

**Submission by the Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion, University of South Australia in response to the Productivity Commission's Interim Report for the Review of the National School Reform Agreement**

We make this submission on behalf of the Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion (CRESI), University of South Australia. CRESI is one of the largest research centres in the world to focus on generating new knowledge about issues related to educational and social inclusion. CRESI has a long history of developing and building an impactful research program. Our research seeks to understand the barriers to inclusion. Our research also offers educationally and socially inclusive alternatives that have impact, including theoretical frameworks, policy proposals, and exemplars of contemporary practices.

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This submission directly responds to the call from the Commission, which is seeking feedback on 'Improving teaching'. In particular:

'Other initiatives could be implemented to support teachers during the critical first three to five years of their careers when they face the most challenging adjustments (especially if employed at so-called 'hard-to-staff' schools) and are at higher risk of early exit from the profession. Australia has relatively high use of mentoring for teachers by OECD standards. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that more than one-third of early career teachers surveyed, say that they do not receive induction training and mentoring.

In addition to supporting new entrants to the profession, focusing on factors such as teacher workload, and developing and sharing best practice, would target the around 300 000 teachers already in the classroom. This would also help to address teacher shortages — some of these same factors weigh heavily in teacher attraction and retention decisions.' (p.10)

With colleagues, we have conducted two large Australian Research Council funded studies on **early career teacher retention**:

1. 'Keeping the best: How school leaders engage and retain high quality teachers' (LP130100830) and
2. 'Addressing the teacher exodus: Enhancing early career teacher resilience and retention in changing times' (LP0883672).

The findings of these studies are very relevant to the issues being considered by the Productivity Commission. Based on this research, we offer:

1. One key recommendation
2. Basic understandings to inform the development of future initiatives
3. Guiding principles to underpin decisions related to new policies and strategies to support new entrants to the teaching profession.
4. A summary of key publications from these studies for the Commission's consideration (see Appendix A).

### **Recommendation**

Australia should develop a '**National Early Career Teacher Workforce Induction Plan**' that systemically maps out a clear set of agreed principles and strategies (like those outlined below) to support all new teachers within the first three – five years of graduation regardless of their employment status.

### ***Rationale:***

Recent reports indicate that early career teachers are increasingly employed on casual or short-term contracts. In fact, 60% of new teachers are employed as casual teachers (30%) or on contracts of less than 1 year (30%) and it can take years to secure long-term employment (Preston, 2019).

In Australia, schools are tasked with providing support to new teachers as they transition to the profession (AITSL, 2016). This onus falls on schools because research indicates 'school-based induction practices as the most useful in enculturating beginning teachers to their school and to their career' (Kearney, 2021, p. 153). However, with 60% of new teachers now employed casually or on short-term contracts, many are working across schools and, in some instances, education sectors. Such teachers might be engaged in multiple induction events tailored to the needs of individual schools; however, they are unlikely to receive an ongoing, systematic induction that meets their individual needs across the first few years of their work as a teacher. As a consequence, most early career teachers are not eligible to undertake quality induction programs and may be left feeling unsupported, isolated and lacking confidence in their abilities, increasing the likelihood of them leaving the profession within their first five years of teaching. Developing and implementing a '**National Early Career Teacher Workforce Induction Plan**' should address these problems.

### **Basic Understandings**

A number of key findings have emerged from our Australian research and our reading of the international literature on what schools can do to support early career teachers' transition to the profession. It is important to note that internationally, research on early career teachers has predominantly focused on those teachers in longer term employment and very little research has examined precariously employed new teachers. Therefore, more is known about what schools can do to support teachers early in their careers and little is known about district/system level support.

There are five key domains that should be considered when providing support to teachers during the induction period – policy work, teachers’ work, culture, relationships, and teacher identity:

1. Policy work

Early career teachers and their communities are best served by policies and practices grounded in democratic principles. This policy work involves:

- Engaging teachers in the development of work policies at the local level;
- Recognising the assets and strengths that early career teachers bring to the role;
- Reframing top-down policies at the local level in responsive and participatory ways; and
- Building strong, collaborative learning communities.

2. Teachers’ work

Early career teachers are best served by policies and practices that ease them into their new teaching roles and support their gradual transition to the profession. This process of acculturation involves:

- Challenging unjust and exploitative recruitment practices that place early career teachers in the most challenging ‘hard-to-staff’ schools;
- Recognising and understanding the highly complex and intense nature of teachers’ work;
- Re-engineering early career teachers’ work by reducing face-to-face teaching loads, and by changing traditional teaching structures, roles and expectations; and
- Providing appropriate ongoing support, resources, and professional learning opportunities.

3. Culture

Early career teachers are best served by cultures that value collaborative relationships, professional learning communities, and democratic decision-making. Espousing and promoting these values involves:

- Promoting a sense of connectedness and belonging;
- Encouraging a spirit of collective ownership, responsibility, and solidarity;
- Providing opportunities for collaborative learning;
- Working through problems respectfully; and
- Promoting distributive leadership.

4. Relationships

Early career teachers are best served when there is a focus on their complex emotional needs and social exchanges that foster respect, trust, care, and integrity. Valuing relationships involves:

- Promoting a sense of belonging, acceptance, and wellbeing;
- Placing student-teacher relationships at the heart of the teaching-learning process;
- Providing explicit affirmation and acknowledgement of early career teachers’ contributions; and
- Creating time and space for dialogue and collaboration.

