

## INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

## Natasha OConnor - Fwd: Re Enquiry into Teacher Recruitment and Training

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From: Committee Social Issues  
 To: Natasha OConnor  
 Date: 16/02/2005 12:06 PM  
 Subject: Fwd: Re Enquiry into Teacher Recruitment and Training

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Hi Natasha

Do you mind adding this e-mail to the subs list - I've acknowledged by reply e-mail but I said a hard copy would follow.

Ta  
 Victoria

>>> brian ferry 15/02/05 9:54:53 am >>>

Dear Colleague,

The following is a response on behalf of the NSW Branch of the Australian College of Educators.

Brian Ferry

NSW Branch President - Australian College of Educators

Attracting quality teachers to NSW Public Schools

Context:

Outstanding and committed candidates are needed in primary and secondary teaching. There is a shortage of secondary teachers in the key learning areas (KLAs) of Mathematics, Science, English, Computing Studies and TAS. Re-training programs are band-aid solutions and have a finite life span as the pool of potential re-trainees rapidly diminishes over time.

Proposals:

a. Extend the number of scholarships available and target regions that need teachers. Scholarship holders need support and encouragement during their studies. Professional organisations and the DET should make contact with these people and induct them into what we see as a valued profession. Where possible practicum experience should be in the schools that preservice teachers are likely to be appointed to. All universities should work in partnership with the DET to ensure that more preservice teachers have rural and remote practicum experiences. This will require incentives for those who are willing to commit to such areas on graduation.

b. Encourage local students (including indigenous students) to become teachers in areas of need. This means scholarships, living away from home allowances and flexible approaches to study eg a modular approach that allows for qualifications to be gained over an extended period. It may also mean variable entry scores for students who are willing to teach in isolated areas.

c. In KLAs where teacher shortages exist, it may be necessary to have an initial entry requirement into teaching that can be achieved in 2 or 3 years eg an associate qualification that permits a person to become an associate teacher. An associate teacher would be appointed on probation and need to complete (over an agreed timeframe) the full qualification by part-time study in order to achieve a professional qualification and subsequent salary rises associated with a full professional qualification.

Recruiting teachers in NSW Public Schools.

A. Recent graduates

-The DET cannot assume that it is an attractive employer. The DET needs to produce an employment face that is attractive and this is beginning to happen. Also it cannot be assumed that recent graduates are prepared to be loyal to one employer and make teaching for the DET a life-long profession. Graduates are more mobile, more flexible and more discerning in terms of

employment options. The trend toward a high attrition rate in the first 5 years of teaching may, in part, reflect this trend rather than just a lack of mentoring as is widely claimed.

-The current transfer system protects the rights of teachers in the system but is cumbersome and lacks flexibility. This creates little mobility in sought after locations and many outstanding graduates take positions with non-government employers who can offer positions in sought after locations. More positions for recent graduates are needed in sought after locations.

- Recent graduates want to know if they have a job and where it is. Targeted graduates may know that they have a permanent job but they may not know the specific school. In the interim some of these graduates receive offers at specific schools from the non-government sector. Also this sector provides incentives such as laptops (ie Catholic system in some regions). As a result some of the best graduates go to the non-government sector.

-The interview process (about 30 to 45 minutes) is flawed. Often it takes place early in the year and disadvantages students who are completing an end-on degree such as a Graduate Diploma in Education. When the interview panel is inexperienced with the university context, they may judge a student as not suitable for a targeted position simply because they had limited classroom experience at that stage in the year. This leads to the loss of some excellent teachers who once again receive offers from other systems. Interview panels need to be experienced and well educated about the practicum experiences of the students they interview. In addition it may be necessary to follow up in some cases. Interviews for graduate positions for other professions are usually more probing. For example in marketing and engineering it is not unusual to be interviewed on at least two occasions and for interviews to the last over an hour.

#### B. Career change teachers

-Most of these people have a lot to offer the profession but the cost of additional qualifications is a disincentive. Often these people are married, have children and a mortgage and a scholarship is not enough. A short-term intensive course that leads to an entry qualification would be an attractive approach. Further additional qualification (paid for by the employer) would be a requirement of an offer of a permanent job. Such an additional qualification could be studied as part-time modules using a blended approach (online plus intensive residential schools) to course delivery.

### 3. Differences and similarities between primary and secondary teachers

Primary teachers in general supply problems do not exist but it is important to encourage good quality teachers. For examples favouring males because there is a shortage of male teachers is too simplistic as it may not lead to the appointment of the best candidates.

The attrition rate in the first 5 years of teaching is high. Issues such as lack of expertise in programming, classroom management, dealing with colleagues and parents are examples of some of the concerns of beginning teachers in BOTH primary and secondary schools.

It is important to mentor new teachers and the DET has developed mentoring programs for new teachers but more needs to be done. It is also important that teachers are mentored at every stage in their career. Career mentoring and support needs to be formally developed within the employment system and

should occur at all levels.

In some cases well-established teachers in schools can create a culture of inertia and this inhibits the creativity of the next generation of teachers (and the school executive). This needs to be addressed so that new teachers with creative ideas are mentored and encouraged by trained mentor teachers who are motivated to act as a sounding board and safety net<sup>9</sup>. However, good mentors don't just happen that need to be developed over time.

B. Secondary teachers-shortages exist eg in the KLAs of English, Mathematics, Science, TAS (including computing studies). New teacher in secondary schools face the same general issues as primary teachers.

#### 4. Existing initiatives

A. Teach NSW - a good start but needs more work in terms of supporting new teachers, and recruitment (see comments above).

B. Scholarships - as above

C. Accelerated training as above. Universities are ideally placed to act as providers in partnership with the DET and a combination of intensive face-to-face and online teaching of courses seems to be effective.

#### 5. The Role of the NSW Institute of Teachers and its accreditation and endorsement requirements.

This institution has the potential to create a set of developmental standards that can be applied across the profession. These standards should be linked to the National Standards and not be developed in isolation. Ideally we should have a common set of standards across the country eg. guaranteeing that a beginning teacher in NSW is equivalent (in terms of standards) to one in Western Australia or any other state.

It appears that the initial thrust will be in preservice teacher education and this has the potential to be effective. In time of teacher shortage it is important that the accreditation process be rigorous but tailored to take into account the excellent work that already takes place in teacher education. It would be counter-productive to enforce rigid, and centrally prescribed curricula in teacher education. Instead universities should continue to provide evidence that they are meeting mandatory requirements in their courses.

A great deal of accountability already exists in Universities and it would be effective to re-purpose the role and composition of some of key university committees so that the NSW Institute of Teachers is effectively represented on these committees.

#### 6. The role, distribution and effectiveness of university pre-service teacher education.

Universities struggle to maintain the following secondary teacher education subjects: computing studies, LOTE, Music and some HSIE subjects. It would be more effective to offer these specialisations as an online subjects and one institution only and have all universities accredit these. This would allow local students to study at their local university for the majority of their subjects and to complete their method subjects online. Currently this

operates in a de-facto way with universities approving cross-institutional study arrangements.

The lack of indigenous teachers is a concern. More incentives are need to encourage more indigenous Australians (particularly matured aged) to apply to become teachers. In addition universities need to develop more flexible courses (modelled on work that has been done in the Northern Territory) that take into account the diverse needs of this important pool of potential teachers.

Primary teacher education courses are over subscribed but there are shortages in other areas and this needs to be addressed. One way is to progressively reduce primary teacher education enrolments and at the same time progressive increase secondary teacher education enrolments in areas of needs. It may be necessary to offer more incentives to primary graduates to re-train as secondary teachers.