

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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(AITSL)

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AITSL acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, sea country and waterways from across Australia.

We honour and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

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Introduction

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is pleased to make a submission to the Legislative Council Education Committee's inquiry into teacher shortages in NSW.

Who we are

AITSL is a Commonwealth company that was formed to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state, and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership. We are here to develop teaching and leadership expertise and empower teachers and leaders to create better education outcomes for Australian students.

How we work

For over a decade, AITSL's work has been grounded in a combination of evidence and professional practice. AITSL delivers a complex, interconnected, and interdependent program of work across quality teaching, school leadership, and initial teacher education

We are proud of our reputation as an honest broker and agent for impact in the education architecture. We have clear and effective frameworks for undertaking genuine consultation and collaboration with our broad range of stakeholders, including teachers and leaders in schools and early childhood and other education settings, and representatives from government systems, Catholic and independent school sectors, teacher regulatory authorities, initial teacher education providers, teacher unions, principal and other professional associations and community organisations.

What we do

We focus on the areas where national work can have the greatest impact. Our evidence-based advice and guidance has led to national educational reforms that support quality teaching and leadership in Australia. In over ten years of operation, AITSL has supported all Australian governments to develop and implement teacher quality and school leadership improvements, including:

- national standards for teachers at all career stages
- high-quality professional learning strategies for teachers and school leaders
- pre-service and in-service teacher support, resources, and tools
- principal and school leadership tools, resources, policies, and practices.

Additionally, AITSL undertakes national projects agreed to by all state and territory education Ministers, as well as state and territory-specific projects through bilateral arrangements with jurisdictional education stakeholders.

In undertaking these projects, AITSL has developed comprehensive experience in conducting consultation and research with diverse groups of stakeholders, often working through complex requirements and contexts. All of AITSL's work is underpinned by research and evidence.

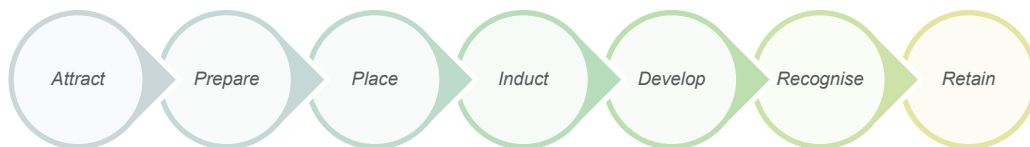
This inquiry

Issues of teacher supply and demand are becoming more prominent. This inquiry is a timely opportunity to examine the extent, causes and impact of teacher shortages in NSW. The causes of teacher shortages are complex, and reach across the full lifecycle of a teaching career. In this submission, AITSL addresses those areas of the terms of reference that are relevant to our remit.

This submission

Various factors influence individuals' decisions to join and remain in the teacher workforce. These factors are both intrinsic and extrinsic. At each phase in the lifecycle of a teaching career, actions by governments and other teacher employers can influence the likelihood of teachers progressing to the next phase. Figure 1 shows a useful conceptual model for the teaching career lifecycle adapted from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019).

Figure 1: Teaching Career Lifecycle Phases



Each of these career phases provides opportunities for specific and targeted support. What is offered for teachers within one lifecycle phase potentially impacts on the profession more broadly. The system will work best when all these phases are taken care of, and the approach across the phases is coherent.

This submission seeks to comment on critical points in the teacher career lifecycle relevant to the terms of reference for the inquiry – attract, prepare, place, recognise and retain – with an overarching focus on the status of the teaching profession, which affects outcomes at each of these career stages.

Status of the teaching profession

Teachers contribute to the wellbeing and success of future generations. Research has shown the value society places on teaching is linked to the attractiveness of teaching as a career, teachers' sense of worth in the profession and their ability to impact student academic achievement. The way teachers are perceived in society (including teachers' self-perception) can impact the entire lifecycle of teaching including the recruitment of new teachers, and the retention, job satisfaction and performance of all teachers. As such, it is worth reflecting on how the public and teachers themselves view the profession, and ways to continue attracting and retaining quality teachers.

Esteeming expertise to enhance status

International evidence shows that in jurisdictions where teaching expertise is recognised (and remunerated accordingly), teachers enjoy higher professional status. In Australia, explicit and supported career pathways are increasingly being offered to teachers and leaders; however, this is rarely systemic.

National teacher certification is a standards-based measure of teaching expertise and instructional leadership. There is more to accomplish in relation to nationally certified Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers (HALTs), and their network is active in recommending new directions. One option (introduced by the South Australian Department for Education) is to fund schools and early childhood settings to advertise and appoint certified teachers with appropriate remuneration while they remain in these schools, thus spreading the excellence to harder-to-staff schools and early childhood settings. This is worthy of discussion; employment issues are not part of AITSL's remit, but initiating debates and research about such options to esteem expertise are.

