadly, there was little support from contributors for the notion of salary differentiation for teachers in hard to staff categories.

Contributors raised incentives such as scholarships, guarantees of appointment and sabbaticals as ways of attracting and retaining teachers in hard to staff categories.

Several contributors raised the current staffing procedures in government schools that give priority transfers to teachers serving in rural and isolated communities, as a factor contributing to high rates of staff turn-over in these communities. Current incentives were perceived as a disincentive to retaining teachers in these communities. Housing subsidies and low interest housing loans were raised as more appropriate incentives for retaining good teachers in rural and isolated communities.

## Considerations

- While there is broad support for the notion of identifying, developing and recognising excellent teachers in the contributions to the discussion paper, there are apparent concerns amongst many existing teachers about the personal implications for them. Clearly, the majority of teachers are doing a very good job in what is seen as an increasingly challenging profession. For them, the notion of increasing the quality of teaching and supporting excellence casts public doubts about the quality of their current practice.
- Schools systems and schools have a significant task and responsibility

for carriage of reforms to teaching to better meet the challenges of the future. To date, the response to this agenda has been disjointed and lacking in cohesion, with some sectors of the profession actively resisting the changes. To some extent this is an outcome of the way in which requirements for teachers to be accredited have been introduced incrementally. The critical mass of teachers now accredited means that this stance is no longer sustainable.

- There are many good teachers within current schools who, given the necessary experience, encouragement and support, can develop the mentoring and leadership capacities embodied in the higher level professional standards.
- Currently, accreditation at the higher levels suffers from lack of information and appropriate support for teachers undergoing the processes. The process is a formative developmental process giving teachers time to develop, reflect and build their capacities. It is not, as characterised in many contributions, a summative paper-based process.
- Although the inclusion of requirements for accreditation in criteria for promotion is one way of increasing the quality of educational leadership, sight should not be lost on the goal of providing career pathways for excellent teachers who wish to remain in the classroom.
- The experience of some schools where HATs have been appointed has been one in which significant progress has been made in changing the culture and teacher development processes of schools.
- To date, the ways in which schools have been administered, managed and resourced has limited their flexibility and capacity to respond to their changing context and needs. Increased flexibility is needed to allow schools to make their own choices about how best to encourage, develop and recognise teaching excellence.
- All organisations, systems and institutions can potentially improve the efficacy of what they do and the quality of what they produce. Schools are not isolated from broader community views about the need to better meet and respond to the challenges of the future.

For more information go to:

[www.schools.nsw.edu.au/greatteaching](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/greatteaching)