#### 5. Teacher identity

Early career teachers are best served when they are encouraged to self-reflect as they develop an emergent and robust teacher identity. This involves:

- Negotiating the links between personal and professional identities in becoming a teacher;
- Accommodating new and different ways of thinking and acting;
- Providing time and resources to engage in self-reflection; and
- Fostering a sense of agency, efficacy, and self-worth.

#### **Guiding Principles**

In order to implement new policies and strategies that reflect these research-based understandings, the following guiding principles should be considered:

- Early career induction is a distinct phase of becoming a successful teacher.
- All new teachers should receive a quality induction regardless of their employment status.
- Induction is a collective responsibility of governments, education systems, universities, schools, and communities.
- Early career teachers will flourish when they are actively engaged in policy formation, enactment and self-reflection.
- Schools will develop work practices organised around collaborating teams which are actively engaged in changing organisational, cultural, and pedagogical practices.
- A commitment to the principles of teacher research to promote inquiry so it is embedded in practice.
- Creating a skilled workforce involves a deep understanding of the philosophical, pedagogical and practical dimensions of teaching and learning.
- Partnerships with universities will provide access to university colleagues and resources to help sustain intellectual, pedagogical and moral support around issues of common concern.

## APPENDIX A:

### Summary of relevant publications on early career teachers by Sullivan, Johnson, and Down et al.

1. Sullivan, A., Johnson, B., & Simons, M. (Eds.). (2019). *Attracting and keeping the best teachers: Issues and opportunities*. Singapore: Springer Nature. Available [here](#).

#### Key messages

- Policy makers and education systems need to be alert to the limitations and impact of existing national and international policy reforms.
- There is a need to engage teachers in policy formation, enactment and reflection.

#### Summary

This book challenges dominant thinking about early career teachers and their work. It offers an in-depth and critical analysis of policies concerning the work of early career teachers and how they are supported during this critical period, when they are highly vulnerable to leaving the profession. Moreover, the book provides examples from actual practice that illustrate how to help early career teachers make a successful transition into the profession. These practices promote early career teachers' development and help the profession as a whole to capitalize on the new knowledge and skills that these teachers bring to their classrooms and their students.

The book is divided into two main parts. Part 1 deals with the difficult to define process of retaining early career teachers, and its respective chapters consider this broad issue from an international perspective. They explore how policies and practices have an impact on what happens in schools, and what it means to be a teacher and to teach. In turn, Part 2 focuses on the need to reconsider the policies and practices that create the 'problem' of early career teachers, and offers alternative ways forward. Each chapter addresses a specific aspect of the early career teacher retention issue, contributing to a greater understanding of how we can rethink the work of early career teachers so that they can more successfully transition into the profession.

2. Sullivan, A., Johnson, B., & Simons, M. (2019). Introduction. In A. Sullivan, B. Johnson, & M. Simons (Eds.), *Attracting and keeping the best teachers: Issues and opportunities* (pp. 1-11). Singapore: Springer Nature. Available [here](#).

#### Key messages

- Attracting and keeping quality teachers is a national priority requiring ongoing and sustained policy responses.

#### Summary

This chapter establishes the importance of attracting and retaining quality teachers to the profession. The chapter outlines emerging international concerns about changes in the teacher labour market and the importance of promoting early career teacher retention as demand for teachers intensifies. The chapter outlines the structure of the book and briefly describes each chapter and the contributions they make to the overall aims of the book.

In times of teacher shortages, education systems 'cope' in a variety of ways by:

- increasing class sizes,
- recruiting less qualified teachers, and
- allocating teachers to teach outside of their field of expertise.

Clearly, these ways of addressing a lack of teachers undermine the quality of education.

Governments have introduced policy initiatives that focus on increasing the teacher workforce by attending to the attraction of 'quality' teachers, but they have been criticised for not attending to teacher retention. For example, the government policy responses in many states in the United States, which are experiencing serious teacher shortages, have typically focused on new teacher recruitment and training, but there has been a lack of focus on retaining teachers (Sutcher et al. 2016). There have been moves to quickly recruit new teachers via 'employment-based pathways' such as Teach for America. However, research indicates that such pathways are problematic because 'teachers with little preparation tend to leave at rates two to three times as high as those who have had a comprehensive preparation before they enter' (Sutcher et al. 2016, p. 4).

Governments which aim to develop and enact policy solutions that promote the retention of teachers need to understand the labour market and, more importantly, the complex relationship between retention and the development of the teaching workforce.

The chapter argues that the nature of early career teachers' work threatens their retention as they transition to the profession, and it needs to be reformed to address issues of intensification and performativity. It argues that whilst appointing mentors, providing induction programs and reducing teaching loads help, they do not resolve the issues. What is needed is a re-imagining of what early career teachers are expected to do and how they should do it.

3. Down, B., & Sullivan, A. (2019). 'Classroom-ready teachers': Gaps, silences and contradictions in the Australian report into teacher education In A. Sullivan, B. Johnson, & M. Simons (Eds.), *Attracting and keeping the best teachers: Issues and opportunities* (pp. 39-61). Singapore: Springer Nature. Available [here](#).

#### **Key messages**

- Creating a professional skilled workforce involves a deep understanding of the philosophical, pedagogical and practical principles of teaching and learning.
- 'Command and control' approaches to teachers' work limits creativity, innovation and professional autonomy.
- Policy makers should be circumspect about the impact of current policy regimes and evidence about 'what works'.
- Teaching is highly complex, emotional, fragile, and relational labour.

