

## INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

There are a number of issues that cause frustration and indeed despair for those principals and others responsible for finding staff, both permanent and temporary/casual.

## **1.0 TEACHER TRAINING**

### **1.1 Selection Process**

#### Teacher training system

A major weakness is in relation to the selection of suitable entrants with very little else other than their desire to be teachers being the criteria in their entry to teacher training courses. It appears that their suitability, in the classroom, is not tested until well into their training, sometimes as long as their fourth year of training.

### **1.2 Practicum experience**

Some trainees often have many fine attributes including conscientiousness, good understanding of educational theory, subject knowledge and methodology. However, while these are very important, the success or lack thereof for most teachers is largely determined by classroom management. The practise of this is, in many cases, is not initiated until considerable time, effort and money has been committed. Trainee teachers are often in their third or fourth year before entering schools for practicums.

Because two or three years of training have occurred, there is often reluctance on the part of the training institutions and the trainee to accept a trainees serious shortcomings when on practice teaching. Both trainees and institutions are reluctant to accept schools recommendations that students are unsatisfactory and there is minimal provision for students to have extended practicums when they have difficulties. There seems little or no provision for them to have conditional certification as teachers and additional support (ie mentors, relief allowance, etc)

Hence, it is often up to a school to expend considerable time and effort trying to bring such teachers to a satisfactory level. More often than not, this is at the expense of student learning. It is then a difficult process to have the teacher declared unsatisfactory.

More rigid selection criteria, earlier experience in the classroom and increased length of practicums needs to be considered.

### **1.3 Mandatory DET policies**

Teacher training should also ensure that mandatory requirements such as first aid, Child Protection and knowledge of DET policies and procedures etc are incorporated in their training rather than being left to schools to provide it after they arrive.

## 1.4 Short Training and Retraining Courses

While some of the graduates of these courses have made excellent teachers and gone on to hold promotions positions, there is first hand and anecdotal evidence that assessment standards are not as rigorous as they should be. Concern has been expressed by Head Teachers Mathematics about the ability of some short course teachers to effectively teach the full range of students, especially at HSC level. Concern has also been expressed about the six month retraining course for retrainees with no teaching experience and/or primary teachers that allows only for a two week practicum in the secondary context.

## 1.5 Scholarships

Reintroduction of the scholarship system should be considered whereby DET have some indication of the number of teachers who will enter the system. This would allow student teachers to make a commitment to the vocation, similar to other professions like dentistry, pharmacy. At present the system appears to be ad hoc, with short re-training courses for such areas as TAS, Mathematics and counsellors popping up after shortfalls are already in existence. This system may also help overcome teacher shortages in more difficult to staff schools.

## **2.0 EMPLOYMENT**

### 2.1 Expediting employment of graduand and graduate teachers

First hand and anecdotal knowledge that students in their final year of teacher training, while being interviewed about half way through their final year for suitability and for targeted status, become increasingly frustrated that they are then not contacted by DET for many months. We know that these potential teachers are offered positions with the CEO and other private school groups and many take up the offers. We have first hand knowledge of this occurring to last years Science graduates from UWS. A couple were employed by the private system before completing their degree and persuaded to continue it part time and six graduates went into the private system, the last after waiting three months to be contacted by DET. We understand that there is a shortage of Science teachers in the DET system.

There is also a considerable delay in graduands gaining DET approval to teach. There are often delays in sending approval letters and serial numbers, especially for those ending their formal courses in November, who could quite easily be employed at the end of the year and gain valuable experience as casual teachers. There are even delays for those graduating at the end of Semester 1.

While recognising that these students may not have their final result notices, they could, with a little co-operation between DET and the NSWTF be given some form of interim or temporary status and paid on an appropriate salary scale that reflects that status.

### 3.0 OVERSEAS TRAINED TEACHERS

#### 3.1 The problem

Every principal can sight examples of their experiences with outstanding and poor overseas trained teachers.

The key element is that students should have the right to a first class education. A major element of this is that their teacher should be easily understood and be able to both express themselves clearly in good English and to understand their students. As well, the teacher should have, or quickly be able to acquire an understanding of the cultural mores of the community in which they work.

In many instances students have difficulty understanding the spoken and written language of overseas trained teachers. This leads to lack of engagement for many as well as lack of understanding of the content.

#### 3.2 Selecting and orientation of overseas trained teachers

All overseas trained teachers need to have a much more rigorous interview that truly assesses their English expression, their speech as it will come across in a typical Australian classroom and their written expression, including grammar. This should be followed by an intensive orientation course that embraces cultural and educational issues as well as mandatory courses such as first aid. There should be an extended probationary period, with schools receiving resourcing support, and an expeditious termination of the capacity of that person to teach if they are deemed not to meet the requirements.

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