

Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Senate Inquiry - Teaching and Learning (maximising investment in Australian schools)

Questions on Notice - Response from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

The Committee has placed the following written questions on notice, which should reach the secretariat by **COB Thursday, 28 March 2013**:

1. The committee heard that mathematics is not required as a pre-requisite for many primary teaching courses, even though most primary school teachers will teach mathematics. Can you comment on whether you believe that senior high school mathematics should be a pre-requisite subject for primary school teachers? [AMSI, Submission 11, p. 14]

AITSL Response:

Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures, sets out the National Program Standards initial teacher education programs will need to meet to be nationally accredited.

Program Standard 3.1 states:

All entrants to initial teacher education will successfully demonstrate their capacity to engage effectively with a rigorous higher education program and to carry out the intellectual demands of teaching itself. To achieve this, it is expected that applicants' levels of personal literacy and numeracy should be broadly equivalent to those of the top 30 per cent of the population.

Program Standard 3.2 states:

Providers who select students who do not meet the requirements in 3.1 above must establish satisfactory additional arrangements to ensure that all students are supported to achieve the required standard before graduation.

The national approach to accreditation makes clear that literacy and numeracy are important for all teachers, but provide for the required levels of literacy and numeracy to be demonstrated in a range of ways, including but not limited to senior secondary school results.

2. Would you support Australia requiring all teaching graduates to pass a test to demonstrate that they meet the minimum standards of knowledge and skill before they are registered as teachers? (This occurs in the UK, see Australian Council for Educational Research, Submission 26, p. 4).

AITSL Response:

The Standards and Procedures for the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia* outline what an initial teacher education program needs to do to prepare teachers to teach in Australian schools, and to meet the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the Graduate career stage. The Standards and

Procedures contain three elements:

- the graduate teacher standards, which make explicit what graduates of nationally accredited programs should know and be able to do
- the program standards, which describe key features of high quality initial teacher education programs
- the accreditation process, which sets out a nationally consistent process for accrediting programs, including establishment and composition of assessment panels, the assessment of programs by these panels, and reporting accreditation decisions.

Graduates of programs accredited under the Standards and Procedures will meet the nationally recognised qualifications requirement for registration as teachers.

A critical aspect of this approach to accrediting initial teacher education is that graduates will meet the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* at the graduate career stage. This will be assessed during initial teacher education programs.

3. Please comment on Dr Ben Jensen's suggestion that education department should restrict the number of placements available in government schools for pre-service teachers to obtain experience. In this scheme, state and territory governments could ensure that only the top students become teachers – while not interfering with the number of students that universities train (*Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, Melbourne, p. 37):

There has been a lot of talk about putting in minimum ATAR requirements, for example. I have some reservations about doing that. I think we have fought long and hard to uncapped places at universities, and I am worried about it going back down that road. But there is no doubt that what is considered high-quality initial teacher education is a greater emphasis on high quality of placements in schools—so you spend more time in schools being developed, mentored et cetera during your course. At the moment, there is great trouble finding high-quality placements, partly because there are so many students in these education courses.

That is a clear lever that systems in the states and territories have. They have that as a lever. They can say: 'We have done the demographic analysis et cetera; supply and demand says we need this many teachers over the next five years.' Therefore, they can actually restrict placements. They can say: 'Instead of having 5½ thousand graduates and only hiring 500 of them, we're only going to provide 500 placements over the next few years.' That will take care of the too-low ATAR problem, for lack of a better word. Simple supply and demand will say: 'We're restricting supply to 500.' That means you are not putting a cap on the universities. They can still do what they want, but they will not get registered in a teaching degree out of that: 'You can do a Bachelor of Education, but you won't get a placement because we're zoning that to the top 500.' From that, there is a clear way, without getting into a government mandated ATAR minimum, to just say, 'We're restricting supply,' or demand, if you look at it from that perspective.

AITSL Response:

Specific arrangements regarding the provision of practicum placements are a matter for employers and initial teacher education providers.

AITSL believes high quality supervised teaching practicum is an important element of initial teacher education programs and *School Partnerships* (Standard 5) are a key principle outlined in the Standards and Procedures for *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education in Australia*:

National accreditation is built around partnerships involving shared responsibilities and obligations among teacher education providers, schools, teachers, employers, and teacher regulatory authorities.

4. What percentage of those seeking registration, under the new AITSL system, fail? (That is, what percentage of students who have been passed by universities, are refused registration?) Please breakdown your answer to the new starters as well as existing teachers seeking registration under AITSL.

AITSL Response:

AITSL does not register teachers. Teacher Regulatory Authorities in each jurisdiction may be able to provide this data.