Similarly, we raise the debate about the merits of introducing a 'model of expertise' into Australian jurisdictions where after 5+ years in the classroom, teachers can choose to become more proficient in teaching (leading to HALT certification), leadership, or specialisms (e.g. reading, STEM, assessment). Providing opportunities for enhanced expertise to be built into the structures of schools and early childhood settings could include leading curriculum areas or teaching teams, teacher-coach positions, mentoring pre-service and beginning teachers, and other instructional leadership roles. This topic is explored further in *Recognise: Esteeming expertise through teacher certification*.

Influence of the media on professional status

Research indicates that media discourse and the community perspective play an important role in the way the profession is viewed. Leveraging stronger community connections arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and re-positioning public messaging about teaching as a profession may have the potential to positively impact on the status of the teaching profession in Australia.

What is clear from the evidence is that teachers have been working longer hours during periods of lockdown to meet the needs of their students (Ziebell, Acquaro, Pearn, and Seah, 2020; Phillips and Cain, 2020). It also seems that the demands of remote learning have fostered greater collaboration between carers and teachers as both schools and families have grappled with the changing face of education during the pandemic (Ziebell, Acquaro, Pearn, and Wee Tiong Seah, 2020). Given the importance of strong relationships between schools and families for student outcomes, it is possible

that this experience, despite the significant challenges it has posed, may yield some benefits in the long run if learnings are carried forward.

However, despite some affirmative data that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is evidence that the breadth of media coverage overall continues to be represented by a dominant and pessimistic narrative. Academic Nicole Mockler's recent work which examines how teachers are portrayed in the media finds a consistently negative tone in the key messages being communicated about teachers in the Australian media (2022). This research identifies three specific characteristics of media coverage:

1. A limited focus on individual teacher quality: ignoring the role of quality systems, quality schools and quality methods
2. Oversimplifying teachers' work: misrepresenting the complex nature of the position
3. Denigrating teachers: normalising the negative way in which teachers are targeted and discussed

Teachers' perceptions of professional status

Whilst teachers consistently proclaim that recognition and respect from the community for the daily challenges they face in their role is important (MacBeath, 2012) they report that they do not think the Australian public appreciates them (Heffernan et al., 2019). Results from the 2018 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) indicate that only 45% of Australian teachers in lower secondary schools believe that the teaching profession is valued by society (OECD, 2020a). While this represents a 6-percentage-point increase from 2013 and is higher than the OECD average of 26% (OECD, 2014a, 2020b), it shows Australian teachers generally do not feel appreciated for their work. In contrast, teachers from Asian countries report that they believe the teaching profession is valued by society (64%) (OECD, 2020b), notably in Shanghai (China), Singapore and Korea where student performances on international tests are also higher (OECD, 2019b).

The Australian community, however, appears to value the profession more highly than teachers think. School teaching was viewed as a profession with high honesty and ethical standards by 74% of 1,267 Australians aged 14 and over who participated in a telephone survey in 2021 (Roy Morgan, 2021). Teaching was ranked 4th out of the 30 different professions polled, above engineers, dentists, police, high court judges, state supreme court judges and university lecturers, but below nurses, doctors and pharmacists (all in the top 10 professions) (Roy Morgan, 2021). The discrepancy between how teachers perceive they are valued and how the public perceives teachers was exemplified in a 2019 study performed by researchers from Monash University. Only 29% of teachers felt that the Australian public appreciated them whereas 82% of the public felt teachers were respected and 93% of the public felt that teachers were trusted (Heffernan et al., 2019).

The Australian public generally agrees that teachers are valued, respected and trusted; however, teachers do not appear to be aware of this perception. Therefore, these distorted representations of teachers and their work can be damaging to the reputation of the profession and teachers' perception of their own value. It is critical to leverage any positive changes in societal perceptions of teachers that have occurred as a result of COVID-19 to create lasting change. The ongoing disruptions to education due to the COVID-19 pandemic have not only emphasised the crucial role teachers play in the lives of Australian young people but also increased connections between schools and families.

The social standing of teachers, from the perspective of society, the media and teachers themselves, has important implications for teacher self-efficacy, and the recruitment and retention of teachers. To sustain an effective education system, the general public, as well the media and those who have the power to influence public perception, have a crucial role to play in elevating the profile and promoting the value of teaching in Australian public life.

Attract: Bringing high quality candidates into the profession

A consistently strong status of the profession is necessary for attracting high-quality candidates. Public regard for the teaching profession has the potential to improve the popularity of teaching as a career choice, leading to increased initial teacher education commencements and attraction into the workforce. Similarly, growing the esteem of the profession has potential to reduce teacher attrition.

Recognition of expertise is shown to contribute to improving the status of the profession, and consequently, to attracting high-quality candidates and retaining a strong teaching workforce.

Incentives can be used to attract candidates

There is a wealth of recent evidence on incentives that may assist in attracting a diverse range of candidates to teaching, including high-achieving school students and accomplished mid-career professionals considering a career change.

