

**Submission
No 250**

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER SHORTAGES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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NSW Teacher Shortages

1. To try to make sense of, or plan to address the shortage of teachers in NSW, a comprehensive analysis of the statistics relating to such shortages should be an on-going function of the Department of Education in particular and any other functionally-related authorities, such as Early Childhood Education, T.A.F.E. and Teacher Training Institutions.

Comment:

This requirement places a responsibility on the relevant Minister to ensure that this function is actually occurring as a matter of continuous practice.

By implication, this throws the same responsibility onto the relevant Shadow Minister through regular Questions in the House

Examples of statistics on shortages for which detail is needed:

- Sector spread; pre-school, primary, secondary
 - Curriculum spread; general, subject specific, eg: English, Mathematics, Science, Languages, etc.
 - Geographical factors; inner city, outer metropolitan, regional, small rural, remote
 - Age-demographic related.
2. This data should then be compared to what one assumes, is an on-going analysis by the Department of Education of the range of factors which contribute to both annual and long-term, say, decade long, Attrition Rates from teaching force, by sector/subject/geographical location and length and status ie; permanent or temporary in the profession as above.

Comments:

As indicated in !. above, This requirement places a responsibility on the relevant Minister to ensure that this function is actually occurring as a matter of continuous practice.

By implication, this throws the same responsibility onto the relevant Shadow Minister through regular Questions in the House.

3. Reasons for shortages:

Anecdotal evidence has shown that the following have all been possible contributing factors

- Selection criteria for selection into teacher training. It does not necessarily follow that only selecting those with the highest ATAR;s will make the best teachers. However, there needs to be discussion about how far down the ATAR scale for selection, is desirable.

Comment:

This needs further discussion at Departmental level and with Teacher Training Institutions.

- Adequacy of teacher training: B.Ed, B.Teach, Undergraduate degree plus Graduate Diploma Of Education, Industry experience plus crash course in education/teaching, the nature of practicum whilst training, its frequency and duration, sector specific training. Which should an undergraduate do?

Comment:

This also needs considerable discussion at Departmental level, with Teacher Training Institutions and Teacher Industrial Organisations. Previous experiments with drawing teachers from Industry, Training or University and giving them crash coursed in “Education” have proved disastrous. There is insufficient time to cover adequately the essentials of child psychology, growth and development, pedagogy in terms of the teaching and learning processes, etc. There is also confusion about the naming of Teacher Education Courses. For example, in some cases B.Teaching applies only to Early Childhood education and elsewhere to Pre-School and Primary Education. What is the difference between B.Teaching and B.Education? In which training courses do undergraduates learn about the educational implications of child psychology and a child’s ability to learn in terms of their growth and development? What are the implications of this for training of primary or secondary teachers? One size does not fit all.

There is now a further demand for inclusion in such courses as we approach reconciliation, the Voice and a Treaty with our First Nations population and that is the inclusion of Aboriginal Pedagogy.

This question about the appropriateness and suitability of Teacher Training for all levels from Early Childhood, Pre-School, Primary and Secondary, makes it essential that there is a serious discussion between all parties responsible for education, to solve them problem. An essential component of this discussion should be about the initial years of teaching, in terms of support mechanisms like mentoring and teaching loads.

Recent suggestions that undergraduate students could be used to fill gaps whilst they are studying, ignore the essentiality of observational lessons and the critical practicum components of teacher training courses.

- Personal suitability for teaching.

Comment:

Difficult to determine, who decides/measures the attributes? Possible industrial implications.

- Geographical location.

Comment:

Who determines placements of appointees? What rights of appeal do/should they have? Media stories often have a negative influence on the attractiveness or

otherwise of particular locations as desirable workplaces. Can anyone recall the Daily Telegraph's negative assessment of the Rooty Hill HSC results and the uproar that followed. More recently, Walgett has received a huge amount of negative publicity about its High School.

The Department and Government both have roles to play in responding to any negative press articles.

Shadow Ministers should continually monitor such articles and question the Minister.

Can anyone remember the old 'Western Allowance?'.

- Workload in terms of teaching and experience

Comment:

Without question, increased workload in terms of administrative workload, report writing without any compensation in terms of additional support staff, have contributed to teacher burnout and resignations.

There needs to be a thorough examination of the appropriateness of teaching loads according to years of experience and available mentoring or peer support.

- NAPLAN

Comment:

Without question, the imposition of NAPLAN on schools has had a disproportionate impact on teacher satisfaction with their career, burnout due to additional administrative work/report writing and a lack of specialist remedial teaching support and inadequate additional clerical/support. NAPLAN has distorted the teaching/learning because of the unfortunate focus on test results. The appropriateness of NAPLAN itself needs to be questioned because of the abuse of process which occurs with its use by unqualified commentators in the community, media who make judgements about the quality of individual teachers or schools upon seeing the annual NAPLAN results revealed. Formative diagnostic tools like a NAPLAN literacy test, cannot and should never be used to make summative judgements as say, the HSC English Exam does. Any other judgements are misleading and invalid.

There needs to be a serious discussion between all interested parties as to whether NAPLAN as used currently, should continue. Following the revealing of annual NAPLAN results, the Department should be obliged also, to reveal which additional resources are provided to those schools requiring them as a result of the NAPLAN testing.

Shadow Ministers should ask this latter question in the House.

- Level of school leadership support.

Comment:

Support is essential at every level.

For Principals. With the unacknowledged increase in workload due to the shifting of responsibilities from the Department to schools with programs such as Local Decisions (or School-based Management) and NAPLAN, school principals have struggled with both the size of the additional workload and the additional skills required for certain tasks.

By Principals. Principals also have mentoring responsibilities towards staff at all levels and should have skill training support where necessary.

- Level of peer support.

Comment:

This is an area of need, particularly for beginning teachers. When looking of ways to better remunerate experienced teachers who still wish to remain essentially classroom teachers, training in mentoring accompanied by a slightly reduced teaching load would provide a valuable resource in every school.

- Availability of mentoring, personal professional development or study leave.

Comment:

These are all elements which would lead to increase levels of teacher satisfaction, if associated with individual career path planning as a pre-condition of advancement to increased salary or promotion.

- Job security/difficulty in obtaining permanency.

Comment:

Without doubt, the greatest disservice which governments and the Department have done to their teaching workforce, particularly new entrants to teaching, has been the failure to grant them permanency with the safety of tenure it brings.

Losses to the service and analogous to those of apprenticeships. Young apprentices on low salaries, see their mates stacking groceries at Woolies, earning more money and acquiring a set of wheels. Socially they feel to be at a disadvantage and leave their training.

Likewise, young teachers without tenure find it difficult to get home loans, etc. and feel similarly socially disadvantaged.

Perhaps if trainee teachers could be offered scholarships which would indenture them to the government, similar to the time when Teaching Scholarships bonded students to the Department for three years, both the department and the teacher benefitted. Schools across the state could be staffed and the teachers had guaranteed job security.

- Salary.

Comment:

Without doubt, the increased demands on teachers, due to recent changes in the lesser amount of profession educational support available from the Department as repeated curriculum changes occur together with significant increases in administrative workloads due to NAPLAN testing, make it obvious that teacher are grossly underpaid.

There needs to be a complete examination of the way in which teacher salary scales are structured.

If it is accepted that mentoring of beginning teachers is required, and that Leading Teachers could play a range of role whilst remaining largely as classroom teachers at the same time that others seek promotion to Deputy principal or Principal and also finally accepting the administrative cost-shifting to schools by the Department, then a substantial increase in salary is required to stem the exodus currently existing.