

**A SUBMISSION TO THE STUDY BY THE PRODUCTIVITY
COMMISSION INTO**

THE SCHOOLS WORKFORCE

FROM



**THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF
VICTORIA**

August 2011

1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government - pursuant to a request from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) - has asked the Productivity Commission to advise on various aspects of the education and training workforce. This study explores the workforce for Australia's schools, encompassing principals, teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff, administrative staff, relevant health professionals and maintenance and canteen staff.

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Productivity Commission's study. The CECV speaks on behalf of the Victorian Catholic schools sector which comprises 95 secondary schools and 385 primary schools as well as 8 special schools, supported by the Catholic Education Offices of the four Dioceses: Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale. These schools educate over 194,000 students within Victoria and employ about 15,600 teachers (about 13,000 FTE) and 6,100 other staff (about 4,200 FTE).

As the CECV is interested in aiming for the highest quality learning experiences and outcomes for all students in its schools, and as these in turn depend fundamentally on the quality of teaching, the Commission clearly has a direct interest in the schools workforce. The Commission is committed to supporting the highest possible quality of teaching in Victorian Catholic schools. The CECV, the individual diocesan Catholic Education Offices and the various religious institutes work in partnership with schools, research organisations and universities on professional preparation, learning, accreditation and induction of leaders and teachers.

Catholic educational philosophy declares that the Catholic school is a key part of the Church and an essential element in the Church's mission. This view advocates an education that combines sound knowledge and skills with an overall personal development rooted in Christian values. The core mission of the Catholic school is seen as a synthesis of culture and faith, and of faith and life.

The primary focus of Catholic education is the physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, cultural, social and spiritual formation of the student as well as an essential concern for the faith development of children and adolescents in the tradition of the Catholic Church. Catholic schools seek to help prepare young people for their future lives as individual persons, citizens, parents, workers, learners and members of the Church.

Staff in Catholic schools are called to share in the mission of the Church. This call, or vocation, is integral to the ministry of service in which all staff in a Catholic school participate. It is the vocation of all those who share in the ministry of the Catholic school to be concerned with the formation of the whole person.

Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of (humankind's) most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the

very spirits of human beings. The personal relations between the teachers and the students, therefore, assume an enormous importance and are not limited simply to giving and taking....it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium. n.19

Generally speaking, the issues paper has identified most of the relevant issues about the working workforce clearly, succinctly and accurately, but some of them are treated somewhat simplistically. This submission will in the main respond to many of the questions raised by the issues paper, and will follow its structure. The submission, like the issues paper, focuses its comments mainly on teachers, principals and other school leaders.

2. ABOUT THE SECTOR

The schools workforce

2.1 *What other features of the current schools workforce and its changing context are important from a policy perspective?*

The issues paper provides a useful summary of some key characteristics of the school teaching workforce. The ageing of the teaching workforce has been repeatedly observed in recent years, with data indicating that the average age of teachers is about 49, and that many teachers are in their 40s and 50s and have been teaching 20 to 30 years.

Clearly there is a pressing need to replenish and balance the teaching force with talented younger people. One major issue that needs more attention is that of retention of younger teachers who are leaving the profession. There appears to be a trend that a significant proportion leave the profession within five years of entry, possibly because of the challenges of classroom and student behaviour management.

While demographic changes and strong competition for labour affect all sectors of the workforce, governments and employers cannot leave the quality of the schools workforce to the vagaries of the labour market. A high quality, dynamic schools workforce provides multiplier benefits for all society. Coordination and intervention are essential.

The profession is predominantly female, especially in the primary years. Data collected by the CECV show that females comprise about 84% of Victorian Catholic school primary teachers and 59% of secondary teachers. It would appear that the imbalance in primary schools is increasing.

The issues paper fails to consider teaching conditions. The demands and complexity of teaching continue to increase in a dynamic, rapidly changing environment characterised by exponentially growing knowledge driven by increasingly accessible technology, by uncertain social structures and conflicting values. The effects of the following contextual issues and developments must be considered in analysing patterns of teachers' work organisation:

- Higher retention rates mean a greater diversity of students remain to senior levels. Teachers face a greater diversity of student needs, learning styles, family backgrounds, cultural backgrounds and emotional and psychological states. Hence a greater diversity of curriculum and teaching approaches is required. Schools and teachers have responded to these needs with more diverse curriculum, teaching methods, assessment methods and expanded student well-being programs. The continuing pressure to prepare for higher education mean that teachers must continue to attend to traditional academic pathways.
- Schools are asked to deal with an increasing range of social problems, resulting in broader curriculum demands, such as drug and alcohol education, traffic and driver education, citizenship education, health education and so on. While many of these have been absorbed into

traditional curriculum areas, the school curriculum is becoming more overcrowded than ever. Other social problems and breakdowns in social structures have pronounced impact upon the work of teachers, who face intense demands for pastoral care, conflict resolution and counselling.

