

Monday 20th February 2012

**Education and Training Workforce: Schools
Productivity Commission**

Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003

**University of Tasmania, Faculty of Education
Response to the Draft Research Report: Schools Workforce**

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) Faculty of Education's (the Faculty) response to the Draft Research Report into Schools Workforce provides comment on the following draft recommendations and findings made by the Commission and comments made regarding supply/demand imbalances and minimum entry level requirements:

Draft Finding 5.1

The provision of high quality practicum and induction experience for pre-service and graduate teachers plays a key role in developing an effective teaching workforce. While there are a number of promising avenues for improvement, including university-school partnerships, trialling and evaluation is needed. This should focus on better understanding what forms and combinations of practicum and induction, and what types of university-school relationships, are most cost-effective in improving the quality of beginning teachers.

The Faculty acknowledges the issues outlined in Finding 5.1, specifically in relation to the delivery of pre-service practicum and induction. The Faculty would like to see a consistent understanding of what it means to be a quality 'colleague teacher' (CT). While many CT's put in a lot of effort with pre-service teacher mentoring, some do not approach the responsibility with a professional attitude and there is no incentive for CT's to improve their CT skills.

The Faculty has explored a number of models to improve the practicum and induction experience for its pre-service teachers including the introduction of a Partnerships in Teaching Excellence Scholarship Program (PiTE) in conjunction with the Department of Education (<http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/teaching/awards/pite>), which is a collaboration designed to enhance the quality of teachers exiting the University. A recent evaluation of the program undertaken by the Department of Education indicated that the program did improve the pre-service education of teachers, and it was the increased time in a school environment that was seen as the crucial

factor in enhancing the preparation of pre-service teachers for full time teaching (Freestone, 2011).

These types of initiatives and programs are also supported by the recently released Gratton Institute Report exploring what Australia can learn from the best school systems in East Asia (Jensen, 2012). Importantly, there are funding implications and scaling issues as well for, while the PiTE program has worked, it has placed additional demands on schools and costs to the Faculty that need to be addressed.

Mentors

The Faculty views the role of mentors (formal and non-formal) and CTs as vitally important. Mentoring of new graduates needs to be extended beyond practicum and induction into the activities of the everyday classroom (Heikkinen, 2012). Hattie (2009) confirms it is induction and mentoring programs that involve frequent classroom observations including constructive feedback that is known to improve student learning. This culture of feedback facilitates the exchange of ideas within and among schools (Blackwell & McClean, 1996)

The Faculty also supports the Commission's *Draft Recommendation 5.1:*

The Australian Government should commission a longitudinal data collection that:

- *follows a sample of recently appointed teachers for at least five years*
- *encompasses an assessment of the pre-service training, induction and professional development that each teacher receives*
- *includes measures of teacher effectiveness, including an indicator of student outcomes.*

The study should follow more than one cohort of graduate teachers to analyse any future experimentation in pre-service training, induction and professional development.

The Faculty supports an evaluation of the medium to long term perceptions of pre-service teachers, specifically regarding the nexus between theory and practice as the initial perceptions of the importance of practicum may decrease as experience increases. The need here is to link this research to teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) rather than just their attitudes to schools and working with students, which we assume should be positive. Being happy to work with students and in schools is not the same as being an effective teacher.

Draft Recommendation 5.2

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs should direct AITSL to modify Program Standard 1.3 of the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia; Standards and Procedures, governing the length of graduate entry teacher training courses. The revised standard should indicate that two-year courses remain an option rather than a mandatory requirement.

The Commission notes that *'it is far from certain that the change will improve the quality of graduate teachers, and it may not be cost effective...'* Chapter 5 p82 and that *'For some students these added costs – and lack of benefits – could be sufficient to dissuade them from pursuing a career in teaching. This would be of particular concern in areas like mathematics and science where there are already*

shortages and where graduate salaries are already considerably higher outside the teaching progression.’ Chapter 5 p83

The Faculty implemented a two-year Master of Teaching course in 2010 that was rigorously accredited by the Tasmanian Teachers Registration Board and has been developed with the AITSL standard of two-year minimum course duration in mind.

