

CHAPTER 5

Career development, retention and professional learning of teachers

Introduction

5.1 In this chapter the committee examines career development and progression for teachers, retention issues, and what constitutes effective professional learning.

5.2 Teacher career development and progression is influenced by a number of factors. These include the pay structure of teaching, the nature of incremental salary advancement, and the limited availability of leadership positions in schools. This chapter considers how to recognise and use high performing teachers in the classroom.

5.3 Retention is an issue for all workforces and teaching is no different. Schools need to be able to retain competent and skilled teachers and ensure adequate support is provided to new teachers. This chapter examines the impact contract work and the pay structure of teaching has on retention, why teachers are leaving the profession and the need to retain the best teachers.

5.4 Effective professional learning is vital to creating a high quality teaching workforce. Teachers need ongoing professional learning and support to adapt to the shifting education environment, respond to students' learning needs, and improve their performance. For these reasons, the committee considers the value of in-school professional learning activities, classroom observation and feedback, the need to devote time and resources to professional learning, and training for teachers teaching 'out of field'. The committee also briefly discusses the role universities have in professional learning, and the potential of online tools.

5.5 While the committee resolved that any requests for confidentiality from submitters for their name or that of a school would be granted, the committee only received one submission from a current teacher (submission 35). The committee nonetheless received evidence from former teachers, schools leaders and teacher representative organisations about their teaching experience.¹

Teacher career development and progression

5.6 When considering the career development of teachers, it is worthwhile starting with an examination of the employment profile of the teaching profession. In April 2012 the Productivity Commission tabled a report on the Schools Workforce in Australia. The Commission found there are over 320,000 full-time equivalent workers in schools, including teachers, principals, teacher's assistants and administrative

1 See for example Ms Lorraine Wilson, *Submission 41*; Dr David Hornsby, *Submission 39*; Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*.

workers.² It noted that the workforce is increasingly feminised and more teachers are being employed on temporary contracts.³

5.7 The committee heard evidence that there has been a demographic shift in the teaching workforce in the last few years because of the global financial crisis. Professor Cherednichenko said 'we had massive retention in the system right across the country in 2009, 2010 and 2011...the shift out of the profession did not occur'.⁴ Mr Gavrielatos agreed the GFC had an impact on retirements arguing 'teachers are hanging on more so than in previous times because of superannuation'.⁵

Career progression of teachers

5.8 Significant issues raised on career progression for teachers included limited opportunity for leadership and pay structures that did not reward experience or performance.

5.9 From the range of evidence provided, submitters noted the limited opportunities available for attaining leadership positions. The Queensland Association of State School Principals said:

Primary Education in Queensland has a very limited career path as there is an abundance of teachers and very few Heads of Curriculum, Coaches, Deputy Principals and Learning Support positions. An increase in these will not only provide equity with the secondary sector but would provide other options for teachers, greater opportunities for professional growth and improved career paths.⁶

5.10 The pay structure in teaching is quite flat, in the sense that there is very little difference between the salary for beginning teachers and very experienced teachers. A recent OECD study highlighted the limited range of pay available for teachers: in Australia a teacher at the top of the pay scale only earns approximately 150 per cent of the salary of a beginning teacher. As a consequence, the 'most able' teachers receive the same salary as the 'least able'.⁷

5.11 Professor Stephen Dinham, agreed that the salary structure is incremental and fails to reward high performers. What is needed is a transition to a career-long salary structure, which the new national standards will contribute to. During the Melbourne hearing Professor Dinham explained that:

...we have got an industrial sort of salary structure, and we need to move beyond that and have a career-long salary structure, where the most able

2 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 54.

3 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 49.

4 Professor Brenda Cherednichenko, President, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 22.

5 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Australian Education Union, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 61.

6 Queensland Association of State School Principals, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

7 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 13.

people continue to develop and demonstrate their capabilities and be rewarded. This is where the new national standards can come in, to provide people with another salary scale beyond the incremental scales. Seventy-five per cent of teachers in Australia are at the top of those incremental salary scales. They are all clustered there at the top.⁸

5.12 The issue of how to reward high performing teachers and develop meaningful career progression is a key concern of this report. The effect of pay structures on retention rates will be considered later in the chapter.

How to provide career development for high performing teachers

5.13 The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is seeking to improve the way highly effective teachers are identified and rewarded. AITSL has established a national certification process for 'Highly Accomplished' and 'Lead' teachers, agreed to by Education Ministers from every state and territory.⁹

5.14 AITSL advised the committee it is up to state and territory governments to decide what this certification will mean in terms of salary or career progression. The submissions received from the Queensland, South Australian, Tasmanian and Victorian governments did not address this issue.¹⁰

5.15 Western Australia has a certification process for recognising high performing teachers which leads to a 'significant salary increase'.¹¹ While the Western Australian Government did not make a submission, Ms Catto from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations described the process:

...we have a level 3 teacher, which is the top of the profession they can go to as a classroom teacher. For a longstanding teacher who had entered as a classroom teacher and then developed and undertaken the training and assessment to go through what I believe is quite a rigorous process to become a level 3 classroom teacher, that is something we would see.¹²

5.16 Although the ACT Government did not make a submission to the inquiry, the committee is aware of the Executive Teacher (Professional Practice) classification/position that has been created in the ACT public school system with a salary just over \$100,000. The role involves mentoring first year teachers, leading

8 Professor Stephen Dinham, Professor, Teacher Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 12.

9 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 13.

