



A response from the Independent Education Union of
Australia to the Australian Government Productivity
Commission:

***Productivity Commission Inquiry into the
Education & Training Workforce:
Schools***

Friday 19 August 2011

INTRODUCTION

1. The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) is the federally registered union that represents teachers and support staff in non-government education institutions including early childhood centres, schools and post secondary training institutions, across all the states and territories of Australia. The union currently has a membership of over 68,000.
2. The IEUA has always taken an active role in the various debates and government funded projects and forums concerned with issues relating to factors affecting the supply of school workers, the knowledge and skills base of the workforce and policy settings that impact on the operation and quality of work for staff employed in schools.
3. The IEUA submission will focus on a selected number of items but notes its interest in all elements of the Inquiry given the inter-linked nature of the elements but also noting the lack of current, reliable data in many instances.

OECD REPORT

4. The IEUA notes with interest the recent report of the OECD, *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, Australia* (August 2011), and in particular the quantitative data at Annex D.
5. The IEUA believes that consideration of the elements outlined for contribution by stakeholders to this Productivity Commission Inquiry must be reflective of the comparative indicators outlined in the OECD report.
6. In particular the IEUA notes the relative expenditure of school systems in Australia compared to OECD average and relative OECD ranking, as well as other indicators such as student to teacher ratios, teacher salaries and teacher access to professional development.
7. The IEUA notes that despite Australia's relative high ranking in both OECD measures of wealth and OECD measures of student attainment (see PISA 2009 results), Australia is poorly ranked and generally below OECD average in relation to the above-mentioned indicators (student to teacher ratios, teacher salaries and teacher access to professional development). Put simply, Australian schools achieve high student results with considerably less expenditure and fewer resources provided to the school workforce.

REMUNERATION AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

8. In relation to workforce remuneration the IEUA will make comments in relation to Australian Government policy settings with respect to teacher salaries and a general statement in relation to other school employees.

9. The IEUA notes the Australian Government's policy in relation to 'Rewarding Great Teachers' and the intersection of this policy setting with questions posed in the Inquiry Issues paper.
10. The IEUA believes that there are a number of key principles which should guide the development of any approach or scheme to identifying Great/Accomplished (or however-named) Teachers.
11. Teachers' base salaries must always be set at a professionally appropriate rate and not undermined by the adoption of a scheme for identifying and recognising Great/Accomplished Teachers. This principle is particularly salient in light of the revelations of the OECD report (August 2011) in relation to the relative salaries of experienced Australian teachers compared to other OECD countries.
12. Any scheme must be open to all; that is, no artificial cap or quota, encourage and not negatively impact on collaboration, and be not limited to subjects that are tested.
13. Any scheme must include teachers and their unions in its development.
14. The appraisal of accomplished teachers must be on the basis of agreed criteria, and that the appraisal must be conducted fairly and impartially by trained personnel.
15. Finally, the IEUA notes that international research reveals that quotas undermine the collaborative approach which characterises teachers' work. Teachers find themselves competing with colleagues which can lead to an unproductive work environment and adversarial relationships among staff. Therefore any notion of arbitrary quotas should be rejected.
16. In relation to other than teachers employed in schools, there are striking pay inequities compared to professionals undertaking similar work in other industries. This is often reflective of the employment (payment) of school staff only for school terms and can therefore impact on 'published' annual salaries by over 20%.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

17. The IEUA believes that one of the key factors in ensuring the quality of education provision is the maintenance of a highly skilled teaching force.
18. Teachers are constantly engaged in a wide variety of professional learning activities, including professional reading, collegial discussion and team work, professional reflection on students' learning, assessment and reporting, conference participation, staff presentations, in service seminars, action research projects, and formal university studies.
19. The IEUA believes that in service training and quality professional learning are the cornerstones of innovation in any organisation. Schools, as organisations, must place significant budgetary and policy importance on the provision of high quality training and professional learning.
20. The IEUA believes that high quality professional learning is essential in order to:
 - Ensure that teachers can respond professionally to economic, social, cultural, technological and scientific change through the learning of personal and intellectual qualities;

