

AAMT believes that solving the current teacher workforce issues is pivotal in addressing the challenges faced in the education sector at the moment. The NRSA report focuses largely on data and lacks any anecdotal evidence gathered from interviews with schools or teachers, or school and classroom visits. Our organisation and its affiliates would urge the review committee to regather and examine workforce teacher data post-covid as the referenced data in the report is pre-covid data. We believe that there is a stark difference in such data.

Of the eight requests for feedback in the Overview document (pages 8 (twice) 13, 14 (twice), 16, and 19 (twice)) AAMT is most qualified to comment on a) the adequacy of Initial Teacher Education (p 19), b) classroom practice (p 8), c) career pathways (p 14) and d) reducing low value tasks (p 13).

With regard to initial teacher education while the report does state that “over a third of early career teachers surveyed, say they do not receive induction training and mentoring” (p 10) the Commission only explicitly seeks feedback on where ITE adequately equips teachers for responding to the needs of priority equity cohorts. ITE occurs predominantly outside the typical classroom environment, where it is the teacher alone with a class.

Regarding classroom practice, teachers largely adopt and endorse what they receive from other teachers. The higher the quality of one’s mentors, the higher the quality of what is adopted. Much has been written in the media over recent years of the efficacy of the direct/explicit instruction models. This is one example of trying to codify and transmit high quality instructional practice. What is often missing in this approach is the volume of knowledge and experience that resides with the authors of such materials. The fullness of practice is reduced by being constrained to a page or a video. What is written and transmitted as “direct instruction” may have, and often has, begun as rich tasks seeking to develop deep understanding. Teaching and learning are partners in a continual dialogue that cannot be completely reduced to a script.

This leads to the issue of career pathways. At present the highest regarded and remunerated pathways for teachers within the school environment is leadership. The Commission’s Report rightly acknowledges that this risks removing effective teachers from the classroom. Developing robust, fruitful communities of practice needs effective content knowledgeable practitioners that are available and accessible to the rank and file. In Australia, with its unique “tyranny of distance” issues, this is extremely difficult to provide. Priority equity cohorts are those that are the first to



miss out on the benefits from such an initiative. Additionally, accredited pathways, such as discipline based Masters degrees, as alternatives to HALT training might be viable and cost effective options.

While not explicitly stated in The Report, the shortage of teachers in the workforce was significant prior to COVID and must be seen now as critical. There are three factors that need to be considered in redressing this: time, cost and quality. It is an unfortunate reality that of these three components any pairing of two makes the third mutually exclusive.

Teachers need to be equipped effectively with both pedagogical and subject knowledge in tandem. These are important attributes of effective learning and teaching in mathematics. Teachers need to be empowered to deliver learning experiences for students that meet the students needs at that particular point in the learning journey. The Commission is encouraged to review the balance between standardisation and creativity in the equipping of teachers.

Lastly, there is the consideration of reducing low value tasks. The Report states that Australian teachers do more of these than their international counterparts. Do other nations not engage in these tasks, or do they have systems in place where the tasks are carried out by non-teachers? The definition of “low value” should also be clarified. Is the meaning that such tasks have little importance or that they have little direct impact on student learning? If the latter, then how can they be managed while at the same time freeing teachers for more fruitful activities? While teaching assistants are mentioned as a possible solution, is this necessarily the best use of their time and expertise?

AAMT encourages The Commission to advocate for wider representation in policy review and writing at both a local and national level.

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