10 Ms Margery Evans, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 55.

11 Ms Margery Evans, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 55.

12 Ms Kylie Rae Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 41.

professional development in their schools, and co-teaching.¹³ It focuses on 'exemplary teaching and building capacity in teaching practice at the school'.¹⁴

5.17 Dr Jensen, Director of the School Education Program in the Grattan Institute, explained that currently most teachers reach the highest pay point after seven or eight years of teaching, and some teachers leave at this point.¹⁵ Dr Jensen suggested that the pay structure of teaching could be changed to reward high performing teachers without necessarily spending more money, by deciding that not everyone reaches the top of the salary structure:

There are numerous things we can do there. I think it is actually sad that we have a discussion about having a six-figure salary in teaching as though it is some obscure, crazy thing, when our best teachers should be on \$150,000 or \$180,000 a year. And we can do that, everyone. We can afford that if we want to change the salary structure and if we say that not everyone reaches the top of the salary structure. We can do that, and I think that will have serious consequences for addressing some of those shortages that we talk about.¹⁶

5.18 A career structure which rewards 'Highly Accomplished' and 'Lead' teachers and ensures that teacher advancement is merit based will encourage the best teachers to stay in the profession. Extra remuneration should be accompanied by job differentiation – with responsibilities like mentoring, coaching and leading change.

Committee View

5.19 Many witnesses and submitters have expressed concern that there is relatively little difference between the pay of a graduate teacher and a teacher at the top pay scale. Furthermore there is very little job differentiation between the scales. Such a structure does not encourage good teachers to remain in the classroom, nor does it encourage continual learning and development.

5.20 The committee believes that there needs to be greater recognition of experienced and highly effective teachers. The Teacher Standards and certification process developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership are a significant step in the right direction. It is encouraging to see some jurisdictions using these standards to create new roles and classifications for teachers that recognise high performance, as discussed in Chapter 2. Evidence provided by Dr Ben Jensen suggests that these changes can be made without a huge injection of funds.

13 Emma Macdonald, 'Teacher goes to top of her class', *Canberra Times*, 2 April 2013, p. 2; Ms Joy Burch, MLA, Minister for Education and Training, '100,000 reasons for top teachers to stay in the classroom', Media release, 3 April 2013.

14 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Teacher Performance and Development in Australia: A mapping and analysis of current practice*, March 2012, under heading 'Performance and development approach – ACT government system: Processes'.

15 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, pp. 43–44.

16 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, pp. 43–44.

5.21 Further work is required by state and territory governments to ensure that Teacher Standards have a meaningful impact on teacher career progression and recognise 'Highly Accomplished' and 'Lead' teachers. However, it is too soon to assess the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Recommendation 17

5.22 The committee recommends that state and territory governments and the Catholic and Independent school sectors consider rewarding Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers with meaningful remuneration and an improved salary structure under the new national certification process (consistent with initiatives already undertaken in some jurisdictions).

Teacher retention

5.23 Chapter 3 of this report discussed the difficulties schools have in retaining staff in remote and rural areas, as well retaining teachers qualified to teach subjects like maths and science. This section addresses the issue of retention more generally, looking at the impact of increased casual work on the profession; which teachers are leaving the education sector and why they are leaving; and the importance of retaining the right teachers.

The impact of increased casual and contract work on the profession

5.24 Teachers can be employed in a number of ways: as permanent employees, casuals, or on fixed term contracts of varying lengths. The committee heard anecdotal evidence about a recent rise in the use of short term contracts and casual positions.

5.25 The University of Melbourne submitted that graduates of their two year Masters of Education course generally have higher rates of permanent employment than other graduates, with 20 per cent being employed on contracts, 10 per cent as casuals, and the rest being permanent. They advised that:

...other universities and authorities report that 30-40% of beginning teachers in Victorian schools – especially state schools – are on some form of fixed contract, with a similar proportion working as casual teachers.¹⁷

5.26 The trend towards casual employment and contracts has been noted in earlier inquiries. A previous Senate inquiry into the status of the teaching profession argued that casual employment had the most harmful effects on new teachers because they were the ones most likely to be offered short term contracts, and it meant they were not always offered induction or support.¹⁸ The committee recommended 'a reversal of the trend to casualisation of the teaching force'.¹⁹

17 University of Melbourne, answer to question on notice (received 27 March 2013).

18 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *A Class Act – Report on the Status of the Teaching Profession*, 1998, p. 205.

19 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *A Class Act – Report on the Status of the Teaching Profession*, 1998, p. 126.

5.27 More recently the Productivity Commission also noted that 'contract and casual employment of school workers has reportedly been increasing'.²⁰ The Commission's report included data from a 2010 Staff in Australia's Schools survey showing the extent of contract employment. A table of this data is reproduced below.²¹

Table Basis of employment for teachers and school leaders, 2010		
<i>Basis of employment</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Secondary</i>
	%	%
Teachers		
Ongoing/permanent	77.1	85.7
Fixed-term contract	20.5	13.0
Casual/relief	2.3	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0
School leaders		
Ongoing/permanent	65.2	64.6
Acting/filling a vacancy	10.9	7.5
Fixed-term contract	23.3	27.9
Casual/relief	0.6	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

^a These figures are estimates of population values based on a survey of teachers and school leaders in 2010. Numbers may not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

5.28 The table demonstrates that around one-fifth of primary school teachers are on a fixed term contract. Percentages of fixed term contracts are even higher for principals (around 28 per cent for secondary schools).

