

CHAPTER 4

Selection, training and registration of teachers

Introduction

4.1 A key focus of this inquiry has been the selection, training and registration of teachers. This Chapter will analyse trends and concerns in the selection, training and registration of teachers. It will begin by defining the term 'quality teachers' before looking more closely at the issues of entry into education courses; training courses for pre-service teachers at university and ensuring a quality supply of teachers through registration management.

4.2 Although witnesses and submitters agreed that standards for the teaching profession are necessary, the committee heard a variety of perspectives on what those standards should be and whether or not current arrangements are appropriate. Opinions varied on the question of when candidates should be selected: at entry to teaching courses, at graduation or at registration.

4.3 A number of submitters called for an overhaul of the entire system of selection, training and registration. For example, Dr Ben Jensen, Grattan Institute, told the committee during the Melbourne hearing that in his view:

[F]ewer people should go into either a Bachelor of Teaching or whatever you want to call the particular courses. I believe we should train fewer. We should set much tighter requirements coming out and put some resources into seriously assessing students who come out the other end.¹

4.4 Incept Labs reached a similar conclusion, submitting that recruitment, selection, retention and preparation of teachers is a key area for improvement in Australia because:

What our work indicates, is that a key driver of educational outcomes is the spectrum of beliefs the teaching workforce hold in relation to teaching and learning, and the proportions in which these beliefs are held by the teaching workforce.

4.5 However, Incept Labs warned that simple measures that only address one issue – such as changes to ATAR scores – will have limited impact because they do

1 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 42.

not account for the fundamental influence that a teacher's beliefs have on performance.²

Quality teachers

4.6 Before we turn to the key focus of this chapter, it is important to first consider the qualities that make a 'good' teacher – because once the desired attributes are identified, selection processes can be informed and targeted.³ A number of witnesses and submitters described quality teaching, and the most helpful descriptions follow.

4.7 Professor Geoff Masters, Australian Council for Educational Research, reported that the feedback he had received from principals was that the most important attribute a teacher can possess is the ability to work with children. Combined with this, teachers also need to be able to know their subject and how children learn that subject.⁴ It is crucial then that teachers only teach subjects that they are qualified to teach.

4.8 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, agreed that quality teaching is more than a good education and intelligence, as teachers also need to have a passion and desire for teaching. During the Sydney hearing Ms Catto observed that:

Something that is hard to measure is a person's attitude and their desire or their love of teaching, and those kinds of things. There is no point having an extremely intelligent person going into teaching who has no desire to work with children and invest in those children.⁵

4.9 Mrs Hilary Backus, President, Queensland Association of State School Principals, considered if a teacher is not 'very strong with relationships' and 'passionate' about their work, then :

[It] does not matter how much training and how much set curriculum you feed them on a plate—they will not be effective in the classroom.⁶

4.10 A quality teacher will also see his or her role as a profession, not just a craft. Professional teachers are equipped to examine evidence and determine what action will promote learning for each student in their particular context.

2 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, pp 19 – 20. The authors of the Supplementary Submission, coordinated by Incept Labs, are: Dr Chris Goldspink and Dr Robert Kay of Incept Labs, Professor Terry Lovat, Newcastle University, Professor Martin Westwell, Flinders University, Teaching and Learning Services (Department for Education and Child Development, South Australia), and Human Resources and Workforce Development (Department for Education and Child Development, South Australia).

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

4 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 50.

5 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 43.

6 Mrs Hilary Backus, President, Queensland Association of State School Principals, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 9.

Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, described the difference between those who practice the craft of teaching and those who are professionals:

There will be many, many teachers who see [teaching] only as a craft and they are not in any position to evaluate what are the evidence based interventions that are going to work. When it becomes a profession, teachers are available to evaluate data but also evaluate evidence and say, 'Here is the evidence base that says this is going to work,' and are able to implement it.⁷

4.11 Incept Labs suggested that quality teaching should include the capability to support students in achieving the Melbourne Goals, particularly Goal 2, discussed in Chapter 2. Incept Labs cited and endorsed the following description of quality teaching:

Accomplished teachers...treat students equitably. ...They...adjust their practice based on observation and knowledge of their students' interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, family circumstances and peer relationships...they foster students' self-esteem, motivation, character, civic responsibility and their respect for individual, cultural, religious and racial differences.⁸