It is the Faculty’s view that the move to a two-year minimum course structure is vitally important for 6 reasons:

1. To allow sufficient time for appropriate and meaningful practicum to take place.
2. To allow the development of pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge (Schulman, 1986), behavioural and classroom management understandings to be developed as well as subject matter content to be refreshed in the context of the evolving Australian curriculum requirements.
3. The evidence is that it is teachers' PCK rather than just content knowledge that is the critical factor in determining classroom students’ achievement and PCK has the predictive influence on students' learning (Blomeke et al., 2012). PCK is not an easy knowledge set to develop and even in a secondary school program it varies across the curriculum. It is not going to be achieved in a short (1 year) course.
4. There is also compelling evidence that effective pre and post- professional learning improves the capability, confidence and efficacy of teachers and school leaders which, in turn, has a direct impact on the quality of students’ educational experiences and the outcomes of school education. Again, this process takes time and is linked to PCK (Schwartz, 2007) and takes time to develop effectively.
5. Internationally, the two-year masters course, after a base degree for professional learning, is articulated in the Bologna Process (European Commission, 2012). This model of education was considered necessary to make European higher education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive, and this model has been adopted in Australia in what is sometimes called the “Melbourne Model”. To move back to a one-year graduate diploma model in Australia would be seen internationally as a backward step and one that would make Australian graduates uncompetitive on the international market.
6. Tasmania’s Board of Teacher Registration has strongly endorsed the two-year Master of Teaching model because it produces a more informed and “job ready” graduate. It is this last point that is the critical issue rather than the notion of cost. Given that the Master of Teaching is directed at the secondary school domain and this is a sector of the profession with shortages, particularly in maths and science, reducing the preparation of these graduates so they have less than a basic preparation does not build capability, confidence and efficacy of teachers.

In summary, there is not sufficient time for these areas to be covered in a 12 month, graduate diploma style course. While there is no doubt a one-year qualification would be less expensive in the short term for the Federal Government to fund, in the long term it is the quality of teacher education that is paramount. The Commission has raised the issue of pre-service teachers' readiness to enter the profession, and to move away from a two-year qualification will only exacerbate this issue.

Supply/demand imbalances

The Commission raised the issue of supply/demand imbalances throughout its Draft Research Report. In addition to the concerns raised, which the Faculty acknowledges, there is the additional policy-related concern regarding the Federal Government's recent decision to cap the Commonwealth funding of postgraduate courses from 2012 onwards.

With the shortages most critical in secondary education and in areas such as mathematics and science that require the completion of an undergraduate qualification in the specific discipline field, the Faculty feels the capping of postgraduate programs will serve to further add to the supply issues in these discipline areas, largely due to the fact that although a Master of Teaching is a postgraduate course, it is still a professional entry requirement, which has failed to be acknowledged in the postgraduate capping strategy.

The Faculty also supports the Commission's policy-related finding that cases for using explicit remuneration incentives to help address workforce shortages be explored, specifically in hard-to-staff schools and in particular subject areas such as mathematics and science.

The Faculty of Education has worked closely with the Department of Education in the implementation of the PiTE Program, which offers pre-service teachers entering the second year of the Master of Teaching or fourth year of the Bachelor of Education the opportunity to apply for a scholarship which provides teacher education pathways with more school-based experience for those seeking a career in Tasmanian Government schools (see link <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/teaching/awards/pite>) for more information. The Faculty is also working with the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and Tasmanian Independent Schools to explore the scope of offering similar scholarships in these systems. The program is designed to support high achieving pre-service teachers' entry into the profession with a particular view to areas of shortage including mathematics, science and rural secondary colleges in the North and North-West of the state.

Meeting the needs of regional Australia

The Commission also noted the issues of oversupply, as evidenced by the substantial number of mainly primary teachers who are on stand-by for positions in metropolitan areas Chapter 4 p49 "*There is a widespread expectation that, without other changes, the lifting of the cap on the number of Commonwealth Supported Places that can be offered by universities from next year will result in substantially more primary education graduates (NSW DEC, sub 14; Queensland DET, sub 40).*"

The Faculty's report *Go West, North West: Exploring teachers' perceptions of teaching in rural and remote schools in Tasmania (2010)* surveyed teachers in the regionally isolated North-West Tasmania regarding their attitudes towards attracting and retaining teachers in rural and remote settings. When asked to rate incentives for accepting remote and rural positions, State teachers were most likely to rate the option of guaranteed relocation to a school in an area of choice (72%) as very attractive. Likewise, Catholic Education teachers were most likely to rate the equivalent incentive of guaranteed relocation to a vacancy in a more preferred area as very attractive (82%).

When asked to consider 12 general incentives to move to rural and regional location, participants were most likely to rate guaranteed permanency after minimum period of service (80%) or reduced or fully paid HECS (78%) as very attractive. When asked to rate 13 social disincentives to teaching in remote and rural locations, participants were most likely to rate isolation from friends and family as very significant (66%). In alignment with that, when asked to rate 16 professional disincentives, participants were most likely to rate the (non) availability of casual relief for leave as very significant (60%). When asked to rate nine incentives to retain teachers in rural and remote settings, participants were most likely to rate cash payments after a designated period of service (71%), emergent leave provisions (70%) and home loan subsidies (76%) as very attractive options. When asked to rate five issues as useful to learn about when thinking about attracting and retaining teachers to rural and remote settings, participants were least likely to select organisational strategies and teaching methods appropriate for teaching multi-grade classrooms in relation to elective units but most likely to select this option in relation to core units or the combination of core and elective units. Finally, when asked to identify one of five considerations that might be favourable to living in rural and remote settings, participants were most likely to rate the option of (it being a) good place to raise children as extremely important (Castleton & Jones, 2011).