- Respond to the demand for increased quality of educational outcomes by improving teachers' classroom capabilities, knowledge base and professional judgements;
 - Support teachers in meeting their responsibilities for learning in schools through their own pursuit of learning and excellence;
 - Provide enabling conditions for teachers, employing authorities and other agencies to initiate creative approaches to emerging educational issues;
 - Recognise the professional status of teachers and the consequent career long nature of the professional learning process;
 - Sustain the motivation, commitment and enthusiasm of teachers and to enhance their self-esteem and sense of control over their professional lives by providing opportunities for teachers to reflect on, analyse and improve their own performance; and
 - Allow teachers to develop new competencies and skills as they move from classroom positions to administrative or specialist positions, or to new environments.
21. Quality professional learning activities should be guided by best practice elements of effective adult learning, including:
- Participation is voluntary;
 - Builds on individual's skills and experiences;
 - Encourages "learner collaboration";
 - Recognises the interdependence of individuals and their institutional settings;
 - Addresses "social" as well as "material" realities;
 - Includes adequate follow-up and support to participants at the end of the course;
 - Allows participants to proceed at their own pace;
 - Includes people in leadership positions;
 - Mentoring or a "buddy system".
22. Quality professional learning should be viewed as significant and integral part of the school yearly plan and as such professional learning opportunities should be:
- Relevant to the specific needs of the individual teacher, as well as the needs of the school or system;
 - Delivered in a variety of models including individual skill and knowledge development, teacher research, school focus activities, school cluster activities;
 - Accessible to all teachers should be through equitable and transparent processes;
 - Accessible to teachers in regional and remote regions with support provided for accommodation, childcare and expenses incurred;
 - Made available during ordinary hours of work.
23. Teachers in regional and rural locations must have access to quality professional learning opportunities, which, as far as possible, should be delivered in their geographical area. The school

employing authority must provide a suitable replacement teacher and time for the teacher to travel, if necessary, for professional learning purposes, as well as fund accommodation, child care and out of pocket expenses on a reasonable basis.

24. Similarly, teachers working in part time and job share positions must have access to quality professional learning opportunities which as far as possible should be delivered in their working hours or upon agreement as paid time.

JOB DESIGN AND INNOVATION

25. The IEUA fundamentally challenges the statement, and subsequent assumptions, in the Inquiry Issues paper that states: “In many workforce environments, such forces would have precipitated significant changes in job design. Yet the role of teachers, and their interaction with other teachers and school workers, does not appear to have changed greatly”.
26. It is not accurate to say that the role of teachers and the interactions between staff are greatly unchanged from 20 or even 10 years ago. In many schools, one teacher in front of thirty seated children is no longer the typical scene.
27. All staff in schools, from principal to teacher, teacher-aides, and administrative staff report that work in schools has intensified over the last decade or so, and that the intensification only seems to compound.
28. Increased compliance and accountability have contributed, as well as computer technology and the shifting of much work to the school level (for example online data input – curriculum and management related, document printing, OHS and other legal compliance, teacher accreditation).
29. A trend to individualised student learning, planning and programming for student differentiation, and analysing assessment for further learning has increased time demands and workload aside from direct classroom teaching.
30. In the classroom, the integration of students with disability and changes in students behaviour (less impressed by authority) increase workload through requirements to consult, design and implement individual education learning plans and behaviour management plans often for multiple students within each class.
31. Teaching today is not such an individual pursuit but rather a team effort, and this is increasingly true. Classroom teachers, along with specialist teachers and teacher’s aides together make classrooms work. Providing trained staff in all of the roles would increase productivity.
32. Teachers are well qualified, but ongoing skill development must be a priority, and must address new and real areas of need – of effective ways to work together.
33. Teacher aides are essential and appreciated, but teachers often say that they are not trained in staff management, and therefore are not using teacher-aide time as effectively as they would like. Training courses should include both teacher and teacher-aides concurrently to build effective

understandings and team building.

