

Submission
No 86

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: University of New South Wales, School of Education

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Submission to the Inquiry into Teacher Shortages in NSW 2022

UNSW School of Education

The School of Education at UNSW welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. We provide initial teacher education through our Bachelor of Education (Secondary) and Master of Teaching (Primary and Secondary) degrees, and continuing education for teachers through Master of Education programs. Education research at UNSW was rated well above world standard in the 2018 Excellence in Research for Australia exercise.

We welcome opportunities to partner with schools and school systems to provide teacher education of the highest quality and to conduct collaborative research that contributes to the ongoing development of the teaching profession in NSW and beyond.

Teacher shortages

Teacher shortages have existed in specific subject areas (notably mathematics and physical sciences) for many years, becoming increasingly acute over time, and effecting schools in rural, regional, and low socio-economic communities disproportionately. The situation now extends beyond mathematics and science and is experienced by schools in metropolitan and more affluent communities. The impacts of COVID-19 have exacerbated the situation resulting in a situation that has been characterised as a crisis.

Addressing teacher shortages requires short term and long term solutions that focus on both recruitment and retention of teachers. We provide two over-arching recommendations and then consider short term initiatives to address the current urgent shortages. Finally, we consider longer terms strategies, to be commenced immediately, that focus on making improving the attractiveness of teaching as a career.

Over-arching recommendations

- It is vital that all initiatives are rigorously evaluated as to their effectiveness and that research examines their impacts beyond the those targeted and examines the mechanisms that contribute to their success or otherwise, with a view to identifying principles that can inform subsequent initiatives.
- Ongoing and enhanced workforce planning is needed to monitor progress and to prevent future shortages.

Short-term initiatives

We acknowledge the need for short term initiatives that reduce barriers to entering the teaching profession and support faster completion of qualifications. Recognising that learning to teach is a complex and difficult undertaking we recommend:

- Fast-track programs be consistent with the quality assurance requirements that apply to more traditional pathways.
- Programs shortened by intensification (UNSW offers, for example, a 2 year MTeach program that can be completed in one and one third years).
- Flexible delivery of ITE programs (e.g., online, face-to-face, hybrid, weekend and school holiday intensives, part time, full time).
- Increased opportunities for ITE students to undertake paid non-teaching roles in schools while studying.
- Locally based models of ITE in rural and regional communities whereby prospective teachers work in non-teaching roles in a local school while studying flexibly.
- Increased recognition of prior learning (RPL) for discipline content studies for graduates wanting to enter MTeach Secondary programs (e.g., at present a prospective mathematics teachers can count only one statistics course towards the mathematics discipline requirements).

Longer term strategies

Long term solutions to teacher shortages need to increase the attractiveness of teaching as a profession for prospective, beginning and experienced teachers. Doing so will positively impact recruitment and retention of teachers. Enhancing the attractiveness of teaching will require attention to:

1. The status of teaching
2. Teachers' working conditions

Most of the recommendations that follow can and should be implemented immediately and are likely to have effects in the short term while fully delivering in the longer term.

The status of teaching

We recommend measures to increase the status of teaching that contribute to:

- Increased remuneration that rewards expertise
- Access to challenging and rewarding career paths that do not necessarily mean leaving classroom teaching

- Depoliticisation of education accompanied by positive and supportive public rhetoric
- Efforts to boost positive media portrayals of teachers and teaching
- Greater professional autonomy
- The cultivation of trust-based professional cultures in schools and school systems

Teachers' working conditions

Working conditions should be enhanced by:

- Faster access to permanent employment for beginning teachers
- More thorough, long-lasting, and contextually tailored induction programs for beginning teachers and teachers and principals now to specific communities (e.g., rural towns).
- Reduced administrative loads, allowing teachers to focus on work directly related to teaching.
- Employment of more ancillary staff to do non-teaching work (e.g., data entry, yard duty).
- Employment of more specialist staff to support the inclusion of students with specific learning, developmental or behavioural needs, and the provision of time for teachers to plan and coordinate with these staff.
- Professional learning opportunities aligned with teachers' interests, career stages, and ambitions.
- Equitable school resourcing to reduce between school disparities in the challenge presented by teaching.

Our recommendations, in summary, are categorised in the Figure below according to their relationship with increasing recruitment or retention and enhancing the status of teaching or teachers' working conditions. Many could have been placed in more than one category.

Enhance status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase remuneration • Positive political rhetoric • Positive media portrayals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community respect • Trust-based professional culture • Greater professional autonomy
Improve work conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced barriers to entry e.g. more flexible RPL • High quality <u>fast-track</u> programs • Faster access to permanent employment • Contextually tailored, long term induction programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging and rewarding career paths • Recognition of expertise • Equitable school resourcing • Reduced administration • More support for students with special needs • Employ ancillary staff for non-teaching work • Ongoing tailored professional learning
	Increase recruitment	Increase retention