5.29 A number of submitters gave evidence that casual employees often have less access to professional learning. DEEWR noted:

It is an issue that is raised and that has implications for things like support for beginning teachers and induction programs, because a lot of the casual staff coming out of universities and going into casual positions do not necessarily have the same support that permanent employees do.²²

5.30 One of the case studies provided by the Australian Council of Deans of Education demonstrated that a teaching graduate (as a casual) is unable to access the 'professional development and mentoring available to permanent staff'.²³ It is difficult to know how widespread this practice is; other submitters gave evidence that some schools choose to offer professional development to casuals. For example, Mrs Backus from the Queensland Association of State School Principals believes it

20 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 55.

21 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 55.

22 Ms Alex Gordon, Group Manager, Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Group, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 59.

23 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 6.

occurs on a 'school-by-school basis' and that 'some schools are very inclusive of their casual staff'.²⁴

5.31 It is not just the teachers themselves who are impacted by short term contracts and casual employment. Ms Lorraine Wilson noted 'some teachers are applying for their own job for the fourth time in the fourth six month period'.²⁵ Such a situation can result in the principal spending less time as an 'educational leader' and more time as an administrator managing frequent recruitment processes.

5.32 The committee sought to understand why contracts and casual positions are used. Witnesses gave evidence that one of the causes of short term contracts is the need to retain positions for permanent staff on unpaid leave, which in some jurisdictions can be for 5 to 7 years. Mr Norm Hart explained:

...I believe one of the drivers for this casualisation of the teaching workforce has been the industrial agreements that allow teachers to maintain right of re-entry into the profession for quite a long time when they are on unpaid leave. On the one hand, one would want to protect somebody's industrial rights. But, on the other hand, the flow-on effect is that there has to be a position held for that person, and that can only be filled casually, sometimes for years at a time.²⁶

5.33 Professor Geoff Prince, Director, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, gave a similar explanation, submitting that leave requirements, particularly in the state system, contribute to contract work.²⁷ Mrs Hilary Backus, President, Queensland Association of State School Principals suggested the rise was due to uncertainty in the Queensland education sector.²⁸

5.34 The Australian Education Union argues that moves to increase autonomy for principals in selecting staff is also a factor:

In recent years, moves towards devolution and greater responsibility for principals in selection of school staff at the local level are a notable factor in the increased use of casual and fixed term employment by schools.

...Integral to this process of shifting risk from the state to individual schools, is the further shifting of risk from management to individual teachers, a direct outcome of which is a growth in insecure work.

It is no coincidence that, for example, in excess of 18% of teachers in Victoria, the most devolved system in Australia, are on fixed term contracts

24 Mrs Hilary Backus, President, Queensland Association of State School Principals, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Tuesday 5 March 2013, p. 10.

25 Ms Lorraine Wilson, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 63.

26 Mr Norm Hart, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 10.

27 Professor Geoff Prince, Director, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 9.

28 Mrs Hilary Backus, Queensland Association of State School Principals, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 10.

as opposed to ongoing employment, and there has been a rapid growth in the same in WA associated with the IPS [Independent Public Schools] and in NSW with attempts to devolve.²⁹

5.35 The committee heard that some principals use short term contracts for new teachers as way to 'try before you buy' and that the majority of teachers who start on contract eventually obtain permanent employment.³⁰

5.36 The Productivity Commission argued there are situations where temporary contracts and casual positions are appropriate to a school's particular circumstances at a particular time. For this reason it cautioned against restricting the use of temporary contracts.³¹ The Productivity Commission further noted that contracts would probably decrease if employers had more flexibility to 'redeploy staff and remove underperformers'.³²

5.37 This evidence demonstrates that there needs to be a balance between giving principals and schools flexibility in staffing, and giving employees certainty in employment.

The impact of increasing casual and contract work on retention

5.38 Submitters and witnesses expressed concern about the rise of short term contracts and casual employment, and suggested that insecure work can lead to high attrition rates in the teaching profession, particularly for early career teachers.

5.39 The Australian Council of Deans of Education provided three case studies to the inquiry that demonstrate the impact of insecure contract work on teaching graduates:

Graduate A: I received a University Admissions Index (UAI) of 99.70 and graduated with first class honours in 2010. After 17 applications I was so relieved to get a 12 month contract – within weeks of arriving at my school I understood why there was an average 30% staff turnover each year. Even though I had the opportunity to stay this year I am going to do a Masters in Special Education. I am hoping that this will make me more employable and provide me with opportunities for career advancement and specialization. There aren't that many opportunities for permanent employment and career progression in public schools other than this, aside from getting my annual increment or going into administration positions.

Graduate B: I received an UAI of 91.05. After three years of casual contracts in two large regional communities – I am throwing in the towel. I have taught everything including my subject area, Physical Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE). Shame no one told me there is an oversupply of PDHPE teachers. The mines have offered to train me up in

29 Australian Education Union, answer to question on notice (received 28 March 2013).

30 Melbourne University, answer to question taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 27 March 2013).

31 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 325.

32 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 327.

Occupational Health & Safety – they offer good pay and conditions, and think my skills in understanding different learning styles will be an advantage to their organisation.