- Principals and teachers can be being drawn into a legal vortex on many sensitive issues such as emotional, sexual and physical harassment. The prevalence of online social networking and its potential for bullying marks a further blurring of lines between home and school.
- Teachers must respond to a steady stream of changes to curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment policies and practices.
- Demands created by rapid developments in information and communication technology are daunting for many teachers. The ongoing requirements for equipment, training, professional development, curriculum development and planning absorb a large amount of schools' and systems' resources.
- Constant curriculum and pedagogical changes demand a much greater degree of collaboration, which means more time is absorbed for meetings and planning. On the other hand, networking and partnerships between teachers, schools, other education and training institutions and employers often results in greater job satisfaction and an increased sense of professionalism.

The National Professional Standards for Teachers released by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), as well as the Victorian Institute of Teaching's Standards of Professional Practice, are useful descriptions of the elements of practice which define teachers' professional work. In summary, the following areas are central to teachers' work:

- Knowledge of their students: their learning strengths and weaknesses; their social, cultural, and religious backgrounds;
- Understanding and respect for their students as individuals, and meeting their different learning needs and social needs;
- Ability to build rapport and communicate effectively with students, parents, colleagues and the school community;
- Sound, critical understanding of the content, processes and skills of relevant learning areas;
- Knowledge of curriculum statements, policies, materials and programs;
- Establishing and maintaining clear and consistent expectations for students' learning and behaviour;
- Use and management of a range of teaching and learning strategies, technologies, activities and resources to provide meaningful, engaging and challenging learning opportunities for all their students;

- Monitoring, assessment and reporting on student learning progress using valid assessment and evaluation strategies ;
- Organisation and administrative skills: managing materials, resources and physical learning environment;
- Working in partnership with other professionals, parents/guardians and members of the broader community;
- Continuous professional learning, applying knowledge and research about teaching and learning to support their practice.

The Productivity Commission should also take into account the significant unpaid voluntary work undertaken by teachers outside of their normal working hours, through professional teaching networks and associations. These function to support the profession and schools more generally.

3. WHY IS THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SCHOOLS WORKFORCE IMPORTANT?

Student outcomes

3.1 *What does the available evidence indicate about Australia's education outcomes? How policy relevant are comparisons of literacy and numeracy over time and across countries?*

Any consideration of the question of the performance of the schools' workforce clearly must consider the question of what the nation expects schools to do, i.e. the purposes of school education and the expectations of schooling in meeting the future needs of Australia and its citizens. A useful way of approaching this question is to use the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) as the best available nationally agreed statement of what schooling is meant to achieve, and to relate that to the performance of the schools workforce.

While the issues paper draws out two major aims of schooling (development of human capital to increase productivity and the building of social coherence) it makes no mention of the important personal benefits of education, the development of human meaning and understanding that helps individuals make sense of their roles as workers and social beings. These elements feature strongly in the Educational Goals.

Schools serve many important functions and are concerned with a wide range of outcomes. The community has high expectations of education as the means by which young people are prepared as workers and community members. Beyond this, parents expect that teachers take on responsibility for custody and care of their children. Some children in difficult family circumstances may rely heavily upon their school for guidance, and some individual teachers may be among the most significant adults in their lives.

The CECV believes that the Productivity Commission's study should give appropriate recognition of teachers' strong, positive contribution to Australian society, of the demands and complexity of modern teaching, and of the social and economic importance of teaching.

3.2 *Which avenues for reform are most promising for reducing educational disadvantage and improving education outcomes more generally? How important are workforce-related changes relative to other initiatives directed at enhancing children's learning potential?*

The CECV shares the concerns of governments about under-achievement by a significant minority of students across the spectrum, and notes that under-achievement has a high correlation with various types of disadvantage. Educational reforms to deal with this must be based on coherent integrated strategies around teacher capacity, leadership capacity and systemically planned allocation of resources.

Latest PISA data (Thompson et al 2011) shows that, in the majority of OECD countries, the effect of the school's economic, social and cultural status on students' performance far outweighs the effects of the individual student's socio-economic background. Regardless of their own socio-economic background, students attending schools with a socio-economically advantaged intake tend to perform better than those attending schools with more disadvantaged peers.