A Grattan Institute report on attracting high achievers to teaching proposes various incentives and ways to promote the status of the profession. In developing that report, a Grattan Institute survey of nearly 1,000 young 'high achievers' (aged 18-25 and with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank of 80 or above) found that more of this cohort would pursue a career in teaching if it offered higher top-end pay and greater career pathways. It also found that financial support while studying was highly valued. It recommended a number of measures, including \$10,000 annual scholarships to encourage high-achieving school students to enter an initial teacher education program, as well as launching an advertising campaign similar to the Australian Defence Force recruitment campaigns (Goss & Sonnemann, 2019).

Research by the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA), commissioned as part of the recent Quality Initial Teacher Education Review, found that given the right incentives, more high-achieving school leavers and mid-career professionals would consider teaching than is currently the case.

BETA conducted a discrete choice experiment among high-achieving school students and mid-career professionals to determine the relative importance of a number of different incentives. It found that for young high-achievers, a \$30,000 scholarship was the most effective work or study incentive, followed by guaranteed ongoing employment in a nearby school. Among high-achieving school students, BETA found that most study and all work incentives were valued more highly than a \$15,000 increase to starting or top pay. For mid-career professionals, paid work while studying their initial teacher education program, a \$30,000 scholarship, supports to address barriers to study such as mortgage/rent relief, and guaranteed ongoing employment in a nearby school were the most impactful work and study related incentives (BETA, 2022).

The Quality Initial Teacher Education Review recommended that incentives be offered to these groups, as well as to people in regional, rural and remote locations, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to attract them to teach (DESE, 2022)

Labour market modelling to match supply with demand

AITSL's background paper on strategic issues for the national teacher workforce, *Teaching Futures* (AITSL, 2021) outlines a proposal for a national labour market model, including a conceptual framework of national teacher supply and demand, which identifies the various elements and critical influences in the teacher labour market. This recommendation was reinforced by the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review.

A national labour market model for the teacher workforce would identify the critical factors affecting supply and demand. Additionally, such a model would enable more effective predictive modelling of the supply and demand for teachers nationally, locally and by specialisation. It would provide a national view of teacher supply and demand including, the supply of teachers from diverse backgrounds as well as within urban, regional, and remote locations. It would measure the impact of economic, social, demographic and policy changes on the teacher workforce. It could also be used for scenario modelling to predict the likely effects of potential policy or economic changes on the teacher workforce.

The [Australian Teacher Workforce Data \(ATWD\)](#) initiative is designed to deliver accurate, useful, and longitudinal data on and insights into supply in ITE and the teacher workforce. This data supports predictive modelling of supply and workforce trends at national, jurisdictional and sector levels. The ATWD progressed from its initial implementation phase into providing annual supply data and is currently funded until 2025. It would provide a strong foundation for developing the national labour market model proposed in *Teaching Futures*.

A successful labour market model will require ongoing commitment to ensure the currency and validity of its data and modelling, and active collaboration among systems, sectors, employers, agencies and stakeholders to generate and provide necessary data. It will also require a broad consideration of factors that influence supply and demand, such as the status of the profession and trends in technological advancement, as macroeconomic and behavioural factors have the potential to act both as barriers to attracting and retaining teachers, or as motivators for growing specialisation demand. Most critically, systems and sectors must commit to provide timely demand data to match the increasingly sophisticated supply modelling available through the ATWD.

Better supply and demand data would open up a more informed debate on methods for addressing shortages. There is still much to be learned about what incentives, including salary, can attract teachers with the right skills to the schools where they are needed most.

Prepare: Delivering effective initial teacher education

Initial teacher education (ITE) providers are required to meet rigorous program standards ([Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures](#)). These program standards make sure that the content of every program prepares students to be effective classroom teachers. All ITE programs, regardless of program structure, are accredited under the Standards and Procedures.

The Standards and Procedures require that all programs are underpinned by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the Graduate career stage. The Graduate Teacher Standards (GTS) describe what teachers need to know and be able to do to teach effectively.

The Standards and Procedures ensure that all:

- entrants have **personal literacy and numeracy** equivalent to the top 30% of the nation
- entrants to graduate entry programs have a **discipline specific** bachelor's degree with at least one major in a subject discipline
- primary programs explicitly reference the evidence-based practice elements of **effective reading instruction**, including phonics, in ITE programs.
- students successfully pass a **Teaching Performance Assessment**. This is a rigorous assessment of the practical skills and knowledge of pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers collect evidence of practice to complete a TPA in the final year of their ITE education program. It is assessed by ITE providers and is a requirement for graduation.

It is the responsibility of the teacher regulatory authority (TRA) in each jurisdiction to ensure that all ITE programs can demonstrate a pre-service teacher (PST) will be able to meet all the GTS upon completion.

In NSW, as of October 2022, 101 accredited ITE programs are being delivered by 15 higher education institutions. All programs have been assessed and meet the requirements of an accredited ITE program under the Standards and Procedures.

Teacher supply and demand in NSW

Matching teacher supply with demand is an ongoing challenge in the education sector, with teacher supply and demand levels varying across stages and subject areas. The ATWD, which AITSL delivers on behalf of Australia's education ministers, has the authoritative data on teacher workforce supply across Australia. The ATWD reports that nationally commencements have declined in both postgraduate and undergraduate programs since 2015.