Graduate C: I received an UAI of 87.00 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Diploma of Education (Primary). As a newly graduated primary school teacher who lives on Sydney's North Shore I knew the chance of a permanent position would be difficult. So being a traveller in search of adventure, I took myself off to a small rural town. I was never without work because I am hardworking and embrace change and opportunity. Even the local (and not so local high schools) had me on their casual relief list. I suddenly found a great enjoyment in teaching maths - supposedly a subject area where there is a shortage of teachers. I would love to do a Masters so that I could specialise in Maths, but Postgraduate Commonwealth Supported Places are limited and I cannot afford the fees. There are no chances of permanent employment out here. I hope I am not a casual for the rest of my life because I love teaching. The most annoying aspect of this is that as a casual I cannot access the professional development and mentoring available to permanent staff.³³

5.40 All of these high performing graduates expressed concern about their ability to secure permanent work, and in one case, one graduate is leaving the profession because of it. Other witnesses provided similar stories. For example, Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parents' Association, gave an example of young people who had been granted scholarships to study Indigenous education with a view to teaching in remote areas after graduation who were unable to obtain permanent employment:

Although you would imagine that there is a crying need for that sort of teacher in the workforce, at least some of the young teachers I know have only been given casual positions in western New South Wales. To me, that seems extraordinary: we know there is such a need, but we are unable to give these students the security of a permanent position when they are going into a sector of the teaching profession where they are just so sorely needed.³⁴

5.41 These examples, while clearly anecdotal in nature, are concerning.

The impact of pay structures on retention

5.42 The relatively flat pay structure of teaching has been discussed earlier in this chapter. The committee heard evidence that this pay structure can mean high performing teachers leave the profession and retrain to seek better remuneration. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership acknowledged that:

33 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 6.

34 Mr Duncan Taylor, President, Isolated Children's Parents' Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 18.

Current pay systems do not encourage the best teachers to remain in the classroom and many excellent practitioners move to leadership positions or leave the profession to increase their earnings.³⁵

5.43 During the Melbourne hearing, Dr Jensen, Grattan Institute, agreed submitting that:

...we have a huge problem that basically people will reach the top of their salary scale after about seven or eight years of their careers, and then we act surprised when people quit after seven or eight years.³⁶

5.44 Teachers who do stay in the profession tend to move out of the classroom and into management or leadership positions. The Australian Council for Educational Research argued:

[A]fter about a decade, teachers tend to either move into a greater proportion of non-teaching work or move out of the profession entirely. That has been historically related to a ceiling that teachers have reached in their pay levels. I think a challenge for us is to keep very able teachers in classrooms to work at making explicit what we understand highly effective teaching in mathematics or science or reading to be, and that we find ways of remunerating and retaining highly able people.³⁷

5.45 Clearly the teaching remuneration structure has an impact on whether teachers choose to stay in the profession and the right incentives are not in place to encourage the best teachers to stay in the classroom.

Support for new teachers

5.46 Submitters and witnesses to the inquiry agreed that the level of support given to teachers in the first few years impacts staff retention and teaching quality.

5.47 The Productivity Commission recently noted it was a 'commonly expressed concern' that a 'significant number of teachers leave in the first few years'. The Commission concluded there is a lack of data on this issue and it is 'not clear whether the rate of exits is unduly high'.³⁸

5.48 Nevertheless, throughout this inquiry the committee heard concerns about the poor retention rates of new teachers. For example, Mr Chris Watt of the Independent Education Union noted that 'there seems to be a large exodus of teachers from the profession in the first couple of years'.³⁹

35 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 13.

36 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 44.

37 Professor Geoffrey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, pp 45–46.

38 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 63.

39 Mr Christopher Watt, Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 3.

5.49 Ms Misty Adoniou conducted a study into the experiences of 14 teachers in their first 16 months of employment. At the end of the study seven of the 14 teachers were contemplating leaving the profession. She told the inquiry what happened to this cohort:

Of the seven that were contemplating—this is three years on now—one has definitely left. Perhaps, handily—I am not sure—four are pregnant. I do not know whether that is a decision: 'I'll do this now while I consider what I will do in the future.' Two more are hanging in there and positive about what they are doing. But it has taken three years for them to get courageous, to stay true to convictions.⁴⁰

5.50 Ms Adoniou's sample size is small, however if the attrition rates present in this study are indicative then there is much cause for concern. A number of submitters link early career decisions to leave teaching to a lack of preparedness for teaching and to a sharp contrast between what was taught at university and the realities of the classroom. Ms Adoniou described how teachers have a 'spirit of teaching' when they choose to go into education, which is challenged when they first enter the classroom:

When they go out into their first year of teaching, that kind of spirit, that motivation, is tested. It is tested in difficult circumstances and by challenges that they had not expected. They are more exhausted than they ever thought they would be.⁴¹

5.51 The committee heard there is a great deal of responsibility placed on new teachers, in a way which does not occur in other professions. The Australian Primary Principals Association noted that:

In no other profession does a neophyte have exactly the same workload and responsibilities on their first day at work as their most experienced colleagues.⁴²

5.52 To exacerbate these challenges, graduate teachers are often employed in schools that are disadvantaged where there tend to be more vacancies, and demands on teachers are higher. This does not benefit the graduate or the school. Professor Christine Ure described the detrimental effect this practice can have:

[N]ot only are you getting a concentration of disadvantage; you are also getting a concentration of inexperience, a lack of mentoring support and all the problems of casualisation and lack of stability in the workforce in those particular schools.⁴³

5.53 However, induction programs are designed to support new teachers and acclimatise them to the classroom. The Independent Education Union believes school induction programs should:

40 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 27.

41 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 24.

42 Australian Primary Principals Association, *Submission 17*, p. 4.

43 Professor Christine Ure, Head of School, School of Education, Deakin University, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 14.