### Summary

This chapter examines the 2014 'Action now: classroom ready teachers' report. This report reinforces the public perception that the "quality" of teachers is deteriorating and the only solution is to intensify accountability regimes through increased levels of control. To this end, the Australian federal government committed \$16.9 million to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to ensure that "teachers are better trained". This involves a greater focus on accountability, accreditation, regulation, selection, assessment, content and evidence about "what works". The chapter argues that:

- Action now is preoccupied with accountability, accreditation, regulation, selection, assessment, content and evidence about "what works".
- Teachers' work is being politicised in ways that threaten their ability to teach well.
- The imposition of teacher standards has led to the de-professionalisation of teachers as they are forced to comply with narrow technologies of reductionist policy products.
- The complexity of schools and the nature of teachers' work are simplified beyond recognition. In doing so, the deeply relational and emotional dimensions of teaching are largely forgotten and therefore devalued.
- The pressure to develop "robust evidence" in all aspects of teacher education is laudable but the policy rhetoric suggests a narrow view of research. It misunderstands the need to develop "teachers as researchers" who are capable of investigating their work in scholarly and critical ways.
- Action now reflects a narrow view of what it means to teach.

Finally, it argues for alternative conceptions of teacher education grounded in a more relational and intellectually engaged response.

4. Johnson, B., Sullivan, A., Simons, M., & Peters, J. (2019). How school leaders attract, recruit, develop and retain the early career teachers they want: Positives and paradoxes. In A. Sullivan, B. Johnson, & M. Simons (Eds.), *Attracting and keeping the best teachers: Issues and opportunities* (pp. 101-122). Singapore: Springer Nature. Available [here](#).

### Key messages

- Developing local school leadership is crucial to the process of attracting, and keeping the best teachers.
- Effective school leaders provide innovative, responsive and contextual responses to professional learning opportunities.
- Professional learning needs to be relevant, timely, meaningful and well resourced.

### Summary

In Australia, discussion of teacher workforce development has focused predominantly on attracting and recruiting quality teachers, with less attention given to the broader retention process. This chapter provides an explanation of the teacher retention process. The concept of retention is better understood as a process which is inclusive of attraction, recruitment, development and deployment of skilled teachers (see 'A model of the attraction-recruitment-development-retention process' below). It provides empirical evidence of how politically savvy school principals attract, recruit, support and develop early career teachers in ways that 'fit' their staffing profile needs and foster their professional commitment (see 'A framework of school leadership practices that promote the retention of early career teachers' below).

- School leaders initiate the attraction and recruitment process by recognising the often-unique qualities of early career teachers to justify their interest in recruiting them over



other possible candidates. They then assess the knowledge, skills and dispositions of potential recruits and whether they ‘fit’ the needs of their school.

- Having found early career teachers who ‘match’ and ‘fit in’, school leaders invest in two retention strategies.
  - They modify early career teachers’ work arrangements to reduce their isolation, promote their involvement in collaborative teaching arrangements and reduce their workload by providing extra release time and shared curriculum resources.
  - Finally, they invest heavily in developing early career teachers’ professional competencies and commitment by encouraging their involvement in formal professional learning activities, publicly recognising and rewarding their contributions and providing opportunities for future leadership.

This chapter questions what leadership knowledge, skills and dispositions will be needed if the teacher labour market shifts from being in slight oversupply (as was the case in this study) to a situation in which demand outstrips supply (as is the case in many jurisdictions worldwide).

Eg

- Will the suite of leadership activities discussed here be sufficient to serve the needs of schools competing for staff in an era of teacher shortages?
- Will school leaders need a better understanding of what constitutes a strong and binding ‘psychological contract’ between teachers and their employers?
- Will early career teachers be more discerning and selective in their employment choices by favouring schools which value their expertise, care about their wellbeing and nurture their professional development?

5. Johnson, B., Sullivan, A., & Simons, M. (2019). Teacher retention: Some concluding thoughts. In A. Sullivan, B. Johnson, & M. Simons (Eds.), *Attracting and keeping the best teachers: Issues and opportunities* (pp. 211-220). Singapore: Springer Nature. Available [here](#).

#### Key messages

- Negative public discourses about the ‘quality’ of teachers needs to change.
- Understanding the nature, purpose and processes of teachers’ work is essential to successful school reform.
- Short-term ‘quick fixes’ are costly and seldom successful.
- Teacher research and inquiry needs to be part of organisational culture.

#### Summary

This chapter draws together the main ideas presented in preceding chapters about how to address the problem of early career teacher attrition. It organises authors’ viewpoints within several themes relating to the negative portrayal of early career teachers, how these pervasively damaging representations can be countered and what paradoxical challenges arise when unintended consequences flow from poorly conceived ‘solutions’ to the ‘problem’. The chapter concludes with a short discussion of the gaps in our knowledge as a reminder of the need for further research to promote early career teacher retention.



7. Reupert, A., Sullivan, A., Tippet, N., White, S., Woodcock, S., Chen, L., & Simons, M. (Conditionally Accepted). An exploration of the experiences of substitute teachers: A systematic review. *Review of Educational Research*. Available [on request](#).

**Key messages**

- Education systems need to consider professionalising substitute teachers further.
- Education systems can provide oversight to ensure all substitute teachers receive a quality induction, professional learning opportunities, and mentoring.
- Schools can ensure that they provide orientation and onboarding, and a collegial environment, with teachers having access to the resources they need.
- Initial teacher education should explicitly address the demands of this work and critically assess the capabilities that are needed to successfully fulfil the role of a substitute teacher.
- Systems need to develop policies and practices that improve casual teachers' work.

**Summary**

The world's first systematic review of literature on the experiences of substitute teachers, also known as casual or relief teachers. Casual teachers are an essential part of school improvement efforts, allowing release time for other teachers to participate in professional learning, complete administrative duties, and attend to personal matters. Although a ubiquitous component of the teaching workforce, little is known about their work conditions, motivations, experiences, and support.

