
Education Consulting Services of Australia

INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

The Hon Jan BURNSWOODS MLC
Committee Chairperson
NSW Parliament Macquarie St Sydney 2000

Re: Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers

Please find attached our brief submission into this review.

Our submission is based on research, tabulated results from of years of consultation with various stakeholders and clients and teacher feedback.

As a former teacher, I attach our submission and my CV.

Kindest regards

Gregory Bondar

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INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

Terms of Reference

No.1 Response:

1.1 ECSA is of the view that the best means of attracting teachers to NSW Public Schools is a threefold process:

1.1.1 Commercialisation of the Recruitment Process

Rather than hoping that those who drift into teaching without adequate training will succeed in the most challenging classrooms, the NSW DET needs to actively recruit prospective teachers on a commercial basis who understand students' cultural backgrounds, and teachers that have the maturity, skills, knowledge and attitudes to build upon students' strengths.

Commercial recruitment focuses, in essence, on:

- Skills and competencies,
- Past achievements 'on the job', and
- A candidate based selection (teachers are recruited only on the basis of qualifications and not on 'selecting the best candidate for the job'.

There also ought to be provision made for the 'seamless transfer' of potential teachers from the commercial sector into teaching and educational administration – at the moment it is a virtual 'closed shop'.

1.1.2 Reward based incentives

Until as such time as teachers are rewarded on a 'bonus for performance' system the teaching profession will fail to recruit the quality teachers it needs. Teaching is one of the few institutional organisations where the poor performers are rewarded along with the best performers which does not, by definition, encourage excellence.

Where is the incentive to perform and therefore attract the 'right' candidate(s).

1.1.3 Retention Policies

Equally true is the fact that there are no 'retention programmes' in place for high performers. Sure teachers can progress to 'up the ladder' but where is the incentive for me to stay if I just want to teach?

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1.2 ECSA is of the view that to meet the needs of the school community there needs to be in place a system of Community **Based Recruitment** of teachers. Each school community has differing needs based on socio-economic factors and as such teachers need to be recruited on the basis of 'fit' –e.g. in a commercial sense it is pointless to recruit a 'financial' wizard into a PR-marketing role.

No.2 Response:

The current system of recruitment of teachers is based on a 'crisis management' approach – recruitment is done by advertising for more trainees without due regard to capabilities and interests. The NSW DET has never shown any signs of 'commercialising the system' of recruitment and in point of fact even the 'administration' of teacher training lacks any commercial people – they are predominantly, if not all, from teaching backgrounds rather than commercial backgrounds.

a. Recent Graduates

The quality of current teacher graduates, based on an ECSA survey in 2003, shows that recent graduates:

2.1 Lack sufficient people management, conflict resolution and adequate expectations about their career choice, and

2.2 There is not (see 1.1.1) a clear commercial selection process for the recruitment teachers.

There needs to be in place proper **Teacher Preparation Programs (TPP)** that would provide prospective teachers (students) with relevant, demanding, practical course work and exposure to teaching at both the public school and the commercial level.

ECSA recommends that there needs to be in place a organization aimed at raising the esteem for teaching, expanding the pool of prospective teachers, and improving the state's teacher recruitment and development policies and practices. ECSA sees this organization as being in purpose to the new Institute of Teachers.

b. Career Change Teachers

There is no incentive for commercially based teachers to enter the NSW DET (NSW Public Schools) based on comments above but in summary due to :

- No incentive (financial or career)
- Lack of willingness by NSW DET to take on prospective educators (and administrators) from the commercial sector based on 'vested interests' from existing teachers/administrators.

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ECSA research and conversations with individuals who want to switch their careers to teaching has identified five of the many reasons why mid-career changers are drawn to teaching careers.

1. To give back. Successful mid-career professionals often want to "pay back" that great teacher or the educational community that helped them achieve academically and personally.

2. To put experience to use. Mid-career changers want to bring to the classroom expertise developed in another career, maturity, negotiating skills, and parenting experience.

3. To change the meaning of "work." Mid-career changers often go into teaching for the opportunity to mentor and interact with young people, to get closer to their community, and to awaken young minds.

4. To follow one successful career with another. Individuals with experience in the military, the Peace Corps, and other careers have the drive and commitment to be successful teachers.

5. To share knowledge and passion. Mid-career changers combine the enthusiasm and dedication of new teachers with deep understanding of subjects such as mathematics, science, literature, or technology.

No.3 Response:

ECSA, over a number of years, has accumulated sufficient evidence, both actual and anecdotal, which highlight the following:

- Primary school teaching is gender biased – it favours the female gender through various means including the holding of executive positions and through the activities and curricula.
- Secondary school teaching is also moving toward being gender biased favouring the female gender – males have no incentive to 'out-do' their female counterparts in 'fear' of academic and social reprisals.