4.12 Quality teachers will also have pedagogical content knowledge – that is, expertise in the subjects they teach, and an understanding of how students from a range of backgrounds and abilities learn that subject. Incept Labs explains that:

It is a teacher's [pedagogical content knowledge] that provides for the use of multiple representations of concepts (e.g. analogies, metaphors, models, experiences) and multiple entry points into an idea so that each of the students in every classroom have a way into a concept that is meaningful to them. PCK transforms discipline content knowledge into a school subject that is constructed in such a way so as to meet the needs of the diversity of students (Panizzon, 2011, Shulman, 1986).⁹

4.13 These descriptions give a sense of the sort of qualities that applicants for education programs should possess, and also indicate that the attributes of a quality teacher are multiple and are not limited to academic ability.

7 Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 19. See also, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*.

8 The USA National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1999, pp 3–4, cited by Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 2.

9 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 14 (see pp 22 – 24 for full references of works cited).

Entry to education courses

Admission policy

4.14 The federal government introduced demand-driven funding for undergraduate education at public universities in early 2012: this means that university places are no longer capped and that each university sets its own entry standards and decides how many students it will enrol in each course. This policy was introduced following a recommendation of the Bradley Review of Higher Education¹⁰. The federal government advises that this reform is designed to promote growth in the education sector and ensure that Australia has sufficient quality graduates to meet its skill needs.¹¹

4.15 A natural consequence of this policy has been a further drop in entrance requirements for teaching courses at some institutions. With a view to preventing a corresponding fall in the quality of teaching graduates, the federal government introduced new Accreditation Standards for teaching programs that have applied from the beginning of this year to all new teaching programs and programs due for reaccreditation.¹² The Accreditation Standards include a requirement that universities demonstrate that graduates from teaching programs have attained the level of proficiency required for a Graduate under the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.¹³ The standards also require that entrants to teaching courses have personal literacy and numeracy levels in the top 30 per cent of the population either prior to commencing studies or prior to graduating.¹⁴

Current entry standards

Background

4.16 The committee was surprised at the range of entrance requirements of teacher training courses. For example, the University of Melbourne graduate teacher training course has rigorous entry standards: students must achieve either second class honours or a distinction average in their undergraduate studies.¹⁵ In contrast, some universities have much lower entry standards, indeed one institution admits students with ATAR

¹⁰ Australian Government (Denise Bradley, Peter Noonan, Helen Nugent, Bill Scales), *Review of Australian Higher Education – Final Report*, December 2008, p. xxiii.

¹¹ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10.

¹² Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10. See also, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 9.

¹³ A public statement that outlines what constitutes teacher quality: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10.

¹⁴ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10. See Chapter 2 for recent government announcements in relation to teacher entry standards.

¹⁵ Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 5.

scores as low as 43 and other universities have alternate entry points where some students have not even completed year 11 and 12. The result is a variance in teacher quality and 'the differential between the top and the bottom is widening at a rapid rate'.¹⁶

4.17 The Australian Council of Deans of Education submitted that despite minimum entry requirements many education entrants do have high ATAR scores, many are postgraduate entrants and a high ATAR score is more an indicator of the suburb the student lives in, the school they attended and the family and/or community support they received.¹⁷ The Deans further submit that education faculties provide appropriate support to students who need to improve in mathematics and literacy.

4.18 Nevertheless, many submitters connected the low entry standards with a drop in teacher quality and status of the profession. A New South Wales government discussion paper illustrates this point neatly. The paper reported that in 2012 more than 20 per cent of undergraduate entrants to teacher education courses had a Year 12 score below 60, and that university education courses were the least popular choice for students who achieved Year 12 scores above 90.¹⁸ Based on this evidence, teaching would appear to be a back-up option for many middling students, rather than a profession that Australia's top performers aspire to. In relation to this phenomenon, Ms Kylie Catto observed that students who see teaching as a back-up option 'are not necessarily passionate about teaching or passionate about developing young children to the best of their capacity'.¹⁹ Such students may also lack other important attributes, such as aptitude for learning.