This study found that, although substitute teachers are a heterogeneous group, their conditions and experiences are less than satisfactory, exacerbated by a lack of targeted support.

8. Sullivan, A., Down, B., & Johnson, B. (2022). Early Career Teachers' Work. In D. Mayer (Ed.), *International Encyclopaedia of Education* (4th ed.): Elsevier. Available [on request](#).

**Key messages**

- Greater policy attention must be placed on effective teacher induction strategies.
- International research is consistent about the conditions that need to be created to support teachers learning.

**Summary**

This chapter examines international research on early career teachers' work and how they can be supported. Most research into early career teacher induction focuses on teachers who are employed on long or ongoing contracts when, in many countries, many beginning teachers are employed on insecure, short-term, and tenuous contracts.

The nature of employment for early career teachers is changing. Part-time employment is increasing among teachers, and job security is becoming highly precarious. The casualization of teachers' work is particularly affecting early career teachers. The latest data in Australia shows that thirty percent of newly graduated teachers are employed on contracts of less than a year. Another thirty percent are casuals. To find permanent employment often takes several years.

This chapter consider the research on:

1. Aims of Induction Programs;
2. Common Strategies and Components Used in Induction Programs;
3. The Role of School Leaders in Induction Programs;
4. The Influence of School Culture on Induction Programs; and
5. Mentoring.

The components of “good” induction programs include:

- conducting a comprehensive initial orientation to the school
- planning a long-term induction program spanning 2–3 years
- providing instructional support
  - sharing curriculum and teaching materials
  - implementing mutual lesson observations
- establishing collaborative working arrangements
  - team teaching
  - co-planning curricula
  - forming network groups with peers (early career teachers and more experienced teachers or “mentors”)
- modifying work arrangements
  - reducing workload
  - providing extra release time
  - de-privatizing early career teachers’ work by creating physical spaces that promote and enable teachers to collaborate more
- promoting teacher agency
  - seeking teachers’ views about their induction needs
  - offering choices about induction activities
- monitoring performance
  - observing and providing feedback on classroom teaching
  - structuring regular “performance review” meetings
  - encouraging reflective practices.

The features of positive mentoring arrangements include:

- Mentor needs to be trained for the role.
- School culture needs to value and support collegiality and cooperation between staff.
- Mentors are given extra time to prepare and perform their mentoring role.
- Mentors and mentees meet during school time.
- Mentors and mentees collaboratively plan induction activities and scheduling.
- Both mentors and mentees have access to other supports in the school beyond the mentor relationship.

The evidence from years of research clearly shows that early career teachers flourish best when they are able to actively participate in shaping the schools in which they work, when their own knowledge and expertise is trusted. There needs to be a radical shift towards valuing early career teachers as actively producing knowledge, rather than merely delivering it.

This would involve reducing workloads, involving new teachers in curriculum planning, and engaging them in participatory, democratic decision-making. In short, encouraging a spirit of collective responsibility and ownership over their work, and working environment.

Early career teachers need a combination of autonomy and support, within their schools. They need a professional community that supports them to thoughtfully engage with the complexity of their work and its social context.

9. Johnson, B., Down, B., Le Cornu, R., Peters, J., Sullivan, A. M., Pearce, J., & Hunter, J. (2014). Promoting early career teacher resilience: A framework for understanding and acting. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 20(5), 530-546. Available [here](#).

#### Key messages

- Policy formation requires alternative ‘ways of seeing’ protracted educational problems.
- Building ECT resilience involves a multi-dimensional approach to address policies and practices, teachers’ work, school culture, relationships, and teacher identity.

#### Summary

In this paper, we undertake a brief review of the ‘conventional’ research into the problems of early career teachers to create a juxtaposed position from which to launch an alternative approach based on resilience theory. We outline four reasons why a new contextualised, social theory of resilience has the potential to open up the field of research into the professional lives of teachers and to produce new insights into the social, cultural and political dynamics at work within and beyond schools. We then move from these theoretical considerations to explain how we used them in a recent Australian research project that examined the experiences of 60 graduate teachers during their first year of teaching. This work led to the development of a Framework of Conditions Supporting Early Career Teacher Resilience (see below) which we outline, promote and advocate as the basis for action to better sustain our graduate teachers in their first few years of teaching. Finally, we reflect on the value of our work so far and outline our practical plans to ‘mobilise’ this knowledge in ways that will make it available to a variety of audiences concerned with the welfare of this group of teachers.

10. Johnson, B., Down, B., Le Cornu, R., Peters, J., Sullivan, A., Pearce, J., & Hunter, J. (2016). *Promoting early career teacher resilience: A socio-cultural and critical guide to action*. London: Routledge. Available [here](#).

#### Key messages

- Listening to teachers’ (and students’) voices is pivotal to reforming schools and teachers’ work.
- Teachers’ experiences should be central to policy processes related to school reform.

#### Summary

In *Promoting Early Career Teacher Resilience* the stories of 60 graduate teachers are documented as they grapple with some of the most persistent and protracted personal and professional struggles facing teachers today. Narratives emerge detailing feelings of frustration, disillusionment and even outrage as they struggle with the complexity, intensity and immediacy of life in schools. Other stories also surface to show exhilarating experiences, documenting the wonder, joy and excitement of working with young people for the first time.