...supplement the beginning teacher's background knowledge with information of a specific kind relating to the school and its community. They should also capitalise on the beginning teacher's previous training, and assist him/her to deal in a practical way with classroom management, curriculum planning, teaching method, and other facets such as administration procedures of the beginning teacher's teaching.⁴⁴

5.54 The union further argued that school induction programs should give new teachers a 'lighter load' and time away from the classroom for mentoring and support.⁴⁵

5.55 The Tasmanian Department of Education is working to address this issue through the Beginning Teacher Time Release (BeTTR) Program which 'reduces the workload for teachers in their first few years of teaching'.⁴⁶

5.56 The Victorian system also acknowledges the need for a reduced teaching load of 120 minutes less a week. However, there is no provision for a reduction in teaching load for experienced teachers to provide mentoring and support.⁴⁷ This is consistent with the results of Ms Adoniou's finding that in the Australian Capital Territory there was a lack of quality mentoring for new teachers. Ms Adoniou submitted that:

Mentoring teachers really do need to understand what kind of support they give and that they are actually matched; it is like there needs to be a matchmaking service between who your mentor is and who it is not.⁴⁸

5.57 Incept Labs observed that where mentoring was available, mentors often provided a great deal of encouragement and support. However, mentors were not particularly good at providing constructive feedback and advice.⁴⁹ The committee heard of positive examples of in-school mentoring. Mrs Michele Bernshaw, Principal, King David School, described how she dedicates resources to paying the best teachers extra to mentor other teachers in the school:

Within the teaching award there is a provision for something called senior teacher-2, which is an increased payment for specific roles within the school. Over the last couple of years I have been able to add three of those positions to the school to encourage teachers, our top teachers, to stay in the classroom but also to use their expertise to help other teachers. So I have two teacher mentors, and they work with the younger teachers and the new teachers in the school. They teach most of their time but they are provided with some time to do mentor. Another teacher has a different role in the

44 Independent Education Union, *Submission 12*, p. 15.

45 Independent Education Union, *Submission 12*, p. 15.

46 Tasmanian Department of Education, *Submission 40*, p. 7.

47 Mrs Michele Bernshaw, Principal, King David School, Australian Council of Jewish Schools, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 5.

48 Ms Misty Adoniou, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 27. The ACT Government has recently moved to address this deficiency: See Chapter 2.

49 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission.

school. I think that has been a very successful way of keeping their interest.⁵⁰

5.58 Mentoring is clearly an effective means of supporting new teachers to develop their teaching practice. Evidence to the inquiry indicates that quality mentoring relationships depend upon:

- Experienced and top performing teachers having a clearly defined role as mentors;
- Participants being given appropriate time and resources to dedicate to mentoring;
- Mentors being matched appropriately with new teachers; and
- Mentors being trained in how to provide effective feedback and support to the student teacher.

The importance of retaining the right teachers

5.59 When discussing retention rates, it is important to consider not just when teachers are leaving, but who is leaving. It is of concern to the committee that some talented teachers are reportedly not being retained. Research from Incept Lab suggests that:

We are probably losing a greater proportion of the more talented in the teacher workforce than we are of the less talented, and so we are getting this gradual skewing of skill distribution.⁵¹

5.60 The Productivity Commission also noted there is a risk of retaining less talented teachers, and this was evidenced by the very low rates of attrition after the first years in the teaching workforce:

With low rates of natural attrition, there is a risk of retaining a cohort of underperformers. This in turn serves to focus attention on the importance of good performance appraisal and feedback, including effective processes for managing underperformance...⁵²

5.61 As discussed in Chapter 3 of this report, increasing the status of the teaching profession will help attract and retain high quality teachers, as will improving professional learning and career structures.

Committee view

5.62 The committee recognises the importance of supporting new teachers. A graduate's experience in the first few years is formative. It can influence their motivation, professional development, and the decision to stay in the classroom in the

50 Ms Anne Hastings, Principal, Emanuel School, Australian Council of Jewish Schools, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 7.

51 Dr Christopher Goldspink, Director, Incept Labs, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 38.

52 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 63.

longer term. The committee believes more attention should be given to the support provided to first year teachers, and finds encouraging the initiatives that are already underway in some jurisdictions.

5.63 The use of temporary contracts to employ new graduates and increasing casualisation of the teacher workforce is concerning to the committee, particularly where such staff are denied access to professional development. There needs to be a balance between maintaining flexibility for schools and providing appropriate working conditions for teachers. Short term contracts (e.g. 6 months) may be a disincentive for high quality graduates to remain in the profession. Fixed term contracts of 3–5 years provide a more reasonable level of certainty for teachers, while still providing principals and schools with a degree of flexibility.

5.64 The committee heard anecdotal evidence that exit rates for new teachers are high, and that some teachers leave when their salary plateaus after 8-10 years. The committee understands Deakin University is currently undertaking a Longitudinal Teacher Education Workforce Study funded by the Commonwealth.⁵³ It would be useful for this study to include an examination of why teachers choose to leave the profession. Further research into this issue, including through exit interviews, is required.

Recommendation 18

5.65 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood commission research into the reasons why teachers are leaving the profession.

Recommendation 19

5.66 The committee recommends the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, in consultation with the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, develop guidelines on how best to support first year teachers.

Ongoing professional learning and support

5.67 Teachers require ongoing professional learning and support in order to continually improve their teaching practice. Professional development must be targeted to the needs of each teacher and should be ongoing throughout all career stages. Melbourne University pointed out professional development should have an impact on students as well, and needs to be evaluated in this context.⁵⁴ The committee is aware that considerable research has been undertaken into what makes effective professional development and the submission by Deakin University (Burwood) provides a detailed literature review on this subject.⁵⁵

53 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 8.