PISA 2009 results also showed that Australian education outcomes to be more variable than the OECD average, The range of reading literacy scores between the performances of the highest- and lowest-achieving students was wider for Australian students than the OECD average. (PISA in Brief – Highlights from the full Australian Report p. 3). In general

the 'strength' of the relationship between socioeconomic background and performance, i.e. the amount of variance in reading literacy scores explained by students' socioeconomic background ... is similar for Australia to the OECD, such that we are classified as an average equity country.

The slope of the socioeconomic gradient is steeper than on average across the OECD, meaning that in Australia the effect of socioeconomic background on performance is greater

Workforce issues

- 3.3** *What are the strengths and weaknesses of current workforce arrangements? What are the priority areas for policy attention?*
- 3.4** *Are major changes required to address shortcomings, or would gains be better achieved through fine-tuning of existing policy settings?*

The Issues Paper outlines some of the key features of teaching workforce arrangements but places much emphasis on shortcomings with scant acknowledgement of the strengths and achievements of the teaching workforce in meeting the demands outlined earlier. There is no doubt that reforms are required, but any reforms, whether incremental or radical, should not undermine the healthy and positive attributes of teachers and leaders in schools. In particular, the profession itself must be directly involved in designing appropriate reforms rather than have governments impose them. It is important also that innovative approaches to teaching and learning arrangements, to remuneration, to teacher education, are given credible trialling before wider implementation. Lasting change takes time, often longer than that envisaged by political cycles.

4. RECENT POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.1 *Do the reforms, in train or in prospect, address the right issue?*
- 4.2 *What reform areas should be afforded the highest priorities?*
- 4.3 *Are there any significant gaps in the reform agenda or reforms that are unlikely to be particularly beneficial?*
- 4.4 *Are the implantation/evaluation/review arrangements likely to be effective?*
- 4.5 *In the context of the current reform initiatives outlined above, where can the commission's study into the schools workforce best add value?*

This study is timely given the significant recent and current policy activity, both nationally and within States, in a range of areas such as the quality of teaching and learning, professional standards, teacher registration, teacher education and educational leadership.

Current reform areas include National Education Agreements, National Partnerships, the establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), development of Australian curriculum and development of national teaching and leadership standards.

The CECV supports the consistent application of newly published national teacher professional standards from 2013, allowing mutual recognition of teaching standards amongst education authorities. The articulation of teacher standards provides a reference point for teacher education, registration, professional learning and appraisal and career structure and remuneration.

Current work funded through National Partnerships is enabling improvement in equity of achievement. Education authorities have begun to address some of these issues and are trialling, evaluating and improving reform initiatives.

It is, however, too soon to assess the value of these reforms. We are in a period of transition where strategies to improve the quality of teaching are in place but the evidence of the full impact of those strategies are some years off.

In any case, policy initiatives which rely entirely on nationally prescribed standards and modes of school operation are unlikely of themselves to lead to improvement in student outcomes. Building the capacity of teachers and school leaders at the local level is a dominant factor for successful reform.

5. FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN SCHOOLS WORKFORCE OUTCOMES

Balancing supply and demand

- 5.1** *What are the key factors, whether across the board or specific to particular areas, that may contribute to current or future workforce shortages? Are all of these factors amenable to policy action?*
- 5.2** *What is contributing to the ongoing surplus of workers (who have teaching qualifications) in some disciplines and locations? Are such surpluses a cause for concern?*
- 5.3** *Are there weaknesses in specific recruitment and/or retention strategies that could be exacerbating imbalances in supply and demand? Are there any underlying problems in workforce planning strategies?*
- 5.4** *What lessons, if any, can be learned from other sectors of the economy in dealing with staffing challenges in the school sector?*

While the issues paper states that there appears to be balance or even surplus in some areas, where requirements are more specific there are supply problems. The fact that teachers may often be teaching outside their areas of expertise masks areas of shortage. There are teachers taking subjects outside of their areas of qualification. Many Victorian Catholic schools experience difficulty in finding teachers for particular subjects (e.g. Information Technology, Science, Mathematics, Physical Education) or particular geographical locations. For example in rural areas there is a shortage of teachers of languages other than English. It is sometimes a challenge to attract qualified mathematics and science teachers to certain areas. There is also a shortage of replacement teachers. Pay incentives such as rent subsidies can help attract teachers to work in country areas.

Teachers working in rural schools and living nearby often have few employment options and so may have little incentive to undertake professional learning.

While data on teacher supply and demand is collected and shared between sectors, there needs to be more consistent collection and availability of this data to assist authorities and schools in planning workforce requirements.