This book makes sense of these experiences in ways that can assist education systems, schools, and faculties of teacher education, as well as early career teachers themselves to develop more powerful forms of critical teacher resilience. Expanding psychological explanations of teacher resilience, it endorses an alternative socio-cultural and critical approach to understanding teacher resilience. The book crosses physical borders and represents experiences of teachers in similar circumstances across the globe, providing researchers and teachers with real-life examples of resilience promoting policies and practices.

This book is not written as an account of the failures of an education system, but rather as a provocation to help generate ideas, policies and practices capable of illuminating the experiences of early career teachers in more critical and socially just ways at an international and national level.

11. Johnson, B., Down, B., Le Cornu, R., Peters, J., Sullivan, A. M., Pearce, J., & Hunter, J. (2015). *Early Career teachers: Stories of resilience*. Singapore: Springer. Available [here](#).

#### Key messages

- Educational reform must be attentive to the cultural, structural, pedagogical and relational elements of teachers' work and school life.
- Improving student engagement and learning requires cooperation and support from governments, education systems, schools, universities and communities: teachers cannot do it alone.

#### Summary

This book addresses one of the most persistent issues confronting governments, education systems and schools today: the attraction, preparation, and retention of early career teachers. It draws on the stories of sixty graduate teachers from Australia to identify the key barriers, interferences and obstacles to teacher resilience and what might be done about it. Based on these stories, five interrelated themes – policies and practices, school culture, teacher identity, teachers' work, and relationships – provide a framework for dialogue around what kinds of conditions need to be created and sustained in order to promote early career teacher resilience. The book provides a set of resources – stories, discussion, comments, reflective questions and insights from the literature – to promote conversations among stakeholders rather than providing yet another 'how to do' list for improving the daily lives of early career teachers. Teaching is a complex, fragile and uncertain profession. It operates in an environment of unprecedented educational reforms designed to control, manage and manipulate pedagogical judgements. Teacher resilience must take account of both the context and circumstances of individual schools (especially those in economically disadvantaged communities) and the diversity of backgrounds and talents of early career teachers themselves. The book acknowledges that the substantial level of change required – cultural, structural, pedagogical and relational – to improve early career teacher resilience demands a great deal of cooperation and support from governments, education systems, schools, universities and communities: teachers cannot do it alone. This book is written to generate conversations amongst early career teachers, teacher colleagues, school leaders, education administrators, academics and community leaders about the kinds of pedagogical and relational conditions required to promote early career teacher resilience and wellbeing.

12. Sullivan, A., Johnson, B., Simons, M., & Tippet, N. (2021). When performativity meets agency: how early career teachers struggle to reconcile competing agendas to become 'quality' teachers. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 388-403. Available [here](#).

**Key messages**

- Teaching is not easily quantifiable by traditional metrics especially in low SES school communities.
- Industrial approaches to measuring inputs and outputs has limitations in a highly complex work environment.
- School reform needs to be done with and for teachers as professional agents.

**Summary**

Early career teachers are increasingly required to be 'classroom ready' upon graduation and to demonstrate capabilities that match their more experienced colleagues. They are also joining a profession that is characterised by increased scrutiny and accountability driven by standards that seek to identify the hallmarks of good teaching. This agenda, constructed around a discourse of 'quality', has created dilemmas for early career teachers. However, little is known about how early career teachers navigate these pressures as they begin their careers. This article reports on a study that sought high-achieving graduate teachers' perceptions of teacher quality and how they assessed their own practices within a 'quality' framework. The study found that high-achieving early career teachers wrestle with their perceptions of what a 'good' teacher might be and do, and how this contrasts with official representations of a 'quality teacher', and that they frequently 'govern' themselves using the regulations and discourses related to 'the quality teacher'. We argue that broader conceptualisations of teacher quality are needed to enable early career teachers to develop as agentic professionals.

13. Sullivan, A., & Morrison, C. (2014). Enacting policy: the capacity of school leaders to support early career teachers through policy work. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 41(5), 603-620. Available [here](#).

**Key messages**

- Providing additional release-time is not a panacea for struggling early career teachers.
- Highly effective school leaders guided early career teachers to make the most of the extra release-time by negotiating and providing formal and informal professional learning.

**Summary**

Early career teachers often feel overwhelmed by the complex, intense and unpredictable nature of their work. Recently, policy initiatives have been introduced to provide new teachers with extra release-time from face-to-face classroom teaching duties to assist them in their transition to the workforce. This paper reports on a critical policy study that investigated the enactment of this policy initiative. A data set was created from a larger qualitative study which investigated early career teacher resilience. Drawing on a policy enactment theoretical 'toolbox', the findings indicate that school leaders can empower early career teachers to move beyond being 'receivers' of policy to assume a more active policy role. This paper argues that school leaders are very powerful in their capacity to enact policy to ensure strategic access to appropriate on-going learning opportunities to support early career teachers.

14. Johnson, B., & Down, B. (2013). Critically re-conceptualising early career teacher resilience. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34(5), 703-715. Available [here](#).

**Key messages**

- Fostering ECT resilience is pivotal to retaining quality teachers.
- Teaching requires a sense of optimism and human agency.
- Respect, trust and care are key values underpinning productive learning environments.
- Teaching is influenced by broader social, economic and political forces.
- Teaching and learning is highly contextual and therefore, relies on local knowledge, leadership and strategies.