54 University of Melbourne, *Submission 20*, p. 6.

55 Deakin University (Burwood), *Submission 22*.

5.68 In this section particular attention is given to the value of in-school professional learning, classroom observation and feedback, and training for teachers who lack subject matter expertise.

5.69 While the key focus is professional learning for teachers, the committee heard evidence that professional learning is also important for principals. Mr Andrew Barr, National Chair of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia told the inquiry that 'we need to keep developing and mentoring our leaders and aspiring leaders within our schools' to build leadership capacity'.⁵⁶

5.70 The Victorian Government's recent discussion paper *New directions for school leadership and the teaching profession* has noted the need to have specific professional development programs for principals:

High performing systems support the transition into school leadership. They provide significant support to new school leaders through development programs that address their broader roles and responsibilities, encourage a student-centred approach to leadership, and take a system-wide perspective.⁵⁷

5.71 Victoria has introduced a number of programs that provide coaching, mentoring and financial training to support new principals in developing as school leaders.⁵⁸

The value of in-school professional learning

5.72 A number of submitters emphasised the importance of school-based professional development and learning.⁵⁹ The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia stated:

A significant proportion of teacher professional learning occurs within schools, first in pre-service practicum placement and then through coaching and mentoring of graduate teachers, peer-to-peer learning and through the delivery of targeted courses.⁶⁰

5.73 CEO and Principal of Haileybury Independent School, Mr Scott, preferred in-house professional learning over external training:

56 Mr Andrew Barr, National Chair, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 32.

57 State of Victoria, Department of Education, Early Childhood Development, *New directions for school leadership and the teaching profession: Discussion paper* (2012), p. 20. See also *Submission 43*, Attachment 1.

58 State of Victoria, Department of Education, Early Childhood Development, *New directions for school leadership and the teaching profession: Discussion paper* (2012), p. 22. See also *Submission 43*, Attachment 1.

59 See for example Deakin University (Burwood), *Submission 22*, pp. 3–7; Mr Andrew Barr, National Chair, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 31.

60 Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, *Submission 3*, p. 6.

There is an awful lot of money wasted on external professional development, where people go away for a day and come back; it is very quickly lost. They might be good ideas but they are very quickly lost.⁶¹

5.74 Submitters noted the value of teachers accessing the latest pedagogical research. Haileybury School submitted that professional development is especially important for heads of subjects and coordinators because as 'educational leaders' they should maintain an awareness of the latest research and best practice.⁶² Deakin University similarly argues that greater investment in professional development is required to support teachers to 'use and reflect on evidence' about teaching and learning.⁶³

5.75 The opportunity to collaborate with colleagues and discuss approaches to teaching was noted as important. Mr Gavrielatos from the Australian Education Union told the committee:

We know that the best professional development and learning occurs when teachers are given the time and space to work together to reflect on and to evaluate our teaching and learning programs and engage in that progressive refinement that we do as part of evaluation processes, all of which are aimed at improving educational outcomes.⁶⁴

The value of classroom observation and feedback

5.76 Classroom observation and mentoring can have a significant impact on learning outcomes. Dr Ben Jensen submitted that:

We have a tendency to look at things like professional development as something you do for that week in summer when school is off....we have a tendency to say that mentoring is something you do when you tick the box and prepare someone to register.

If you change all of that around and put serious hours into it, where you say, 'Okay, teachers are going to meet for X number of hours per week, a mentoring program will actually mean that we are going to have three or four hours a week, and teachers will observe other people's classrooms and have their own classrooms observed at least every week'—bearing in mind that most teachers in Australia will go through the year without having their classroom observed a single time—that would be the greatest form of professional development, professional learning. The evidence is very clear: it will have the greatest impact on student learning.⁶⁵

61 Mr Derek Scott, CEO and Principal, Haileybury Independent School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 51.

62 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 8.

63 Deakin University (Burwood), *Submission 22*, p. 1.

64 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Federal President, Australian Education Union, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 53.

65 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 40.

5.77 Haileybury Independent School's professional learning system includes classroom observation of teachers and regular provision of feedback.⁶⁶ Since 2012 all teaching staff have gone through a formal process of peer observation and the results have been encouraging:

The early indicators are that this process is something that both observers and even those being observed enjoy. Teachers are learning from one another and perhaps more importantly are having more meaningful conversations about what and how they teach. We have given specific instructions within this process for people to focus on elements of the teaching process rather than the curriculum being taught. In essence, we want to move teachers away from conversations about what is being taught, and towards conversations about how it is being taught.⁶⁷

5.78 The Haileybury Independent School acknowledge that the idea of classroom observation can cause unease amongst teachers: 'of all elements of potential learning frameworks, the idea of direct observation and measurement of teaching performance causes the most anxiety'.⁶⁸ They argue it is nonetheless a 'valuable tool' if carefully implemented, with 'appropriate and necessary feedback' provided.⁶⁹

5.79 Similarly, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association noted that teachers need opportunities 'to observe great teachers at work, develop model lessons with great teachers and have great teachers observe other teachers in real lessons with a view to providing feedback'.⁷⁰

5.80 Mrs Michele Bernshaw, Principal of the King David School in Melbourne, described how her school took part in an Australian Government Quality Teacher Program trial which involved improving pedagogy through observation. They are expanding the trial this year. She argued 'research shows that where it is done peer to peer and also where there is at least a reasonable degree of teacher willingness to engage in the task, it [observation] is most effective'.⁷¹

5.81 The Australian Education Union (AEU) supports a range of personal development opportunities for teachers, but rejected any compulsory personal development initiatives, such as peer observation. The union emphasised that the key is 'not to impose' any initiatives on teachers and to ensure that all programs are properly resourced.⁷²

66 Mr Derek Scott, CEO and Principal, Haileybury Independent School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 49.