- In postgraduate courses, commencements dropped off 15 % from 2015 (10,332) to 2018 (8,683), with a slight increase in 2019 (9015 – 4%). However, overall commencements are 13% lower than in 2015. The most significant drop was from 2017 (10,091) to 2018 (8,683).

- In undergraduate courses, commencements dropped from a peak of 25,372 in 2017 to 20,211 in 2018 (20%). They continued to decline in 2019 to 19,679, representing a 22% decline since 2017.

NSW has the largest number of ITE students in Australia and has experienced the largest decline in commencements from 2017-2018. However, the decline is proportionate to Victoria and the ACT, with all three jurisdictions having an 18-22% drop from 2017-2018 that was not reversed in 2019.

The 2020 ATWD ITE Pipeline report details that 73% of undergraduates and 67% of postgraduates were employed in an education-based role in their first year after graduation, indicating that while commencements are dropping, employment rates are steady.

Supply issues are more nuanced. While showing a decline in commencements overall, they do not capture supply issues in specific disciplines and regions – such as regional, rural, and remote schools as well as subject areas such as STEM, languages, and Vocational Education and Training (VET). Additionally, these statistics do not address the impact of COVID-19 on teacher supply issues including the decline in international student numbers, at a national and state level.

These current drops in commencements and ongoing issues affecting workforce supply require flexible approaches to match teachers' supply and demand, speed up entry into the classroom, and improve the quality of school experience within ITE. The success of these approaches requires substantial cooperation at all levels.

Procurement models in initial teacher education

Currently, the NSW Government offers four scholarship programs to ensure high-quality candidates complete ITE degrees and teach in high-priority areas. Each scholarship offers permanent employment after the successful completion of an ITE degree. These scholarships are offered for the following pre-service teachers (PST):

- Rural and Remote PSTs
- Mathematics PSTs
- PSTs specialising in high-priority curriculum areas
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander PSTs.

The NSW Government also offers Graduate Teacher Scholarships (GTS) to final year teacher education students in high-demand subject areas. The offer includes:

- Up to 20 GTS are available in mathematics, science (with physics), selected Technological and Applied Studies (TAS) subjects and special education (K - 12).
- \$5000 training allowance
- Permanent employment
- Agreed locations across NSW.

Programs like these, which match supply more tightly to demand, are likely to become more prominent as shortages in specific subject areas and locations become more acute.

Flexible approaches to initial teacher education

The initiatives outlined above have been implemented to meet supply issues in high-demand areas. However, they do not fast-track entry to the classroom. To speed up entry to the classroom, a more flexible approach to ITE delivery could be implemented to allow for the fast-tracking of high quality ITE candidates into the classroom to meet current supply needs.

For example, a school system may procure a two-year equivalent postgraduate ITE program where the academic component is conducted over 12-18 months. This could also include a 6-12 month paid internship or residency as a core element of the 2-year program; giving employers the ability to choose the schools and curriculum areas PSTs are placed in and to have greater influence over the internship and the PSTs induction to the profession. This model can also be applied within the final year of an undergraduate ITE qualification.

Models like this currently operate in some jurisdictions (with others moving in this direction). The procurement model also enables employers to work with ITE providers to offer places in hard-to-staff schools and areas of subject shortages. The specific, targeted support provided to PSTs in placements increases the likelihood of these teachers remaining and continuing to work in these schools. The NSW Education Standards Authority has expanded their conditional accreditation pathway for PSTs to smooth their registration pathway under these models. Other states and territories are also applying their own limited forms of teacher registration.

Implementing paid internships or residencies also encourages high-quality candidates (e.g., mid-career changers) to complete an ITE qualification by reducing the financial disincentives of undertaking study. At the same time, internships increase the time spent in the classroom before full-time employment. Structured time spent in the classroom supports the PSTs' skill development in curriculum delivery and critical skills, including classroom management and student engagement. Under this approach, employer demand for quality teachers in areas of shortage can be used to drive supply in priority areas, including rural and remote schools.

The current Standards and Procedures accommodate these flexible models of ITE and do not pose implementation barriers to pathways or plans that provide PSTs with more practical experience. Instead, innovations in ITE program structure, delivery and teacher preparedness demonstrate increasing maturity in the use of the Standards.

Examples of other models and approaches

The Australian Government (through the High Achieving Teachers Program)¹ and the Victorian Department of Education and Training (through employment-based and/or hybrid pathways) have procured specific programs from ITE providers to address teacher supply issues. These and similar models successfully link government, employers, providers and schools together to increase PSTs on-the-job training and partnerships that support this.

For example, a Victorian hybrid pathway requires applicants to train and work in an identified area of workforce shortage at the secondary level and be successfully matched with a host school. Successful applicants then receive a stipend in instalments, on-the-job training and are employed, with permission to teach, in the first year after commencing the program. A pathway with a continuum like this, essentially from entrance to employment, increases the chances that PSTs remain at their placement school and/or in their respective field or area of workforce shortage. Pathways to ongoing

¹ Teach For Australia, a national program focused on PSTs in STEM shortage areas and funded by the Australian Government, does not operate in New South Wales.

employment are also important for retaining high quality candidates like career changers with experience in subject areas of shortage.