4.19 The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership submitted that diverse pathways into teaching should be encouraged, however these pathways must 'meet the rigour of the agreed Standards'. AITSL acknowledged that analysis of data about the impact of entry reforms must be collected and published.²⁰

Graduate entry

4.20 The Melbourne Graduate School of Education submitted that teacher quality would improve if teaching programs became a graduate course only, as is the case in high performing countries such as Finland. Such a measure would address the 'major oversupply' of teachers seeking employment and also serve to raise the profile of the teaching profession, prevent universities enrolling students who are 'unlikely to be competent in the classroom' and 'ensure that students are more prepared through their

16 Professor Stephen Dinham, Professor of Teacher Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 15.

17 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 14.

18 NSW Government, 'Great Teaching, Inspired Learning'. Cited in Anna Patty, 'Teaching bar raised: 70% of applicants would be rejected', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 2013.

19 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 43.

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

undergraduate degrees'.²¹ In its experience, the decision to improve the quality of its program and move to a graduate level has 'raised the quality of candidates both coming into and exiting from our programs'.²²

4.21 The Melbourne Graduate School of Education has cited evidence that 90 per cent of its graduates feel prepared for the classroom, compared to the national average of 40 per cent nationally. The high level of preparedness is attributed in in part to the length and quality of its practicums.²³

4.22 The Australian Council of Deans of Education argued against a mandatory standard of graduate entry to education courses on the basis that this would exclude many of the diverse people who enter undergraduate degrees, in particular people who are the first members of their family to enter university. Professor Brenda Cherednichenko argued that graduate teachers continue to grow as teachers throughout their careers and that quality teaching should be viewed as 'a whole-of-career journey, not just a teacher education journey'.²⁴

4.23 The Australian Mathematical Science Institute expressed doubt that a graduate degree in Primary Teaching will make primary school teachers better at mathematics:

It is all very well for recent graduates to report that they feel more prepared, the reality may be that they feel more prepared, but are not. Janine McIntosh has taught in the University of Melbourne two-year masters (at a time when the university engaged sessional lecturers to cover their courses). The mathematical content knowledge of the primary teaching cohort was a little higher than in previous years under the old system of a four year undergraduate degree, but there were still quite a number of poorly prepared teachers graduating with a less than acceptable standard of mathematics understanding and confidence. The worry here is that Melbourne University's course is considered to be one with the highest standards in the country. There are many primary teachers graduating from other universities who are quite wobbly on their legs mathematically.²⁵

Prerequisites

4.24 In addition to higher entry requirements, the committee heard that the quality of primary school teachers would improve if Year 12 mathematics was a prerequisite subject to enrol in teaching programs. This is because students who do not study Year 12 mathematics have 'self-selected' out of the subject generally by year 11, and are not

21 Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 5.

22 Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 5.

23 Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 6.

24 Brenda Cherednichenko, President, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 20.

25 Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, Response to questions taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 27 March 2013).

'competent' or 'comfortable' with the subject.²⁶ While students at university are required to study mathematics, the quality of mathematics training varies across institutions and some prospective teachers get a very good foundation and others do not.²⁷

4.25 Changing prerequisites will have financial consequences for universities. Dr Alan Finkel, President, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, explained that if one university raises its standards but others do not, it will be disadvantaged and this is not a problem particular to teaching programs:

If you look at it with that cynical viewpoint, it affects every university. I am not picking on any university. One university cannot take on a whole spectrum of prerequisites without risking losing its opportunity to recruit really smart students who just have not chosen those prerequisites. So the lack of prerequisites is a uniform problem across the whole university space and it leads to consequential problems. If you take engineering, if students were to enter engineering without any calculus background, they would struggle to keep up.²⁸

4.26 The absence of confidence and solid grounding in mathematics will have flow on effects on the performance of teachers once they graduate and are in front of classes. It is clear from the evidence that any change to pre-requisites would need to be made by all universities, as the costs are too high for individual faculties.

4.27 It is against this backdrop that during the course of this inquiry a number of Australian governments have responded to calls to increase the minimum entrance requirements for teaching courses by raising ATAR scores and introducing entry and exit testing.²⁹

4.28 However, any initiative to improve admission standards must not focus only on Year 12 results. This is for two reasons. Firstly, only a third of entrants to teacher education courses enter on the basis of their Year 12 results. The remaining two thirds of entrants do so as graduate students or on alternate pathways.³⁰ Secondly, as there are many attributes an individual must possess in order to become a quality teacher, any remedy that focuses only on academic ability is unlikely to select the best candidates.