Based on these findings, the recruitment process is gender biased and does not recruit on the basis of 'best man for the job' but rather of the need to comply with various gender equity provisions and EEO requirements.

No.4 Response:

The current initiatives are commendable but fail to meet the much needed commercial criteria found in the corporate sector.

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All the initiatives (a), (b), and (c) are piecemeal and do not address the real issues of:

- 4.1 Reward for Performance – teachers need to be given KPIs and rewarded accordingly
- 4.2 Scholarships take no account of ‘suitability for the job’
- 4.3 Accelerated training programmes were essentially introduced to meet the teacher shortage rather than enhance the recruitment process.

No.5 Response:

ECSA is of the view that the Institute of Teachers is a commendable initiative and that we have been advocating for years. However, the Institute will fail, and is programmed to fail, if it does not the initiative and the necessary steps to not employ ‘Department personnel’ to run the Institute – the old ‘the inmates are running the clinic’ saying.

Unless there is a commercial focus and a commercial approach to accreditation the Institute will be nothing more than another bureaucracy.

ECSA has been instrumental in developing and implementing various Certification and Accreditation system for various not-for-profit associations (Institutes) with a view to lifting professionalism in the said industry.

Certification must be based on the following:

- 5.1 Qualifications
- 5.2 Experience
- 5.3 On-going Training
- 5.4 Practical continuum

ECSA is of the view that every teacher would need to acquire a set of **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** points to maintain their teacher accreditation.

No.6 Response:

ECSA has been involved in these on a ‘watching brief’ basis and suffice it to say, that we are of the view that these lack substance and significance based on:

- 6.1 timing,
- 6.2 length, and
- 6.3 exposure

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No.7 Response:

ECSA would like to submit the following for consideration by the Committee:

Recommendations:

- 7.1 Teachers be required to commit to a **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**
- 7.2 That the NSW DET begin to recruit non-departmental (that is commercial-corporate) executives for senior SES positions as means of injecting 'new blood' and commercial thinking' into the management of teacher education,
- 7.3 That teachers be appointed on a **three year contract basis** and not on a tenure as a means of encouraging and rewarding performance by not-renewing contracts for poor performers,
- 7.4 That teacher contracts be KPI and Performance based,
- 7.5 That teacher recruitment be **commercialised** (advertised, submit resumes etc) and **localised** (involving community representatives for the given school).
- 7.6 That **Teacher Preparation Programs (TPP)** be introduced which would be more practical and capability based.
- 7.7 That veteran teachers be used as resources for newly appointed teachers.
- 7.8 Introduce differential pay levels to attract more qualified teachers to high-need academic subject areas and schools.
- 7.9 Introduce a new and better system of teacher induction (see 7.13)

Teacher Recruitment Findings:

- 7.10 Overseas school principals are most concerned about the lack of classroom management and instructional skills of the new teachers they recruit and hire. They also say that new teachers suffer from high levels of stress on the job, a problem that can be improved by shifting the focus of teacher preparation to address the real-world discipline and teaching demands of today's classroom and by developing stronger mentoring and induction programs in schools.
- 7.11 ECSA research has shown that, while recruiting qualified teachers for high-need subject areas, particularly in poorest schools, is a huge challenge for school leaders. Schools are really struggling to retain their new teachers, and our research provides firsthand insight about what new teachers need in order to make it through those first few critical years given that up to 50 percent of new teachers tend to leave the profession in the first five years.
- 7.12 The major problem facing new teachers is (1) salaries and (2) the fact that new teachers cite "lack of support" as their top concern. As the teacher shortage worsens, the problem for schools is increasingly one of **retention** rather than **recruitment**. Schools are really struggling with high turnover rates, as teachers flee the profession, in large part due to the lack of assistance on the job.

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7.13 The teaching profession is probably the only profession where an entering professional is expected to be self-sufficient on the first day he or she reports to work. **It has been the practice of the education profession to place beginning employees in classrooms and expect them to perform at the same level as all other employees.** This is an issue that those in K–12 education need to address, in consort with higher education. There are universities where education has become a five-year program, with a full year practicum, rather than a semester of student teaching. There are certainly advantages to this approach, in that the teacher trainees get to see the entire process, from start to finish, in a school with a class of students. They are able to see the changes that occur in the students during a school year; they get to see what their mentor teacher does to begin and end the year smoothly, and to participate and observe the testing program for that state.

A comprehensive **induction program** should include the following:

- a sound hiring process;
- a pre-service program that provides necessary information and resources and active participation;
- a support network, including ongoing timely sessions;
- an ongoing mentoring or coaching program;
- an evaluation plan that promotes growth; and,
- a professional development program that supports new teachers

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