The Victorian Government spent \$13 million on fast tracked employment-based pathways over in the 2021-2022 financial year and has committed to extending this initiative over the next two financial years. As part of this initiative, the Government sought proposals from ITE providers on how partnerships could be formed to respond to current teacher shortages and increase the number of students undertaking postgraduate ITE and pursuing careers in education.

States, territories and ITE providers are also using or exploring 'fast-tracked' programs separately or as part of these models, often with increased professional experience components. For example, AITSL understands that New South Wales and Victoria are currently proposing a plan to allow ITE students to assist teachers in classrooms a lot earlier in their degrees. Like existing programs and models that are 'fast-tracked' or accelerated, including some hybrid pathways, the potential for this work to increase teacher preparedness earlier and at a larger scale is promising.

At present, ITE students tend to act more as para-professionals – augmenting the existing workforce of support staff and, in some cases, teachers. This further strengthens the case for strong and ongoing coordination between ITE providers, employers and TRAs to ensure that all teaching support or teaching PSTs deliver aligns to their skills, as they are developed, and their registration status. Without strong coordination and partnerships between providers and employers, PSTs earlier in their studies may find themselves only supervising students and/or struggling to teach with the necessary skills or subject knowledge they require.

It is also important that these programs are designed to increase completion rates, not just bring the same number of people into the workforce slightly earlier. As outlined, the pipeline of future teachers in New South Wales, using ITE program commencement data for the state as a proxy, will likely continue trending down. In this context, consideration needs to be given to how fast-tracked and accelerated pathways also prioritise overall enrolments while accounting for the student population. Otherwise, in the context of declining enrolments, some fast-tracked pathways may only shift future supply forward, creating the potential for future teacher shortages.

Place: Meeting the need for subject specialisation

Teacher shortages are not uniform. It is important to get teachers to where they are needed. Subject specialisations and school location are the main issues in matching teacher supply and demand.

A teacher is said to be 'teaching in-field' when they are teaching a subject that they have received training to teach. Specifically, this submission defines teachers who are teaching in-field as teachers who have completed subject-specific tertiary study in both the content and pedagogy required to teach a particular subject. This is a relatively strict definition. Teachers may have completed professional learning in the content/and or pedagogy of their subject, or developed these skills from other sources.

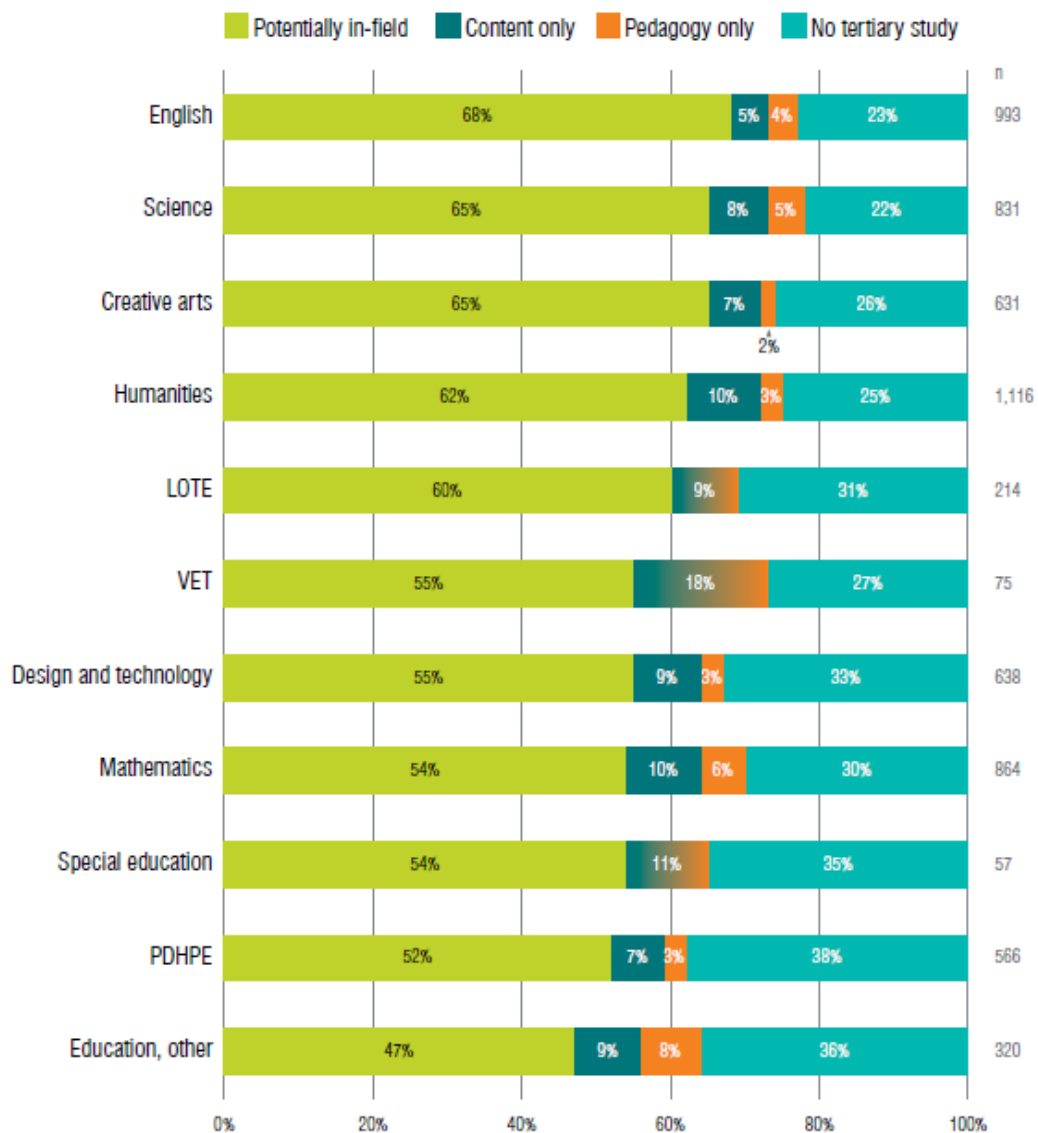
There are a variety of reasons why a teacher might be teaching out-of-field. A reduced supply of teachers, the difficulty in staffing hard to staff schools and timetabling constraints can all provide the reasons why teachers can find themselves teaching out-of-field (Hobb *et al.*, 2022).