26 Ms Janine McIntosh, Schools Manager, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 5.

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

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

29 See Chapter 2 of this report.

30 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 12.

Selection on the basis of attributes

4.29 While many submitters called for an increase to minimum ATAR scores, other submitters rejected this measure on its own, and instead recommended a more sophisticated entry process to select the best applicants. Incept Labs provided a particularly well argued and evidence based submission supporting just such an approach and this chapter uses their model as a basis for reform. A number of other submitters made suggestions that are not inconsistent with those made by Incept Labs. For example, Mr Hart, Australian Primary Principals Association, suggested that applicants should be interviewed to determine if they have 'a collaborative approach to working and learning' and whether they are 'suited to the profession of teaching'.³¹

4.30 Many countries have a sophisticated selection process that includes assessing whether the applicant possesses the relevant attributes to enable them to be a good teacher. The Australian Council for Educational Research advised that the education systems that perform highly are selective about whom they will admit into teacher education courses and ensure that the number of teachers trained matches the number of teachers required.³² This approach takes into account academic ability and a range of other factors so that the right people become teachers – and the wrong ones do not.

4.31 Incept Labs' research concludes that a key driver of teacher quality is the belief that individual teachers have about teaching and learning. Teachers also need to have strong pedagogical content knowledge, as described at the beginning of this chapter. Efforts to improve teacher quality that focus only on ATAR scores or exit tests will not ensure that the best people become teachers, because these:

[S]imple and uninformed formulas are not designed to do the essential job of discerning and discriminating in order to find the kinds of candidates most likely to be disposed to be effective teachers of 21st Century Skills.³³

4.32 Incept Labs' evaluated the Teach SA program. The program was designed increase the number of skilled mathematics and science teachers in South Australia. Incept Labs' findings demonstrate the value of using multiple methods to test suitability for the teaching profession, including: psychometric testing, interviews, role-plays and teaching practice.³⁴ Each of these tools is inadequate on its own, but contribute to build an image teaching candidate.

4.33 The types of questions in interviews and psychometric testing and the style of role-play need to be calibrated to test the particular attributes that are sought. If this is not done correctly, then the process is expensive and of little use. Incept Labs explains that:

31 Mr Norm Hart, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 13

32 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 45.

33 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 14. (21st Century Skills are referred to Goal 2 of the Melbourne Goals).

34 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 11.

Interviews can be powerful tools if they ask the right questions; equally, they can be useless if they ask the wrong ones. University entrance scores tell us something about the student, though arguably not much about their disposition towards teaching and learning. Entrance scores might simply tell us that they themselves have been very good at following the scripts their teachers asked them to follow rather than being good at thinking and learning for themselves. Role-plays, teaching observations and psychometric testing all reveal different elements of the picture, however, none provide the overall picture if done alone.³⁵

4.34 The results of all the screening processes must be collated and weighted to provide an overall picture of the teaching applicant. A fascinating outcome of this process is that some applicants that have performed highly in some selection criteria have performed very poorly in others. Incept Labs is quick to point out that 'this doesn't mean they lack intelligence, the appropriate motivation or reasonable people skills – but it probably does mean they are not suitable candidates for teaching.'³⁶ This research highlights the weaknesses of an admission standard that looks only to entry or exit scores. In order to confidently select teaching candidates, a more sophisticated approach is needed.

Teacher training courses

4.35 Teacher training courses across Australia are diverse in quality. At some faculties graduates reported feeling very equipped to teach in a classroom. However, this was the exception and generally the sense of preparedness was quite low. Some witnesses called for strict limits to the number of graduates who receive practical training and are registered to restrict oversupply. Universities, on the other hand, submitted that teaching degrees are highly valued qualifications that are useful in a range of occupations.

Coursework

4.36 As discussed earlier in this chapter, the federal government introduced new Accreditation Standards for teaching programs to ensure that the uncapping of university places (and lower entrance standards) did not result in a corresponding drop in quality of education graduates.³⁷ All university courses have also been accredited by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency. And the Accreditation Standards include a requirement that universities demonstrate that graduates from teaching programs have attained the level of proficiency required for a graduate under the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers³⁸ In this regard, at least in theory, the outcomes of teacher training across the country should be the same.

35 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 11.

36 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 11.

37 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10.

38 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10.