Job Design and innovation

- 5.5** *Are the roles of and relationships between different school workers appropriate to meet current and emerging needs? In what ways might changes in job design be useful?*
- 5.6** *Are there regulatory, institutional or cultural impediments to beneficial adjustments in job design and staffing mixes? To what extent do the national accreditation and registration requirements recognise changing professional demands for school workers?*
- 5.7** *Does the current design of teaching roles give sufficient recognition to issues such as extra-curricular activities, interaction with parents and the community, or to assisting students with the transition to further education or employment?*
- 5.8** *Would further decreases in student- teacher ratios significantly improve student outcomes? How should empirical research on the cost- effectiveness*

of class size reductions as a means to improve student outcomes be interpreted?

5.9 *Is there appropriate sharing of Australian and international experiences regarding changes to the role and mix of teachers, leaders, para-professionals, and other school workers?*

At the heart of discussions about the nature of teachers' work is the tension between professional and employee status. Consideration of teacher professional standards inevitably invites consideration of matters of teachers' working environments, career structures and remuneration.

Compared with most professions, teaching offers modest financial rewards and a flat career path. There are relatively few senior positions available for long-serving or high-quality teachers, and most of these positions involve less actual teaching. With few career opportunities or incentives to develop further in their teaching practice, many experienced teachers need renewal and challenge. There is a need for more varied senior school-based positions, possibly across a number of schools or regions, e.g. in curriculum development, technical support, course planning, strategic planning, research, guest or specialist teaching, etc. Some structural and industrial issues need to be resolved to allow some of these developments.

With a growing proportion of teachers, especially in early career, employed on fixed term contracts to enable flexibility within schools, there is a degree of instability in teachers' work with ramifications for teacher retention and morale.

On the other hand, flexibility in the schools workforce is constrained by various enterprise bargaining agreements and formulaic funding and staffing. There needs to be a shift to a more professional engagement rather than an industrial or employee engagement. A greater level of school-based global budgeting will create another level of flexibility for schools in staffing.

There needs to be more serious investigation of innovative and flexible job profiles for teachers. A highly qualified and high performing teacher force could be ably supported by teacher assistants, who could relieve teachers of the more peripheral administrative tasks to allow them to concentrate on their core business. While these proposals should be explored and trialled, there remain questions about what work of teachers could realistically be transferred, and whether the amount of work so transferred would have a significant impact upon teachers' workloads.

Within primary schools the increasing breadth and demands of the curriculum have made it next to impossible for one teacher to deliver effectively the entire program to a class, leading to more and more specialist teachers working in primary schools in areas such as art, music, health and physical education and languages. Many primary schools have adopted more flexible staffing and timetabling arrangements, not only to accommodate specialist teaching, but also to allow teams of teachers to plan and deliver programs collaboratively.

Teachers' roles and their interaction with other teachers and school workers have changed. There is strong anecdotal evidence of a move away from a

constant one teacher one class scenario. Strict one teacher/one class delivery may be less efficient and less effective than flexible team teaching arrangements to support personalised learning, individual learning and curriculum differentiation. It is important to understand that teachers working collaboratively in teams is critical to any efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The facilities made available through the Building the Education Revolution (BER) has given opportunities for professional learning teams to use varied contemporary learning approaches. Catholic schools such as Bethany Parish Primary School provide evidence of such approaches.

Opportunities for more flexible school day and school year arrangements could be explored to allow different and possibly more efficient modes of working for school staff. For example, in some environments different teams of educators and support staff could work on overlapping am and pm shifts serving the needs of student groups attending school at different times of the day.

Training and professional development

- 5.10** *What are the advantages and disadvantages of the traditional Diploma and Bachelor of education entry pathway? Do postgraduate studies in education contribute significantly to teacher quality?*
- 5.11** *How effectively do pre-service teaching courses (and the national accreditation standards for such courses) meet the current and prospective needs of the education system and teachers? Do course place sufficient emphasis on practicum?*
- 5.12** *To what extent are employment-based pathways a complement to standard teaching courses? Are such pathways likely to be of a niche nature, or might they have wider applicability in the future?*
- 5.13** *Is sufficient attention paid to professional development — not only for classroom teachers, but also principals and other school workers? What specific changes, beyond those already in prospect, would be appropriate?*
- 5.14** *Are adequate resources available to mentor new teachers? Is there a need for formalised system-wide mentoring structures, or should the processes for inducting new teachers be left to each school?*
- 5.15** *What role do pre-service training providers play in directing aspiring teachers into areas of teacher shortage?*
- 5.16** *At what point (or points) in time should the quality of aspiring teachers be assessed: before pre-service training, before practicum, before entering the workforce as new teachers, or elsewhere in the training and development cycle? What scope is there to increase standards for entering courses, placements or the profession without exacerbating current or future shortages?*