**Summary**

In this paper, we describe how and why we adopted a socially critical orientation to early career teacher resilience. In re-conceptualising early career teacher resilience, we expose the normative components of resilience by revealing the implicit values, beliefs and assumptions that underpin most traditional conceptions of resilience. We argue against the hyper-individualisation of the concept because it leads to a diminution of the influence of situational and structural forces on early career teachers' experiences, and shifts primary responsibility for early career teacher well-being onto the individual. We lay the groundwork for a critical perspective on teacher resilience capable of illuminating the 'problems' of early career teachers within a broader social, cultural and political context. Our analysis is designed to promote further debate about new ways of seeing early career teacher resilience with the aim of creating and sustaining a spirit of optimism and human agency, as well as a sense of health and well-being among early career teachers.

15. Sullivan, A., & Johnson, B. (2012). Questionable practices? Relying on individual teacher resilience in remote schools. *The Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 22(3), 101-116. Available [here](#).

**Key messages**

- There are unique circumstances and challenges facing ECTs in rural and remote regions.
- Pre-service teacher education and education systems need resources to better prepare and support teachers in challenging contexts.
- Although many incentives are offered to attract teachers to remote areas, simply attracting teachers is insufficient; more needs to be done to support teachers to remain at such schools for as long as possible.

**Summary**

Early career teachers eager to find employment are often encouraged by employers to accept positions in remote locations which are traditionally difficult to staff. This paper reports research that examined a case study of a graduate teacher employed in a remote school. Drawing on resilience theory, we challenge the profession to consider whether in fact employers are relying on the personal resilience of early career teachers to cope with the rigors of teaching in remote schools and are remiss for not providing adequate support at school and system levels.



### Public engagement on early career teacher retention

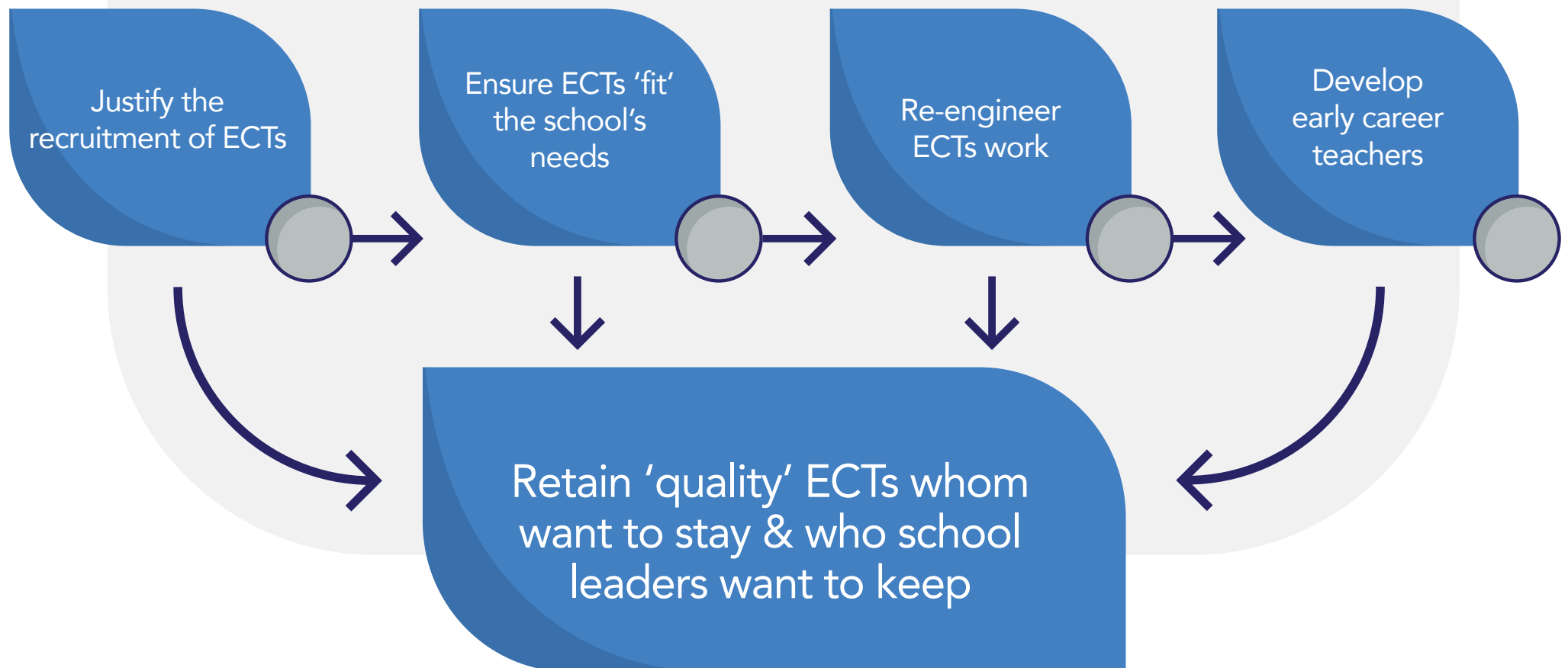
Sullivan, A., Reupert, A., Simons, M., Tippet, N., White, S. & Woodcock, S. (2 Sept 2021). A good induction is important for all new jobs. So why are teachers being left behind? *The Conversation*. Available [here](#).

Singhal, P. (10 Sept 2019). 'Impending crisis': 72 per cent of new teachers are in insecure roles, *Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, Brisbane Times, & WA Today*. Available [here](#).

Education Central, (9 Sept 2019). The global problem of teacher retention. *Education Central NZ*. Available [here](#).

Simons, M., Sullivan, A. & Johnson, B. (9 Sept 2019). Fewer casual positions and less out-of-hours work could help retain early career teachers. *The Conversation*. Available [here](#).