67 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 11.

68 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 9.

69 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 9.

70 Isolated Children's Parents' Association, *Submission 35*, p. 3.

71 Mrs Michele Bernshaw, Principal, King David School, Australian Council of Jewish Schools, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 7.

72 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Federal President, Australian Education Union, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2012, p. 59.

5.82 The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership is currently developing a 'Teacher Observation Framework', which it submits is an 'important tool for improving teaching'.⁷³

The need to devote time and resources to professional learning

5.83 Professional learning can be time and resource intensive for schools as teachers undertaking mentoring and collaborative learning activities need a reduction in their teaching load to participate. The Independent Education Union of Australia submitted that the costs are high:

... because it means you have to release those teachers from their day-to-day duties so they can have the experience of other classrooms, mentoring with other teachers. As soon as you take a teacher offline from their classroom work, you have to replace them—put another body in that classroom. A simple recommendation and work around something like that is, we recognise, expensive. But at some point we have to accept the fact that expense and resources are going to be required to do that and to act upon those as we see in the national interest.⁷⁴

5.84 Dr Ben Jensen of the Grattan Institute submitted that education resources need to be spent more effectively and that targeting professional learning is an efficient way of doing this:

What I constantly argue is that, if you target either the Gonski or our existing resources towards freeing up teachers' time, which means reduced teaching time, and focus in on those areas—so professional collaboration, professional learning—you will have a serious impact on student learning, regardless of whether it is a low, a medium or a high SES school. I think the evidence is pretty clear on that.⁷⁵

5.85 The committee heard rural and remote schools need additional support for such collaboration. The Isolated Children's Parents' Association argues that 'there is a real problem in rural and remote education as far as the outcomes go' and as such, teachers in these areas should have preferential access to professional development.⁷⁶

Training for teachers who are teaching 'out of field'

5.86 Teachers need to know what they are teaching and how to teach it. Incept Labs describe the need for 'pedagogical content knowledge', which means having '...insights into learning, high quality discipline content knowledge and high quality pedagogical training'. Teachers who have a strong understanding of subject content

73 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, answer to question on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 26 March 2013), p. 4.

74 Mr Chris Watt, Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 2.

75 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 40.

76 Mr Duncan Taylor, President, Isolated Children's Parents Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 19.

can ask more engaging and open-ended questions of students. Teachers with high pedagogical content knowledge can be more 'strategic about their students' learning'.⁷⁷

5.87 The concept of pedagogical content knowledge is relevant when considering the issue of teachers required to teach disciplines they have not been trained in (for example secondary maths). The Independent Education Union submitted that 'most teachers can report that during their career they have been required to teach some part of the curriculum for which they are not well qualified'.⁷⁸ The Australian Education Union's survey data supported this statement:

Data from the AEU's 2010 national State of Our Schools survey indicate that the majority of secondary schools have teaching staff working in subject areas for which they are not qualified with mathematics, technology, science, special education and physical education being the 'worst' areas in this respect.⁷⁹

5.88 The Productivity Commission estimated that the number of teachers teaching mathematics who were not qualified to do so is between 15 and 25 per cent.⁸⁰ The Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) noted that this is a significant problem for mathematics as a discipline and argued that teachers teaching 'out of field' need 'special and focused support to teach mathematics'. AMSI recommends there be a 'nationally coordinated scheme' to 'qualify' these teachers.⁸¹

5.89 It is important to provide support for those teachers who are teaching mathematics or science without any subject matter expertise. The STELR program run by the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) is targeted at these teachers. President of ATSE, Dr Alan Finkel explained:

We recognise that there are a lot of teachers who are teaching outside their area of absolute competency in physics and chemistry. To help them we have tried to create a product that is ready to roll.

They go to the curriculum cupboard and the cupboard is filled. So even if they are not domain experts they have background material, lesson plans, student worksheets and the equipment. If you are not an expert and you are being asked to teach some lesson in physics and you do not have the equipment, you will not even know where to go out to buy, borrow or beg for the equipment.⁸²

77 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 14.

78 Independent Education Union, *Submission 12*, p. 13.

79 Australian Education Union, *Submission 16*, p. 33.

80 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 90.

81 Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Submission 5*, p. 16.

82 Dr Alan Finkel, President, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 9.

5.90 The committee notes that demand for the STELR program 'continues to exceed ATSE's financial capacity' and further funding would be needed for expansion.⁸³

5.91 AMSI also provides training to teachers teaching maths out of field. An intensive course run in Geelong produced a strong – yet still inadequate – improvement in the teachers' knowledge.⁸⁴

5.92 In relation to literacy, ad hoc support is provided to individual schools by skilled literacy practitioners, such as Ms Misty Adoniou. While such training is an important remedial measure, the ability to teach literacy should to be a core element in pre-service teacher education courses (discussed in chapter four of this report).⁸⁵

5.93 Such programs are very useful for teachers facing a subject they are unqualified to teach, however the committee notes that long term solutions to the issue of teaching 'out of field' are required.