34. In non government schools there has been a trend to employ business managers to assist the principal with office and site management, leaving the principal with more time to provide educational leadership, the essential element to successfully achieve the main purpose of the enterprise – and the reason why the leader must have an education background.
35. Schools need other paraprofessional staff to assist teachers organisationally, for example with tasks such as research and preparation of materials, technical support, management of assessment records and the paperwork of registration and accreditation. In the main, such support is either absent or inadequate in schools today, which is a contributor to work intensification.
36. Serious attention must be given to the provision and development of trained paraprofessionals that would give teachers the chance to concentrate on teaching rather than administration.
37. The extent to which the national accreditation and registration requirements recognise changing professional demands for school workers is indicated though the main impediment to beneficial adjustments being chronic under funding and the ensuing competition in schools over insufficient resources.
38. The IEUA believes that it is too early to comment on the effects of national processes at this time.
39. In relation to the recognition of issues such as extracurricular activities, interaction with parents and the community, or to assisting students with the transition to further education or employment the IEUA notes that teachers on the whole are willing providers of extra curricula activities and are cooperative in maintaining positive relationships with parents and community.
40. The IEUA believes that there are two-way benefits from extra curricula that most teachers understand. First the additional learning experiences for the student, and second the rapport that can develop between student and teacher, which can pay off in behaviour management in the traditional classroom. These are the reasons why teachers continue to volunteer their efforts.
41. However while seeing the benefits, teachers in non-government schools (many of whom spend hours during the week and significant time on Saturdays during term managing student's activities) believe they are insufficiently recognised and rewarded for their time and dedication.
42. With respect to class sizes the IEUA notes that research findings vary regarding optimal class sizes and learning outcomes.
43. Nevertheless it is reasonable to say that classes should not generally exceed a certain number of students, and should be smaller towards the earlier years of schooling, but the optimal class size really depends on several factors: student profile, subject content, and physical environment.
44. A common complaint from teachers is that in a cross-the-board system of staff-student ratio, the actual profile of the class and the individual needs of the students that make up the particular class, are not taken into account. Teachers report that when an additional staffing need is identified (for a student behavioural, physical, or learning need) 'lack of resources' is the most common reason given for the systemic failure to respond.

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING AND INDUCTION

45. Much has been spoken about improving the quality of the teaching workforce and attracting the best and brightest to the profession.
46. As long as there is a perception in the community that teaching is not as rewarding a career as those in the medical, legal and business disciplines and that working conditions are not attractive either, it will not be possible to attract the “best and brightest” to the profession in the numbers that are required. Especially in fields demanding skills in mathematics, science and in some of the more technical areas where wages and working conditions are more attractive in non-teaching roles.
47. This will be particularly so for primary and lower secondary teachers where a high level of content knowledge as well as skill as a teacher is essential.
48. The bottom line is the bottom line: make the profession financially rewarding, make the hours worked commensurate to the wages received and provide a career structure that enables a greater number in the profession to achieve higher salary levels.
49. One of the key areas that needs to be addressed is the number of entrants into education courses – in many cases the numbers far exceed the need, especially in specific fields. However, the effect of this is to stretch too thinly the resources of the universities to meet the needs of their students, especially in the area of the practicum. There needs to be specific funding for universities that is embargoed for the use of practicum placements; this should be a realistic amount to cover the cost of paying for the release time for a supervising teacher to work with the student during the practicum and to pay the teacher appropriately for their services in educating the students for the universities.
50. Finding practicum placements for thousands of education students who will never enter the profession is wasteful of supervising teachers’ time and the resources of universities.
51. Quality practicum experience is necessary for education students and to facilitate this appropriate resourcing must be provided. Time for suitably qualified and skilled supervising teachers to spend with student teachers to mentor them is essential – this is probably more important than improving the remuneration they receive for undertaking this task. However, the remuneration has not been increased for years and years (in Queensland at least) and is frankly not worth the effort that is necessary to put into the task of caring for a student teacher.
52. The issue of time to mentor beginning teachers is also a critical point in the retention of teachers past the first five years of their employment as teachers.
53. A system of induction into the profession is necessary (at least in the first year of teaching and should probably extend into the second and have scope for follow up into the third year) and again this must be appropriately funded. It has been recommended in Queensland that a beginning teacher should not have more than 0.8 of a full time workload and that they should be supported

by a trained mentor. Presumably this mentor would have some release time to engage in the process of mentoring; eg, observing lessons, and working with the teacher to resolve problems or work through issues identified by the beginning teacher.

54. Clearly this is a role that could fall under the scope of the exemplary teacher or lead teacher in the National Standards for Teachers. It should be appropriately remunerated but the key element is for adequate funding for time release to actually undertake the mentoring.

Chris Watt

Federal Secretary IEUA

19 August 2011