4.37 However, there is great variance in teacher training courses across Australia and concerns persist that low entry standards to teaching courses will result in a reduction of teacher exit standards.³⁹ While the programs provided by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education have been singled out for their innovation and high quality, these are not typical of the types of programs offered by the majority of education institutions.⁴⁰ As a testament to this, some principals have also expressed some concern about the quality of some teaching graduates.

4.38 Incept Labs reported a consistent theme emerging from more than 120 interviews recently conducted with a 'wide range of teachers' at different career stages (early, mid and late). The results indicate that 'By and large' teachers interviewed were 'highly critical of the pre-service education experience, particularly with respect to preparing teachers for the real world of the classroom'.⁴¹ Incept Labs concluded that the consistency of experience:

[S]uggests strong systemic influences acting to constrain universities' willingness or capacity to respond to what are, beyond the post-course evaluations, widely recognised problems with pre-service teacher education.⁴²

4.39 The Australian Council of Education Deans considers that there have been improvements to teacher standards as a consequence of the introduction of the National Graduate Teacher Standards and the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs Professional Standards.

Engagement between schools and universities

4.40 The committee heard that universities have advisory committees with employer representation. These groups meet a few times a year to consider the courses, outcomes data and to provide feedback.⁴³ Dr Ben Jensen criticised the flow of information between universities and schools, describing it as 'miniscule' and 'rarely leading to actual action'.⁴⁴

4.41 If relationships between universities, schools and governments improved, the impact could be substantial. One reason why it is difficult to achieve change in this sector is because of the number of competing interests. Professor Cherednichenko, from the Australian Council of Deans of Education, called for national cohesion to improve educational outcomes overall:

39 See for example, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 5.

40 For example, Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 42.

41 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 13.

42 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 13.

43 Professor Diane Mayer, Teacher, Education Specialist, Australian Council of Deans of Education, 4 March 2013, p. 25.

44 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 41.

The fix is that we actually need to get together and get cohesion happening nationally. We have various interest groups with different priorities... We actually need some sort of systemic, structural way of continuing to build the relationships between schools, systems and universities so that we are all aligned, trying to get the right outcomes for kids. We are all in it for the same reason, but I do think there are a lot of competing interests that go on.⁴⁵

4.42 On a local level, the committee was pleased to hear that a recent initiative by the University of Canberra has seconded teachers to assist academics to deliver university tutorials to student teachers. The aim of this reform is to create a learning relationship between teachers and academics that also benefits students. Ms Misty Adoniou explained that:

[T]he general feeling was that we wanted it to be a two-way, reciprocal, relationship. We both wanted to learn from each other. There are obvious advantages to bringing seconded teachers in, and there are some inherent things to watch for. If we had a perfect education system at the moment, then it would be fine to just replicate it; but we do not, so we cannot afford to just have people come in and replicate that and talk about the practice they currently use—because we do not have a perfect education system. So we want something that is transformative.⁴⁶

4.43 In response to further questioning by the committee, a number of witnesses and submitters detailed engagement with universities and schools.⁴⁷ For example, the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) has strong engagement with universities, particularly in relation to its support program for teachers of mathematics and science (STELR). This organisation has formal arrangements in place with thirteen universities to include the STELR program as part of teacher education programs. ATSE also has strong relationships with universities to ensure that the STELR program has ongoing quality academic input. A number of universities also formally sponsor the work of ATSE, as do a number of state governments and corporations.⁴⁸

Committee view

4.44 The network between principals, teachers and universities should be strong. The committee was surprised to learn that this is not the case. These examples demonstrate that efforts are being made by some peak groups and universities to

45 Brenda Cherednichenko, President, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 23.

46 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 29.

47 See for example: University of Melbourne, Answer to questions taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 27 March 2013); Deakin University, Answer to questions taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 10 April 2013); Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, Answer to questions taken on notice, 4 March 2013, (received 27 March 2013).

48 Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, Response to question taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 28 March 2013).

actively work with stakeholders to improve outcomes for students, teachers and children. However more can be done in this area. To take a simple example, teachers have practical insights from the classroom to offer university academics and university academics have the latest research and evidence to share with teachers. Similarly, school principals can provide valuable feedback to universities about the quality of teaching graduates, and areas of strength and weakness. The difficulty is ensuring that the right networks are in place for these conversations to occur and that time is found for those networks to operate effectively.