# A model of the attraction-recruitment-development-retention process



# A framework of school leadership practices that promote the retention of early career teachers

## **Justify the recruitment of early career teachers to enact the principal's vision for the school and the profession**

'Justify' refers to the fundamental arguments used by leaders to support the recruitment of ECTs who can contribute to the achievement of the goals of the school.

### **School leaders make strategic choices to achieve a preferred staff profile. They:**

- Analyse the complex and dynamic demands of their staffing profile
- Work actively to build the school's public profile, standing and identity through strategic appointments
- Ensure that both short term and future staffing needs are considered when forming a preferred staff profile
- Use human resource processes to recruit ECTs who meet desired standards

### **School leaders use power and authority to achieve their goals. They:**

- Delegate responsibility for the recruitment and development of ECTs
- Form coalitions and alliances which advocate for the recruitment of ECTs
- Maintain strategic oversight of the recruitment of ECTs
- Manage opposition and conflict caused by the appointment of ECTs

### **School leaders promote an agenda of continual development in teaching and learning. They:**

- Recognise the importance of school renewal and development through the appointment of ECTs as 'agents of change'
- Justify school development initiatives by linking them to improvements in teaching and learning
- Recognise that they have a responsibility to the profession to promote improvements in teaching and learning

## **Use workforce recruitment strategies to attract and employ quality early career teachers**

'Workforce recruitment strategies' refers to the ways leaders plan and implement actions to find and appoint new staff.

### **School leaders understand the market forces & policy drivers that frame ECT recruitment options. They:**

- Seize opportunities to recruit and retain ECTs as a staffing priority
- Target particular ECTs they want
- Manage the school's budget to fund responsive and flexible staffing appointments

### **School leaders know & manipulate central recruitment policies. They:**

- Create detailed recruitment plans and processes
- Negotiate staffing arrangements that manipulate established recruitment 'rules'
- Capitalise on changes to policies and enterprise agreements to appoint ECTs

### **School leaders position their schools as desirable workplaces. They:**

- Promote the school's image and reputation as a 'first choice' employer
- Create employment opportunities that specifically target ECTs
- Use pre-service teacher placements as a recruitment strategy
- Promote professional learning and career development opportunities for staff
- Provide attractive and responsive working conditions

### **School leaders know how to identify ECTs who 'fit' the school's needs. They:**

- Identify the knowledge, skills and dispositions of 'compatible' ECTs
- Implement extensive & rigorous recruitment processes to check if ECTs will 'fit-in'
- Select ECTs who can contribute to the enactment of the school's vision

## **Re-engineer early career teachers' work to promote success and commitment**

'Re-engineer' teachers' work refers to the ways leaders change traditional teaching structures, roles, and expectations to promote success and commitment.

### **School leaders define & manage teachers' work. They:**

- Allocate ECTs to multiple and variable teaching teams to promote broader collaboration
- Structure the timetable and work spaces to support teamwork and collaboration
- Reduce ECT's workloads and provide stability and familiarity in work from year to year

### **School leaders promote the de-privatisation of teachers' work. They:**

- Expect ECTs to share responsibility for students and their learning
- Create physical spaces that enable teachers to collaborate
- Open classrooms for reciprocal observation of teaching
- Expect teachers to use collaborative approaches to planning, curriculum and resource development, & the promotion of student welfare

### **School leaders shape ECTs' professional learning. They:**

- Position all teachers as learners
- Provide targeted professional learning programs for ECTs
- Encourage ECTs to initiate their own professional learning
- Allocate substantial resources to support professional learning
- Encourage ECTs to lead professional learning by valuing and using ECTs' expertise

## **Develop early career teachers so that they can contribute to the achievement of the school's goals**

'Develop' refers to the processes leaders use to ensure that ECTs' skills, knowledge and values become compatible with those wanted by the school.

### **School leaders emphasise the importance of 'context'. They:**

- Ensure that ECTs understand and are enabled to respond to the school's contextual circumstances
- Induct ECTs into the school's culture
- Make local school expectations explicit

### **School leaders formally and informally assess the quality of ECTs' performance. They:**

- Observe ECTs as they teach and provide specific feedback based on observations
- Expect ECTs to assess and reflect on their own performance
- Enlist other teachers to provide appraisals of ECTs' performance
- Solicit students' views about ECTs' skills, knowledge and dispositions

### **School leaders communicate the quality of ECTs' performance. They:**

- Publicly and privately affirm and reward ECTs' work that they consider to be of good quality
- Offer more secure forms of employment to ECTs who perform well
- Promote ECTs to leadership positions
- Assist ECTs to secure employment in other schools

# A Framework of Conditions Supporting Early Career Teacher (ECT) Resilience

## POLICIES & PRACTICES

Policies and practices refer to the officially mandated statements, guidelines, values and prescriptions that both enable and constrain ECT wellbeing. ECT resilience and wellbeing are enhanced when policies and practices show a strong commitment to social justice, teacher agency and voice, community engagement, and respect for local knowledge and practice.

**To enhance ECT resilience, it is important to:**

**Provide relevant, rigorous and responsive pre-service preparation for the profession**

- ▶ Foster stakeholders' collective ownership of preparation, induction and ongoing learning
- ▶ Provide diverse, rigorous and carefully planned pre-service professional experiences
- ▶ Ensure coherence between on-campus courses and the dynamic demands of the profession

**Create innovative partnerships and initiatives that assist smooth transitions to the workforce**

- ▶ Support professional development suitable to the school context
- ▶ Acknowledge the value of previous professional experiences and expertise
- ▶ Provide additional professional and financial resources for complex school settings

**Implement transparent, fair and responsive employment processes**

- ▶ Notify school appointments in a timely manner
- ▶ Provide opportunities for continuity of employment
- ▶ Ensure equitable access to support, resources and learning opportunities
- ▶ Provide professional development that equips school leaders to support ECTs

## TEACHERS' WORK

Teachers' work refers to the complex array of practices, knowledge, relationships and ethical considerations that comprise the role of the teacher. ECT resilience is promoted when the focus is on understanding the complex, intense and unpredictable nature of teachers' work rather than on individual deficits and blame.