The role of universities in offering professional learning programs

5.94 Universities have a role in working with employers to develop professional learning for teachers. The Australian Catholic University is undertaking a number of initiatives with schools and school leadership to support ongoing professional development.⁸⁶

5.95 Dr Griffiths from the National Catholic Education Commission described Catholic schools working closely with universities:

I think the Catholic employers, particularly the major Catholic employers, are quite forthright, if you like, in the demands or the requests that they would place on local universities in terms of what they would like them to do with regard to their professional development. A case in point is the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The Catholic Education Office in Melbourne would be the largest Catholic system in Australia, with over 300 schools, I think. They have just built a leadership centre on a school site just near the Australian Catholic University on Victoria Parade in East Melbourne.

...I understand there is quite a detailed memorandum of understanding about the contribution the university will make in terms of what the Catholic Education Office and its advisers and principals and staff have agreed they want. And I think that is the case generally. It is not, 'I have my program, come and get it'; it is, "What can we do, what do you need and

83 Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, answer to question on notice (received 28 March 2013).

84 Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, answer to question on notice, 4 March 2013, (received 27 March 2013), Q4.

85 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 29.

86 Australian Catholic University, *Submission 56*, pp. 17–18.

how can we work this out together? What strengths do we have and what strengths do you have?'.⁸⁷

5.96 Ms Misty Adoniou, Lecturer, stressed the need for closer relationships between new teachers and universities:

It is like the first year really needs to be the fifth year of university, and it is like the fourth year of university needs to be the first year of teaching. That final year needs to be a lovely collaboration between the two. The benefits would be enormous because universities would see what is happening in schools, and schools would benefit from the professional learning that they would get from working with educators. We may have a reputation for being up in the clouds, but really we work a lot with cutting-edge understandings of how teaching and learning happens. So there is much to be learnt from cooperating with academics.⁸⁸

5.97 In response to further questioning by the committee a number of educational institutions provided details of their collaborations with schools.⁸⁹ While it is clear that efforts have been made to engage with schools, more work needs to be done in this area to ensure that teachers and school communities can benefit from the research of universities – and vice versa.

The potential of online tools

5.98 A variety of online tools are available to teachers for support, encouragement and professional development. The committee heard of some web resources that have been funded by governments, other useful resources include blogs set-up by teachers themselves.⁹⁰ The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) observed that teachers are using the internet to share knowledge:

With a lot of the online capabilities, teacher specialisation is being shared online. Language is one area in which that is happening, for regional delivery, and there are other areas in which they do not necessarily have that specialist teaching base within the schools themselves.⁹¹

5.99 This sophisticated approach to professional support and development enables a teacher located in Mildura Victoria to offer and receive professional support from a teacher located on the other side of the country for very minimal cost.

5.100 During the Canberra hearing Ms Adoniou suggested that given the range of online tools available, it may assist if all resources were grouped together on one

87 Dr William Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer, National Catholic Education Commission, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, pp. 48–49.

88 Ms Misty Adoniou, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 27.

89 For example: Deakin University, Melbourne University, answer to question taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received on 10 April 2013 and 27 March respectively). See also, Chapter 4.

90 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 30.

91 Ms Alex Gordon, Group Manager, Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 59.

website as this would make it easier for teachers to locate all relevant resources and 'support each other'.⁹² Ms Adoniou's suggestion is a sensible one that requires further consideration.

Committee view

5.101 Quality professional learning is vital to improving Australia's education systems. Effective professional learning can improve a teacher's subject knowledge, improve the methods they use to impart this knowledge, and should ultimately result in better outcomes for students.

5.102 It is clear from the evidence provided by witnesses and submitters that effective professional learning activities are essential to quality teaching. Teachers need to be given the opportunity to continually improve their professional skills. Professional learning should be an ongoing activity throughout a teacher's career, indeed, 'continuous learning is essential and is everyone's responsibility'.⁹³ The committee believes there is value in professional development activities like peer observation for all teachers.

5.103 The use of online tools for professional development activities is promising, especially for students in geographically isolated locations, however this is a relatively new policy area which requires further development. There is also value in schools developing closer relationships with universities to support the ongoing professional development of new and experienced teachers. These collaborations can also contribute to ensuring that universities remain connected to the practical realities of teaching in Australia today.

5.104 The committee notes that professional learning can be costly in terms of time and resources, and that the cost-benefit of these activities can vary greatly. In-school activities like mentoring, collaboration, classroom observation and feedback are relatively inexpensive forms of professional learning that require an investment of time rather than resources. While there is inevitably a cost associated with reducing teacher workloads to facilitate in-school activities, the committee believes these types of collaborative activities have significant value.

5.105 The number of teachers teaching 'out of field' (without appropriate subject expertise) is of concern. The committee commends the Australian Academy of Technological Services and Engineering for creating science resources for such teachers. The necessary long term solution to this issue is to encourage more applicants to study these subjects, and provide pathways for existing teachers to become qualified in these areas.

5.106 The committee believes the success of professional learning should be measured not just in the benefit to the teacher, but in improved outcomes for the students.

92 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 30.

93 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 11.

Recommendation 20

5.107 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors consider ways to support in-house professional learning and development (including mentoring), with an associated reduction in teaching loads.

Recommendation 21

5.108 The committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations investigate the potential use of online tools for delivery of professional learning for teachers.

Recommendation 22

5.109 The committee recommends that the state and territory governments consider creating pathways (for example scholarships) for teachers teaching 'out of field' in mathematics and science to become qualified in these disciplines. The Commonwealth Government should also consider increasing the number of postgraduate Commonwealth Supported Places in these disciplines. As an interim solution, the committee recommends that programs which assist teachers teaching 'out of field' be expanded.

Recommendation 23

5.110 The committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations commission a study in 2016 to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives being undertaken by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.