Concerns with the quality, consistency and relevance of some pre-service education remain, despite several innovative programmes and additions and adjustments to address these concerns. The most prevalent concern amongst graduates and principals is the perennial issue of insufficient time spent by student teachers in school practice. There is a continuing view that a more extended practicum experience is essential to:

- Develop adequate understanding and appreciation of how schools actually operate;

- Develop adequate classroom management skills;
- Develop good planning skills;
- Provide exposure to dealing with parents;
- Provide exposure to a wide range of students particularly those with special learning needs;
- Provide exposure to the administration, interpretation and use of standardised tests and the results derived from them;
- Develop practical understanding of issues surrounding assessment and reporting;
- Develop practical understandings of the application of ICTs in curriculum and pedagogy;
- Build awareness of what schools are offering in their programs.

There is some evidence that some undergraduate teachers have insufficient information and communications technology (ICT) skills to meet modern pedagogical requirements. Teacher education courses need to give stronger emphasis in on the use of ICT in best practice teaching and learning to facilitate curriculum differentiation and personalised learning.

A variety of models of teacher education now operate. The issues paper does not differentiate the Graduate Diploma and Bachelor of Education models, but the differences need to be acknowledged, along with the advantages and disadvantages of each. Another approach is the University of Melbourne Master of Teaching, a two-year postgraduate qualification with a large proportion of time devoted to the practicum under the guidance of a mentor. Early evidence suggests that this model is effective in preparation of teachers, with most graduates believing they are well prepared for the classroom (see www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/mteach/).

Some models of teacher preparation involve placement of teachers in schools part time throughout the school year. Kilbreda College in Mentone hosts such a model. Two pilot teacher education initiatives under the Smarter Schools National Partnerships programs are in their second year of implementation with the research component just beginning. One pilot links a student to a school for two days a week through the course. It is not a supervised practicum but a tagged learning experience in a school community, linking the student to classroom and teacher teams. The model is seen as a three way partnership between the university, the school and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV). Early surveys of graduate teachers show that in general the graduates feel they are quite prepared for classroom teaching. The advantage of this approach is that students learn more readily about school culture and dynamics, and have an experience closer to the reality of full-time teaching.

Universities maintain that it is increasingly difficult to place student teachers in schools for practicums. Support and mentoring for training teachers should be an expectation of teachers credited with the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher professional standards. Models of professional support include mentoring, shadowing, peer coaching and peer support. Some schools specialise in supporting training teachers (in a similar way to a training hospital)

and these need support with funds going direct to the school. This approach could readily be extended if properly supported.

Governments are trialling other means of attracting high-calibre trainees to the profession (such as Teach for Australia). The effectiveness of such schemes need to be properly evaluated but other approaches need to be explored by teachers themselves, teacher educators and education authorities.

In the main, pre-service teaching courses pay insufficient attention to the significant role of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) in secondary education. On Track data (from Victorian post school destination surveys) indicates more students take on a non-university pathway after school. With an increased proportion of students choosing VET courses, several questions need to be considered:

- Are undergraduate teachers being informed and prepared to assist with the diverse education and training options available to students in secondary school?
- What opportunities do undergraduate teachers have to become aware of the qualifications and experience needed to deliver VET programs in schools?
- Is it appropriate to offer VET/VCAL related coursework as a recognised method as part of a pre-service teaching course?

There need to be more explicit links between undergraduate courses and induction and professional learning programs provided in the first years of teaching. This could be developed with stronger links between universities, employing authorities, schools and professional standard bodies such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

The Victorian Institute of Teaching's mentoring programs and mechanisms to move from provisional to full registration are an important step. There should be exploration of the possibility that universities accredit teachers to take a much higher profile in the supervision and the development of student teachers and they continue to work closely as much with those teachers as with the students themselves.

Supporting graduates through effective induction is the responsibility of the profession itself, of schools and of systems. The Catholic Education Office Melbourne offers support for school-based induction of beginning teachers, but induction varies in effectiveness between schools. Induction processes need to be better developed, more comprehensive and more closely linked to pre-service programs.

In recent years in Victoria the term professional development has been supplanted by the term professional learning. This represents more accurately the notion that it is the teacher's or leader's own professional responsibility to engage in development of professional knowledge and skills, rather than having it done to him or her. Professional learning is crucial in providing opportunities to

improve practice, and should be designed and delivered in light of the extensive literature on the characteristics of effective professional learning, such as peer learning, working in teams, having opportunities to share, trial and reflect on experiences, and so on. Some examples of effective professional learning associated with the Victorian Catholic sector follow.