**To enhance ECT resilience, it is important to:**

**Acknowledge the complex, intense and unpredictable nature of teachers' work**

- ▶ Attend to the physical, intellectual, relational and emotional dimensions of teachers' work
- ▶ Acknowledge that teachers' work is demanding and tiring
- ▶ Negotiate multiple and complex relationships in diverse settings

**Develop teachers' curriculum and pedagogical knowledge and strategies**

- ▶ Provide opportunities for collaborative planning, teaching, assessment and reporting
- ▶ Allocate space and structures for teachers' critical and reflective work
- ▶ Focus on student diversity, passions and interests
- ▶ Promote innovative and engaging curriculum practices

**Provide support to create engaging learning environments**

- ▶ Take collective ownership of students' wellbeing and behaviour
- ▶ Develop beliefs and practices that engage students and encourage constructive behaviours
- ▶ Create collaborative and democratic learning environments
- ▶ Make authentic connections between students' learning and their life-worlds

**Ensure access to appropriate ongoing support, resources and learning opportunities**

- ▶ Provide equitable and timely access to needs-based professional learning
- ▶ Support the development of pedagogical beliefs, values and practices
- ▶ Provide adequate release time from face-to-face teaching

## SCHOOL CULTURE

School culture refers to the values, beliefs, norms, assumptions, behaviours and relationships that characterise the daily rituals of school life. ECT resilience flourishes in schools that promote collaborative relationships, professional learning communities, educative forms of leadership and democratic decision-making.

**To enhance ECT resilience, it is important to:**

**Promote a sense of belonging and social connectedness**

- ▶ Practise affirmation
- ▶ Recognise and value diverse perspectives, practices and backgrounds
- ▶ Foster trust and goodwill
- ▶ Minimise isolation
- ▶ Take collective responsibility for teacher wellbeing and safety

**Develop educative, democratic and empowering processes**

- ▶ Promote distributive leadership
- ▶ Work through problems respectfully
- ▶ Include all school personnel regardless of employment status
- ▶ Establish a commitment to social justice

**Provide formal and informal transition/induction processes**

- ▶ Appoint mentors/coaches/buddies
- ▶ Provide ongoing induction
- ▶ Apply equitable processes regardless of length and nature of appointment
- ▶ Promote understanding and appreciation of the different roles in the school

**Develop a professional learning community**

- ▶ Promote opportunities for risk taking and innovation
- ▶ Provide environments and resources that optimise teaching and learning
- ▶ Provide opportunities for collaborative learning
- ▶ Take collective responsibility for student behaviour, learning and wellbeing

## RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships refers to the social and professional networks, human connections and belongingness experienced by ECTs. Schools that value relationships focus on the complex emotional needs of ECTs and encourage social exchanges that foster respect, trust, care and integrity. ECT resilience benefits significantly when these values are evident in policies and practice.

**To enhance ECT resilience, it is important to:**

**Promote a sense of belonging, acceptance and wellbeing**

- ▶ Foster relationships based on mutual trust, respect, care and integrity
- ▶ Help manage personal and professional challenges and conflicts
- ▶ Encourage involvement in professional and community networks
- ▶ Value support from family, friends and peers

**Place student-teacher relationships at the heart of the teaching-learning process**

- ▶ Develop positive and democratic relationships with students
- ▶ Involve parents/caregivers in their children's learning
- ▶ Enjoy interacting with students and celebrate their successes
- ▶ Develop learning communities where everyone encourages each other's learning
- ▶ Celebrate student innovation and success in and beyond the classroom

**Foster professional growth**

- ▶ Value the personal strengths and resources of teachers
- ▶ Give specific, constructive and timely feedback
- ▶ Give explicit affirmation and acknowledgement
- ▶ Support communication with parents/caregivers/community

**Promote collective ownership and responsibility for professional relationships**

- ▶ Cultivate a generosity of spirit
- ▶ Share responsibility for maintaining positive relationships
- ▶ Create time and spaces for dialogue and collaboration

## TEACHER IDENTITY

Teacher identity refers to the development of one's awareness and understanding of self as a teacher. Teacher resilience is enhanced when ECTs engage in processes of self-reflection and self-understanding that sustain their personal identity, while at the same time developing a robust teacher identity.

**To enhance ECT resilience, it is important to:**

**Understand the interplay between personal and professional identities**

- ▶ Recognise that personal and professional identities are interconnected
- ▶ Recognise that teachers' identities are produced in particular social and cultural contexts
- ▶ Understand the evolving nature of personal-professional identities
- ▶ Recognise that emotions are an integral part of identity development

**Engage in self-reflection**

- ▶ Accommodate new and different ways of thinking
- ▶ Challenge and develop beliefs, assumptions, values and practices
- ▶ Negotiate the contradictions and tensions of teaching
- ▶ Employ proactive coping strategies

**Foster a sense of agency, efficacy and self-worth**

- ▶ Commit to the ethical and moral purposes of teaching
- ▶ Develop a high level of social and emotional responsiveness
- ▶ Maintain hope and optimism
- ▶ Promote work-life balance and wellbeing
- ▶ Seek help and support