Out-of-field teaching in New South Wales

The Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative provides data on the proportion of teachers that are potentially teaching in-field. Each year the ATWD administers the largest survey of the teaching profession in Australia, the ATWD Teacher Survey. As part of this survey, teachers are asked what subjects they teach and if they have received at least one semester of content knowledge or one semester of pedagogy training in these subjects.

The results of the most recent analysis of NSW ATWD Teacher Survey data provide a preliminary analysis of the proportion of secondary teachers teaching in-field (AITSL, 2021). Shown in Figure 2 below is the level of tertiary preparation teachers have in teaching several secondary subjects. The chart shows for each subject the proportion of teachers potentially teaching in-field and the proportion of teachers receiving only content training, pedagogy training or no tertiary training in a particular subject. Across all curriculum areas and subjects in NSW, between 47-68% of secondary teachers are potentially teaching in-field within a given subject. Alternatively, between 22-38% of teachers in a given subject have received no tertiary study in that subject.

Figure 2: Subject-specific ITE preparation, secondary teachers, NSW (AITSL, 2021)



Note: Data was gathered through the ATWD Teacher Survey through the following two questions: Select all subjects that you are teaching in 2018. & Did you complete at least one semester learning content knowledge or pedagogy in the following subject/s during your teacher education program or other tertiary study?

The subjects with the highest proportion of secondary teachers potentially teaching in field are English (68%), Science (65%) and Creative Arts (65%). The subjects with a lower proportion of teachers potentially teaching in-field are more technical or vocational of nature. These subjects include Mathematics (54%), Design and Technology (55%) and VET (55%). The subjects with the lowest proportion of teachers teaching in-field are Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE; 52%) and Special Education (54%).

Science and English are the two subjects with the least proportion of secondary teachers that have received no tertiary study in those subjects (22% and 23% respectively). The subjects with the highest proportion of teachers who have no tertiary study in that subject are PDHPE at 38% and Special Education at 35%.

Action is needed to support the workforce

The Australian National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field has recently proposed 22 actions and 46 recommendations that address the issue of out-of-field teaching (Hobb *et al.*, 2022). These actions and recommendations conform to five key messages.

1. Definition: A nationally consistent definition of out-of-field teaching needs to be made
2. Measurement: Further data needs to be sourced to understand the effects and experiences of long-term out-of-field teaching and teacher specialisation
3. Strategy: Enact strategies that address the reasons why out-of-field teaching is occurring
4. Policy: Create policies that support the practice, wellbeing and professional learning of out-of-field teachers
5. Collaboration: Work with stakeholders to reinforce pathways into teaching and provide formal pathways to re-train out-of-field teachers

Initiatives can be implemented to directly address the number of out-of-field teachers. For example, the Victorian Department of Education and Training has funded the *Secondary Mathematics and Science Initiative* (SMSI) (Department of Education and Training, 2021). This program allows out-of-field Science or Mathematics teachers to apply to undertake a fully-funded graduate certificate to teach their out-of-field subject to Year 10. These teachers are given 0.2 full-time equivalent time release to study.

The SMSI program for 2022 is capped at 75 mathematics teachers and 25 science teachers with 50 places reserved for teachers from rural and regional settings. Regional and rural teachers are further supported by this initiative with their travel, meals and accommodation costs reimbursed.