A useful approach to teacher development in the workforce is the application of the Performance and Development Culture model, where the professional learning plan is aligned with school improvement goals. Creating and Supporting a Performance and Development Culture in Schools (PDC) is based on the premise that an effective school provides all staff with objective, constructive and actionable feedback on their performance and opportunities for ongoing and responsive professional learning. This approach, which has been used in Victorian schools since 2006, recognises the importance of a culture of strong leadership and professional learning.

The program was initiated by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and, since 2004, the Catholic Education Office Melbourne has been working in partnership with DEECD to implement this strategy. A key dimension of this initiative is accreditation for schools that meet the criteria of a performance and development culture.

The five elements of a P&D Culture are:

- induction for new staff
- multiple sources of feedback
- individual performance and development plans based on individual development needs, student learning and school priorities
- quality professional learning
- staff belief that a P&D Culture exists in the school

Teacher education institutions, schools, education authorities and governments all share responsibility for the preparation and ongoing professional learning of teachers. There should be more responsibility for teacher education by schools and much greater input into the structure and content of pre-service courses by the profession. There needs to be closer partnerships between schools, teacher education providers, education authorities and professional groups and organisations in offering different models and opportunities for professional learning.

Another powerful strategy is sponsorship of postgraduate studies by education authorities. The Catholic Education Office Melbourne has for many years sponsored postgraduate study for leaders, aspiring leaders and key staff in areas such as wellbeing, inclusive schooling and curriculum leadership. This has helped create a critical mass of leadership and knowledge in the sector.

Another effective and highly regarded professional learning program is the Literacy Assessment Project (LAP). Participants focus on building a professional learning community and using data to inform teaching and learning. All schools involved in this project have experienced substantial gains in reading comprehension development, up to three times the normally expected gain.

Various other early literacy and oral language research and professional learning programs operating in Victorian Catholic schools provide examples of successful professional learning for teachers and leaders.

Remuneration and performance evaluation

- 5.17** *How important are the level and structure of remuneration for recruitment and retention of teachers? What impact does the level of remuneration have on the capabilities of those entering the teaching profession? Should differentiated remuneration be used more widely to address imbalances in supply and demand?*
- 5.18** *Are there non-remuneration conditions of employment that, if changed, would enhance teacher quality and student outcomes? Is there sufficient recognition of the work associated with the delivery of extra-curricular programs?*
- 5.19** *What makes a quality teacher? How should teacher performance be measured? To what extent can computable performance metrics indicate the 'value added' by a teacher?*
- 5.20** *If a well-designed performance-based pay scheme could be implemented, would it significantly enhance teacher quality and student outcomes? What risks and costs are associated with performance-based pay?*
- 5.21** *Separate from whether financial rewards should be attached, are there ways to enhance performance appraisal processes for school workers?*

Presently teachers' pay scales are flat and inflexible. It is not helpful to have a very rigid pay structure whereby teachers reach the top salary possible in the classroom ten years into their career. Some differentiation is needed to make teaching attractive over the longer term, to retain good teachers, especially those with 10-15 years service. The challenge is how to differentiate teachers' pay in a clear and consistent way within existing resources. There need to be principles that inform teacher's pay scales and provide appropriate remuneration.

Work has been done through the Smarter Schools National Partnership, in collaboration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, on identifying high performing teachers in Catholic schools. This is research in progress which is already identifying new means of recognition and reward of teachers' performance.

Trials indicate that the workforce is resisting the Australian government's teacher performance bonus model. The bonus payment initiative contradicts other worthwhile initiatives regarding teacher quality and professional standards and detracts from the more important issues. If teachers' performance pay is not aligned with teachers professional standards it will be confusing in the workforce.

Maintaining professional standards requires valid procedures for appraisal of the performance of teachers and leaders. It is becoming widely accepted that appraisal is an essential component in building the professional status, standards and rewards of teaching. Appraisal has a variety of purposes, both formative (professional renewal and improvement) and summative (accountability or career progression). Each type of appraisal has a place in maintaining professional standards. Difficulties arise, however, when mutually conflicting purposes are conflated within the one process.