5. The committee has heard that a large proportion of teachers in their first years of teaching work as casuals or on fixed-term contracts. One cause of this was said to be the need to hold positions for those on maternity or other leave. Do you consider this to be the predominant cause of the widespread use of casuals and contracts? Are there other causes that you can elaborate on?

AITSL Response:

This question falls within the scope of advice of employers.

Senator McKenzie has placed the following written question on notice, which should reach the secretariat by **COB Thursday, 28 March 2013:**

6. This questions stems from first paragraph on top of p. 10 of your submission – OECD reports that teachers are not receiving the effective feedback that they require. Can you comment on the School Inspector type model that was previously used in some Australian jurisdictions? Do you believe that this model promotes good teaching?

AITSL Response:

The *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* outlines the components associated with teacher performance and development which usually occur in a cycle. The cycle provides a structure for appraising, developing and refining teaching practice, and recognises the entitlement of teachers to receive feedback and support.

Schools with an effective approach to teacher performance and development have a commitment to ongoing formal and informal feedback and coaching built into their culture. Timely, frequent and improvement focused feedback supports teachers' efforts to improve their practice, guides choices about professional learning, and informs reflection on and revision of performance and development goals.

As outlined in the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* an essential element of feedback and review is that:

All teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback on their performance. This includes a formal review against their performance and development goals

at least annually, with verbal and written feedback being provided to the teacher.

Classroom practice is a key component of quality teaching and a major source of evidence for studying how teachers teach, determining what highly effective teachers do in the classroom that distinguishes their practice from less effective teachers and identifying what instructional practices correlate most highly to achievement.

AITSL is currently working with key stakeholders including an expert teachers group, to develop a Teacher Observation Framework linked to the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.

Observation is an important tool for improving teaching. There are different models of how this can occur, including through observers external to the school.

7. How can the quality and availability of practicum during pre-service training can be improved?

AITSL Response:

In relation to the quality of practicum, the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia – Standards and Procedures* outlines National Program Standards, which state that providers require that the supervised teaching practice (5.6):

- *mandates at least a satisfactory formal assessment of the program's students against the professional practice elements of the Graduate Teacher Standards as a requirement for graduating from the program*
- *is undertaken mostly in a recognised Australian school setting over a substantial and sustained period that is relevant to an authentic classroom environment, and*
- *includes a designated role for supervising teachers in the assessment of the program's students.*

Specific arrangements for the provision of practicum placements are a matter for employers and initial teacher education providers.

8. How do you deal with the reality of Principals being educational leaders in small regional schools when combined with the realities of administration costs?

AITSL Response:

The Australian Professional Standard for Principals is a public statement which sets out what principals are expected to know and understand and do to achieve their work. It applies to emerging, aspiring, practicing and experienced principals across Australia. The Standard acknowledges the diversity of contexts and complexity and dual roles principals play, particularly in small, regional, rural or remote schools.

AITSL has recently established a *Teaching Principals Project* to identify best practice of teaching principals and alignment of their work with the Australian Professional Standard for Principals. Further research has been commissioned and a practitioner reference group engaged to provide further input, generate discussion on the key issues and identify potential areas for future action.

To support principals to operate autonomously, either within their system or due to

their geographic location, AITSL also delivers the national flagship professional learning program *Local Leadership*.

AITSL receives funding from the Australian Government as part of the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative to deliver the professional learning program. The program supports school leaders to be more empowered to make local decisions.

9. Why was the Country Areas Program phased out?

AITSL Response:

The Country Areas Program was administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

10. In relation to your comments on p. 13 of your submission – the need to have pay systems that encourage the best teachers to remain in the classroom – can you comment on other evidence that the committee has received that teachers know the pay scales and still enter the profession?

AITSL Response:

There are a range of factors that drive individuals' career choices. Pay scales are one factor, but have to be considered in the context of the other drivers of these choices.

As stated in AITSL's submission to the committee, a teacher at the top of the pay scale in Australia earns only 1.49 times the salary of a beginning teacher (OECD, 2012). 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.

The details of pay scales and other terms and conditions are a matter between teachers and their employers.

11. Please provide the criteria you have developed for assessing teacher performance.

AITSL Response:

AITSL worked closely with key education stakeholders to develop the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* which outlines the critical factors for creating a performance and development culture in schools, including essential elements that should be present in all Australian schools.

The key elements of a culture of performance and development are:

A focus on student outcomes

Improving teaching is not an end in itself. It is directed at improving outcomes for students. This Framework defines student outcomes broadly to include student learning, engagement in learning and wellbeing, and acknowledges that these can be measured in a variety of ways.

A clear understanding of effective teaching

To focus on improving teaching, it is necessary to have a clear vision of what

effective teaching looks like. The National Professional Standards for Teachers outline what teachers should know and be able to do at four career stages.