As depicted above, the Faculty's experience in Tasmania is, if the student comes from a regional location and they receive their teacher education in an environment that maintains their contact with regional Australia, these graduates are more likely to return to regional Australia. That is, University's located away from the larger cities in Australia have a better track record in encouraging graduates to take up placements in regional Australia. For example, in Tasmania the teacher education graduates from the Burnie campus are readily employed in rural Tasmania and some 80% of these graduates are employed early in their career in full time positions and they are also more focussed on moving to other regional location in other States (Castleton & Jones, 2011).

Minimum Entry Level Requirements – Program Standard 3 of the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs developed by AITSL:

Chapter 5 p85 *'In sum, the Commission considers that the minimum literacy and numeracy requirements under the national accreditation system have the potential to improve the quality of the teaching workforce and may even have some ancillary benefits. However, the improvements in quality is unlikely to be substantial in the short-term, particularly in primary education given the current teaching surpluses, and may be limited in the long term if there are not complementary measures to increase the attractiveness of teaching as a profession. Additionally, there is a need for these requirements to be reviewed*

over time to ensure that the requirements have no unforeseen effects, such as exacerbating shortages in particular areas.'

Entry into the profession

It is likely that the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) will support a two-stage process on graduate entry. The benchmark will be an ATAR score of 70 plus, however, if students' entry scores are below this point they will receive additional academic support, particularly in the academic domains of academic literacy and academic numeracy. UTAS and the Faculty of Education have jointly developed the Diploma in University Studies (Education) which should address this pre-service teacher student cohort.

Capping at postgraduate level needs to be removed

There are areas of education with significant teacher shortages, such as maths and science. More needs to be done to make maths and science teaching more attractive to future teachers into the profession. One important strategy is to uncapping these places in the postgraduate programs. While it may be logical to cap postgraduate Masters courses in, for example, the Arts where there is no shortage, however to cap postgraduate teacher education programs where there is already a shortage is illogical and a false economy. Australian schools need more secondary school teachers and the capping of these placements from 2012 in Schools of Education will cause an increased shortage of secondary school teachers. This policy is not in Australia's long term interest and policy needs to encourage more young graduates into becoming secondary and VET teachers. The Faculty is noting in its 2012 enrolments the effect of capping such that there are now fewer students coming into the science and maths units in the secondary Master of Teaching program. Capping is having an immediate negative impact.

In summary, this submission supports the case that a strong teacher preparation program is in Australia's long term best interest, and that there is a correlation between a quality teacher preparation program and a country's GNP.

This submission is highly supportive of Australia benchmarking itself to international standards and in terms of post graduate qualifications this is to the Bologna Process and in academic terms to, high quality programs that develop teachers' PCK, such as in the East Asia systems (Jenson, 2012). This submission is supportive of maintaining the two-year Master of Teaching award and is not supportive of postgraduate capping of secondary education programs.

Yours sincerely

Professor Ian Hay
Dean, Faculty of Education
University of Tasmania

References

- Blackwell, R., & McClean, M. (1996) Peer observation of teaching and staff development, *High Education Quartlery*, 50(2): 156-171.
- Blomeke, S., Suhl, U., Kaiser, G. & Dohrmann, M. (2012) *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28 (1), 44-55
- Castleton, G. & Jones, T. (2010). *Go West, North West: Exploring teachers' perceptions of teaching in rural and remote schools in Tasmania*. Unpublished Report. University of Tasmania.
- European Commission Education and Training (2012). *The Bologna Process – Towards the European Higher Education Area*. http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc1290_en.htm. (20 February 2012).
- Freestone, M. (2011). *Partnerships in Teaching Excellence: Issues for Review and Development*. Hobart, Australia. Department of Education.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Heikkinen, L.T. (2012). *Mentoring as Collaboration: Supporting Early Career Teachers in Northern Europe*. University of Tasmania, Launceston, February 20 2012.
- Jensen, B. (2012). *Catching up: Learning from the best school systems in East Asia: Summary Report*. Melbourne, Australia. Graton Institute.
- Schwartz, J.E. (2007). *Elementary Mathematics Pedagogical Content Knowledge: Powerful Ideas for Teachers*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Shulman, L. (1986b). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.