School leadership

- 5.22** *Has sufficient policy attention been paid to school leadership and its contribution to education outcomes?*
- 5.23** *What motivates teachers to become school leaders? Is enough being done to identify current and future leaders?*
- 5.24** *What skills do school leaders require beyond those acquired as teachers? Is enough being done to facilitate leaders' acquisition and development of ancillary skills? Do principals necessarily require a teaching background?*
- 5.25** *In an environment of greater autonomy for schools, how is the role of the principal likely to change? To what extent do changes in job design for school leaders have feed-through effects to other members of the schools workforce?*

School leadership at all levels, not only the principal's, is crucial to educational outcomes. Schools need highly capable, visionary and committed leaders to motivate staff. There is little doubt that pressure on school leaders has increased concomitantly with increased social demands upon schools, and in some areas schools are finding difficulty in attracting high quality applicants for leadership positions. Equally, succession planning and leadership development for school leaders requires significant support to prepare and encourage future leaders.

The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) has addressed leadership preparation and succession planning through the development of the Leadership in Catholic Schools Development framework and standards of practice (Leadership Standards Framework) in conjunction with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). The clear articulation of what constitutes effective leadership within a Catholic school informed steps to address the varied needs of school leaders according to experience, career stage and context. The web-based CEOM Leadership Continuum, launched in 2007, provides resources for the development of leadership, as well as information about existing leadership initiatives and professional learning opportunities. It takes properly differentiated approach to leadership support, structured around six phases:

1. Emerging Leaders
2. Established Leaders
3. Aspirant Principals
4. Initial Principals
5. Experienced Principals
6. Mentor Principals

The key to this approach was the development of leadership capabilities underpinned by the Leadership Standards Framework.

Principal coaching and mentoring programs and leadership team development programs support school leaders.

Another important strategy for leadership support by the Archdiocese of Melbourne is the building of a Catholic Leadership Centre in East Melbourne expected to be completed in mid-2012. This centre with state-of-the-art facilities will serve to support leaders at all levels in Catholic education (and other service areas) through intensive professional learning programs and advanced studies.

School autonomy

- 5.26** *What are the advantages and disadvantages of increasing school autonomy? To what extent can currently centralised responsibilities be sensibly devolved to the school level? What lessons can be learned from approaches in Victoria and other countries, as well as from experiences in independent schools?*
- 5.27** *What specific governance and regulatory arrangements are needed to support greater school autonomy?*
- 5.28** *What other checks and balances are required to ensure individual schools do not advance their interests at the expense of outcomes across the whole system? Specifically, could schools serving disadvantaged communities be left worse off by the competition for resources that might result from decentralisation? To what extent could such outcomes be ameliorated by concomitant increases in the flexibility of remuneration arrangements?*
- 5.29** *Is a 'one size fits all' approach to school autonomy appropriate, or should the degree of autonomy enjoyed by schools vary according to their performance?*

School autonomy represents an opportunity to respond to local conditions with flexible budgeting and local employment of staff. The degree of autonomy of a school should vary according to a range of factors, including the capacity and performance of the school and its leaders. Schools in the Catholic sector in Victoria operate with various degrees of autonomy, dependent on whether they are primary or secondary, in a particular diocese and whether owned by a religious order or a parish or group of parishes. In any case, Victorian Catholic schools employ their own staff, manage their own budgets and develop their own policies. The schools, however, operate within systemic and diocesan policy frameworks which guide school decision-making. They are also supported by various professional and leadership networks and diocesan Catholic education offices.

This semi-autonomous arrangement has significant advantages from both the school and sector perspectives. It lacks the rigidity of centralisation but retains benefits of systemic support. It is flexible and responsive to local conditions, but retains important aspects of systemic quality assurance and efficiency.

Meeting the needs of particular students populations

- 5.30** *How effective is the current suite of workforce-related initiatives to address educational disadvantage? Should the goal of such policies be greater equality in education outcomes or greater equality of opportunity for all students to realise their educational potential? Does the choice between these two alternatives have implications for the nature of the schools workforce policies that should be employed to address educational disadvantage?*
- 5.31** *Are all student groups that are experiencing significant educational disadvantage being given suitable recognition in the current workforce policy framework? Are current measures of socioeconomic status adequate?*
- 5.32** *Are school workers sufficiently trained to deal with special needs, students from cultural and language backgrounds other than English, and students with any other specific educational requirements?*
- 5.33** *Are there particular qualities that are especially important in teaching Indigenous students? Do existing teaching courses place sufficient emphasis on the development of these qualities? How might the number of Indigenous Australians training to enter the schools workforce be increased?*
- 5.34** *Are there workforce changes that would assist disadvantaged students make a successful transition from school to work or further education?*
- 5.35** *What are the main factors that influence the choice of teachers and other professionals to work in areas of educational disadvantage or with students with specific educational needs?*

The goal of educational equity is not so much greater equality of educational outcomes but smaller differences in standards between highest and lowest performing students through raising the standards of all students. The CECV operates a funding allocation system which seeks to redress imbalances in school resources so that less economically advantaged communities are given greater assistance.