These Standards present a comprehensive picture of the elements of effective teaching covering the three domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. This understanding of effective teaching will be shaped by the school's context and priorities.

Leadership

Research is clear not only on the importance of school leadership in improving school performance, but also on the critical role of leaders in creating a culture of performance and development.

Leadership must come from all levels, from those with and without formal leadership positions. A truly effective approach is characterised by a shared commitment to improvement and an acceptance that teachers have a powerful role to play in each others' development, as well as their own.

Flexibility

All schools are different, and need to respond to their unique contexts and histories. Schools vary widely in their existing approaches to teacher performance and development. It is clear that effective implementation takes into account starting points, and that the sequencing of change will be different in different situations.

Coherence

It is important that teachers and school leaders experience performance and development as something that ties together the various activities they are engaged in, rather than a separate and additional process. Alignment to school plans and school-wide approaches to professional learning are particularly important

Within the performance and development cycle, there are four elements that are essential to an effective approach:

Reflection and goal setting

- 1. All teachers have a set of documented and regularly reviewed goals related to both performance and development, and ways of measuring progress towards them, that are agreed with the principal or delegate.*

Professional practice and learning

- 2. All teachers are supported in working towards their goals, including through access to high quality professional learning*
- 3. Evidence used to reflect on and evaluate teacher performance, including through the full review described below, should come from multiple sources and include as a minimum: data showing impact on student outcomes; information based on direct observation of teaching; and evidence of collaboration with colleagues.*

Feedback and review

- 4. All teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback on their performance. This includes a formal review against their performance and*

development goals at least annually, with verbal and written feedback being provided to the teacher.

5. What reasons did Victoria and Queensland provide for not signing up for the Rewards for Great Teachers National Partnership?
- Is there an additional workload imposed to participate in this program – for example, data collection?
 - Would you say that Victoria and Queensland have equivalent programs?
 - Has Queensland and Victoria's decision not to sign up yet had any funding implications for those states?

AITSL Response:

Rewards for Great Teachers is an initiative administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

6. On page 5 of your submission you say that the Teacher Standards offer a 'baseline' for 'assessing, accrediting and supporting the quality of pre-service education programs and determining the professional requirements for registration to practice'. What measures are being used for this baseline data?

AITSL Response:

During the development of the Program Standards for *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia*, Ministers specifically requested that information standards be included in the program standards.

In response to the Ministers' request for information standards Program Standard 7.3 was developed and endorsed:

Providers supply data as required to support local and national teacher workforce supply reporting, to support program and provider benchmarking, and to build a cumulative database of evidence relating to the quality of teacher education in Australia. Data collected is held in a centrally managed database and, under agreed protocols, will be available to all jurisdictions and teacher education providers for research, evaluation and program improvement.

AITSL's website now has a searchable database which provides information on accredited initial teacher education programs. The database replaces the previous static listing of programs and brings together for the first time, in a searchable format, the programs accredited through each jurisdiction.

AITSL has planned a two phase project, with Phase 1 addressing the Ministers' requests- using currently available data for publication in 2013 – and Phase 2 scoping the collection and reporting of additional initial teacher education data relating specifically to the Program Standards. A Final Report on Phase 1 will be provided to Ministers in May 2013.

7. The committee has heard from a number of witnesses that cultural and behavioural change is necessary to improve educational outcomes. How will AITSL ensure that the National Professional Standards for Teachers will improve teacher quality, given cultural and behavioural limitations?

AITSL Response:

As outlined in the response to question 11, AITSL developed a nationally consistent approach to teacher performance and development which was endorsed by Education Ministers on 3 August 2012.

This involved consultation with all state and territory education employers, Catholic and Independent school authorities, teacher regulatory authorities, peak national bodies, including teacher unions and principals associations, and practising teachers and principals.

The *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* calls for the creation of a performance and development culture in all Australian schools. A performance and development culture is characterised by a clear focus on improving teaching as a powerful means of improving student outcomes. In particular, it requires that teachers: know what is expected of them; receive frequent, useful feedback on their teaching; and access high quality support to improve their practice.

There is clear evidence that purposeful professional learning for teachers and school leaders is one of the most effective strategies for improving student outcomes in our schools. The *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* is a resource to inform and influence the planning, design and evaluation of ongoing professional learning that leads to achievement, development and progression against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals. And which has a direct impact on the quality of students' educational experiences.

The professional learning undertaken will vary to suit the context and priorities of teachers, leaders, schools, systems and sectors but the imperative to engage actively in high quality professional learning remains the same.

The Charter defines effective professional learning as a shared responsibility that must be taken up at all levels of the education system – by teachers, school leaders, system leaders and policy makers. Changing culture and professional practices is not easy and will require sustained effort.