The role of incentives, including but not limited to salary, also need to be considered. It is important to understand what motivates teachers to move to and stay in particular locations. It may also be necessary to pay extra or offer other incentives to attract teachers in subject areas that are in demand.

Deployment within schools

Placing teachers in a particular school is only the beginning of the process. The subjects and year levels teachers are assigned to not only affects their students' learning, but also the development of their own expertise. For example, a teacher might specialise in middle years science teaching for a number of years and develop specific expertise that can be shared with other teachers, including those teaching higher and lower year levels. As far as possible, these should be deliberate decisions, rather than being based on short-term necessity.

Recognise: Esteeming expertise through teacher certification

Ensuring there are attractive and engaging career pathways for teachers is essential for both attracting teachers to, and retaining them long term in, the profession. The public reputation of the teaching profession must be increased so that the societal contribution of educators is not only valued and understood, but to ensure so that that teaching is and remains an attractive career choice.

High esteem for the teaching profession is most likely to occur when the profession itself advocates for its own expertise, rather than basing its status on seeing the profession as a job or vocation. In calling for improved remuneration, greater autonomy, and more time, the profession must also promote what this money, autonomy and time is for – to develop, esteem, and privilege teaching and leadership expertise.

National certification in New South Wales

One example of this is seen in national teacher certification (referred to as *Accreditation at the higher levels* in NSW). This is a standards-based measure of teaching expertise and instructional leadership against the higher career stages of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Teacher Standards), assessed by an external assessor from outside of the teacher's school.

Prior to the nationally agreed process in 2012, NSW introduced a system of recognising expert teaching at higher levels of accreditation, beyond the full licence to teach. For the first time in Australia, exceptional and innovative teachers could be publicly recognised as such through accreditation as a Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher. Since the agreement of a national process for certifying teachers at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages of the Teacher Standards, certification is now available in some form in all states and territories (although not yet in each sector).

As well as increasing the status of the profession by highlighting teachers' expertise, certification opens possibilities for using the expertise of our best teachers to spread excellence across the system and provides an alternative career pathway to traditional administrative leadership pathways in schools.

Although certified teachers and their principals report that the certification process is of great benefit, to date only 1,025 teachers (280 in NSW), or approximately 0.3% of the workforce, have achieved certification. A concerted national effort is required to ensure the benefits of certification are realised across Australia. Such a national effort would have three pillars:

- Establish national targets for the number of teachers achieving certification
- Review and streamline the certification process, including methods to avoid duplication where teachers have undertaken other similar processes
- Finding ways to make best use of certified teachers in and across schools.

Ambitious targets encourage action

The target of 2,500 HALTs in NSW by 2025, announced recently by the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning, will allow NSW employers to move from seeing national certification as a boutique offering, to expanding and creating internal frameworks to support teachers to seek the recognition for their expertise. NSW employers should work with their industrial relations partners to achieve this.

To achieve this ambitious target, a review of the certification process should be undertaken to identify areas that could be streamlined, such as evidence requirements and decision-making processes. This review would be informed by key stakeholders in certification, including employers, certifying authorities and Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers (HALTs) themselves. If the process can be streamlined (while maintaining the rigour of the standard) then it would reduce the time and resourcing required to assess applications and allow certifying authorities to increase their intake of HALT applicants. Similarly, a reduced time commitment for prospective HALTs may lower barriers to entry, increasing the number of applicants.

The NSW education systems and sectors could assist in achieving these targets and realising the benefits of teacher certification by creating roles for certified teachers, similar to the ‘master teachers’ seen in some high performing education systems such as Singapore. These teachers would retain a significant classroom teaching load, but also be responsible for coaching other teachers to improve practice, supervising pre-service and beginning teachers, and leading initiatives to improve pedagogy within and across schools. Their pay should recognise their expertise and reward them for taking leadership roles in the system. There is evidence that increasing the level of pay for high-level positions would make the profession more attractive than (more expensive) generalised pay rises (Goss & Sonnemann 2019, BETA 2022). Each system or sector would need flexibility to implement this reform in line with the timing of expiry of existing industrial agreements and in negotiation with their workforces. Evidence shows that these types of professionalisation practices promote high quality teaching and the retention of the teaching workforce.

AITSL’s consultation with HALTs themselves shows that they are keen to take on these roles. Many HALTs are frustrated that schools and systems do not gain more value from their expertise. Working with other teachers, including but not limited to pre-service and beginning teachers, should be built into their job descriptions. These roles can be seen as a valued career progression for those who do not want to go into administrative school leadership positions, such as Deputy Principal and Principal.

HALTs themselves perceive certification as a national acknowledgement of quality teaching. Over half of the teachers and school leaders surveyed by AITSL in 2017 viewed certification as a significant indicator of skill (57% teachers, 61% leaders) and many HALTs mentioned it increased their standing with colleagues and peers.

The certification process as an important first step for quality teachers to be acknowledged and, in turn, recognised within the wider school community. Increasing the number of teachers certificated at Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher level and the creation of high-level roles within schools that allow them to impact the teaching and learning of their peers and students would ensure the public reputation of the teaching profession is not only valued, but increased.