Programs designed to raise standards of at lower-achieving students have been in operation for many years. Currently the Smarter Schools National Partnerships for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities and for Low Literacy and Numeracy target educational and social disadvantage, but it is too early to tell the effectiveness of the strategies used.

The Smarter Schools National Partnership on Teacher Quality is making grants to Koori Education Workers to encourage them to enrol in teacher education courses and so to increase the number of indigenous teachers in the workforce.

A major challenge for schools is meeting the needs of many students with specific learning needs, including those with learning difficulties, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, students with a language background other than English, Indigenous students as well as gifted and talented students. Such a diverse group of students can be 15-20% of a school population.

Many teachers have limited knowledge of the needs of gifted and talented students and issues such as identification, curriculum differentiation, underachievement and acceleration, effective working relationships with students and parents. The complex social-emotional needs of gifted and

talented students add to the demands placed on teachers to provide appropriate teaching and learning experiences. There is a need for much more comprehensive training in identification measures, appropriate curriculum planning and specific teaching strategies, incorporated into teacher education courses.

The surrounding institutional framework

- 5.36** *How responsive is the overall institutional regime to changing circumstances? Is the established culture and practice within education departments and related regulatory agencies, as well as in government and non-government schools, an impediment to workforce reform?*
- 5.37** *Are industrial relations arrangements in the schools sector sufficiently flexible? Are there particular regulatory or institutional factors that may impede the recruitment and retention of high quality school workers? How can these be addressed?*
- 5.38** *Does the policy interface between the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments pose challenges for effective schools workforce reform? What effect will initiatives such as national accreditation and registration requirements, and the introduction of a national curriculum, have on the schools workforce and its capacity to meet the needs of students, parents and the community?*
- 5.39** *Is there sufficient engagement between the government and non-government school sectors on workforce-related issues?*
- 5.40** *How effective is the interaction with parents and the community on matters relating to student progress and school policy? How engaged are parents in school governance processes, in classroom support, and in other aspects of school activity?*

While national cooperation has increased markedly in recent years especially through the COAG agenda, there is unnecessary disjuncture between the Australian and the State/Territory governments in education policy. The short and asynchronous political cycles lead to poor consistency and coherence across States/Territories on educational policy and programs, limited cooperation, stalled momentum and lack of real commitment to longevity of reforms. This has become evident in the disputes about educational standards that threaten to compromise the implementation of the Australian curriculum. It is also evident in the inconsistency and lack of transparency in the implementation of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships.

- 5.41** *Is there sufficient interaction and coordination between the schools, ECD and VET sectors?*

In Victoria, VET trainers without a teaching qualification are given a Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) 'permission to teach'. This permission has a two-year currency with an expectation that the candidate will pursue full teacher qualifications within that period.

Currently, federally funded programs such as Trade Training Centres in Schools (TTCs) insist on the delivery of Certificate III VET programs in schools. Very

few existing staff in schools have the qualifications to deliver at this certificate level; yet state regulations inhibit a school's ability to recruit appropriate skilled industry trainers to perform this task.

The introduction of TTCs has highlighted the need to employ appropriate staff, with current industry qualifications and experience, who have the capacity to deliver up to date, industry specific training. These staff members, who are often employed to operate a business within a TTC, do not desire or need teaching qualifications to perform effectively a unique role such as this.

This regulation restricts a school's capacity to retain appropriate industry qualified trainers to staff TTCs.

- 5.42** *Is there an adequate focus on the evaluation of programs (including the dissemination of evaluation results), and a readiness to adjust programs if evidence indicates that improvements can be achieved?*
- 5.43** *Are there particular information and data gaps, either in collection or dissemination, that impede good decision making in education policy? Are the current institutional arrangements for undertaking research on schools workforce policy, and on education policy more generally, adequate? If not, how might they be improved?*

Educational policy and decision-making rely more and more on data derived from results of specific forms of student testing, whether that be NAPLAN or PISA or other well-established tests. The culmination of this has been the publication of such data on the *My School* website. One of the critical issues here is that the data does not represent the full range of student outcomes that a school is committed to achieving, so the public receives a distorted picture of the school's performance and culture. This has led to misinterpretation and misguided criticism of teachers and schools that are seen to be underperforming.

Too often policy decisions are based on incomplete and narrowly derived data. There is a pressing need to explore broader measures of school and student performance, as well as teacher performance, to underpin proper evaluation of teacher professional performance and to inform improvement strategies.

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