Retain: Addressing factors that cause teachers to leave

Understanding the intentions of teachers to remain in the profession provides important insights into how they view the long-term sustainability of their personal teaching career, and the analysis of their reasons why they intend to leave highlights factors which could be addressed to increase retention.

There are both short-term and long-term triggers for attrition in any workforce. The reasons people give for their intentions to leave are more likely to reflect the longer-term challenges that teachers face. Rapid triggers that are strongly associated with leaving the profession immediately (for example, a personal reason such as a severe medical diagnosis) tend to be unplanned and not part of a person's career intentions.

Workload is a critical factor

Teachers are considering leaving the profession at alarming levels. The Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative has identified through its annual ATWD Teacher Survey that in New South Wales, 32% of teachers intend to leave the profession prior to retirement (compared with a national average of 25%). Teachers in New South Wales were also less likely to report that they intended to remain in the profession – 35% in NSW, compared with 41% of teachers nationally.

The top two reasons why NSW teachers consider leaving the profession are related to workload (AITSL, 2021). Of NSW teachers considering leaving, 75% report that they consider leaving because the workload is too heavy and 68% report that it is due to their desire to achieve a better work/life balance. Teachers in NSW were between 1 and 5 percentage points more likely to select workload and coping reasons than the national average.

Further, a 2022 study by Monash University showed that only 41% of respondents planned to remain in the teaching profession. The main reasons cited were increased workload, health and wellbeing concerns for teachers and the status of the profession (Heffernan, Bright, Kim, Longmuir & Magyar, 2022).

Quality teaching is the foundation for education. If teachers don't have time to devote to planning for quality teaching due to increased workloads, the percentage of teachers planning to remain in the profession may fall further. The Grattan Institute report, *Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help* (2002) recommended 3 reform directions for ensuring teachers workload is reduced:

- First, let teachers teach, by better matching teachers' work to teachers' expertise: Improve the integration of specialist and support staff in schools to help teachers focus on high-quality classroom instruction, and to ensure that non-teaching staff can perform duties that don't require teaching expertise.
- Second, help teachers to work smarter, by reducing unnecessary tasks: Examine administrative activities, but also core teaching activities. Reduce the need for teachers to 're-invent the wheel' in curriculum and lesson planning.

- Third, rethink the ways teachers' work is organised in schools: Ensure industrial agreements give school leaders the flexibility to strike a sensible balance between class sizes and teachers' face-to-face teaching time, and to smooth out workloads over the school year by scheduling more time for teachers to work together on preparation activities in term breaks. (Hunter & Sonnemann, 2022).

Collective efficacy and professional learning

Quality teaching can be inferred based on students' learning growth and achievement, quality processes such as collaborating with other teachers and giving meaningful feedback to students, and reported self-efficacy (OECD, 2018b). Studies have shown that self-efficacy is positively related to student achievement and teachers' job satisfaction (OECD, 2018b). Moreover, collective efficacy – the level of shared confidence that teachers have in their collective abilities to guide students to success – not only impacts student learning, it also leads to teacher self-efficacy (Hattie, 2012). This feedback loop benefits both teachers and students. Teachers who are confident in their abilities and persist through difficulties tend to positively influence student outcomes and gain a greater sense of job satisfaction, making them less likely to leave the profession (Herbert-Smith, 2018).

In Australia, there is a strong association between teachers' job satisfaction and having participated in impactful professional learning. Continuous professional learning helps teachers improve their self-efficacy and satisfaction, along with the necessary skills (OECD, 2014b, 2016). A review of nine studies that investigated the effectiveness of professional learning found that, on average, 49 hours of professional learning can boost student achievement by 21 percentile points (AITSL, 2018).

Contractual arrangements affect retention

The ATWD Teacher Survey provides a source for estimating the proportion of teachers with permanent employment contracts, fixed term contracts and those who are casual teachers in NSW (AITSL, 2021).

Over two-thirds (69%) of the teaching workforce in New South Wales reported being employed with a permanent employment contract. A further 18% of teachers in New South Wales reported being engaged under a fixed-term contract of one year or less. In addition, 10% of teachers in New South Wales reported being casual teachers. Of those casual teachers, 33% are working in these roles due to personal circumstances, such as family commitments and 32% of them were unable to secure a contract or permanent position.

By sector, teachers working in independent schools in NSW reported the highest proportion with permanent employment contracts (81%), while teachers working in government schools reported the lowest (68%). The proportion of men who report being employed with a permanent employment contract (73%) is higher than women (68%).

Of those who reported working as casual teachers in government schools, 33% of them were unable to secure a permanent employment contract. This is higher than casual teachers reporting they work in the independent (19%) and Catholic (22%) sectors.

Of those under 30 years old working as casual teachers in NSW, 47% of them report being unable to secure a contract of permanent role. This marks the age group that is reporting the highest proportion of teachers unable to secure a permanent or ongoing role.

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