Practical training for pre-service teachers

4.45 National accreditation standards outline the national standard of practical training for pre-service teachers. Education providers and employers are responsible for the specific arrangements of practicum placements. Supervised teaching practice must:

- mandate 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;
- be undertaken mostly in a recognised Australian school setting over a substantial and sustained period that is relevant to an authentic classroom environment; and
- include a designated role for supervising teachers in the assessment of the program's students.⁴⁹

4.46 The quality of practical teaching training is impacted by both cost and the oversupply of pre-service teachers. In metropolitan areas, and regions close to a university, demand for placements is extremely high and this impacts the quality of practical training available to students in these areas. Many schools are 'swamped' with requests for practical placements. While schools endeavour to accommodate these requests, sometimes there is 'a compromise' and some of the 'models of teacher educator that students are exposed to are not optimal'.⁵⁰

4.47 The funding issues are structural and arise from an oversight many years ago, where the cost of practicum was not included in university funding for teacher education. In particular, provision was not made for the payment of teachers who supervised practical training. (In contrast, funding was provided for the practical components of other programs, for example nursing and social work).⁵¹ A brief respite was provided in 2004 when Howard government directed \$129 million over three

49 Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia – Standards and Procedures, National Program Standards, 5.6: AITSL, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 26 March 2013), Q7.

50 Mr Norm Hart, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 14.

51 Research prepared by the NSW Council of Deans of Education cited by Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, pp 17 – 18.

years to cover university practicum costs. However, the current funding on a per capita basis is approximately a third of the previous rate.⁵²

4.48 Ms Lorraine Wilson, a former teacher and Deputy Principal in Victoria, described the difference between practical training she received and the current arrangements, submitting that this may explain the low confidence levels of many graduate teachers:

I know that when I trained and even not that long ago it was the university lecturers who came out to supervise teaching practice in schools. They do not have the money to do that anymore. So if anyone comes to see the students in their teaching rounds in the classrooms it is casually employed and usually retired teachers. They are paid at a much lower rate. I know that there is no contact between that casual person and tutors of the undergraduates at university. So the teaching practice is not nearly so valued. They cannot learn from their mistakes by talking about them back at the university.⁵³

4.49 Incept Labs' interviews with teachers found that the majority of teachers felt that their university education ill-prepared them for the realities of the classroom. However, there were two exceptions to this overall negative response. One teacher who had experienced two months of practical training was full of praise for the benefits of a longer training and a teacher who entered teaching after an external career felt that wider life experience was a good combination with the theoretical aspects taught at university.⁵⁴

4.50 The Melbourne Graduate School of Education has cited evidence that 90 per cent of its graduates feel prepared for the classroom, compared to the national average of 40 per cent nationally. The high level of preparedness is attributed in part to the length and quality of its practicums.⁵⁵

4.51 Melbourne University and Deakin University have specialised approaches to ensuring that students participate in quality pre-service practical experience in schools. Professor Field Rickards explained:

The model we set up was to have 42 base schools and early childhood networks. We pay for half a teacher's salary in each of those schools and early childhood networks. They are called teaching fellows. They work in partnership with the people based at the university who are teaching experts and who teach the disciplinary subjects and the core learning subjects—they are called clinical specialists. But it is all about building the bridge metaphorically. Do you remember that stuff that John Hattie was speaking about last night? Here it is in practice. So you see the practice, you

52 Research prepared by the NSW Council of Deans of Education cited by Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, pp 17 – 18.

53 Ms Lorraine Wilson, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 66.

54 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 17.

55 Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 6.

understand the theory and you understand why the practice is like it is. This is no different really to any other clinical model.⁵⁶

4.52 But it should be noted that these models are very expensive. The Melbourne model, which costs \$2million a year, was initially funded by start-up grants and support from the Catholic education system and still operates with support from the university. Other universities may not have the resources to replicate its model.⁵⁷

4.53 The Productivity Commissioner reported that the current funding for practical training is adequate and meets the needs of pre-service teachers. However Professor Ure, Deakin University, challenged this conclusion, arguing that the current funding is only adequate for antiquated training:

The Productivity Commission decided that teacher education actually had enough money to survive. It does if you look at it at 80 days and 60 days in your program and you send them out in an old model of teacher preparation, but deep teacher preparation requires a close working relationship between the university and the school sectors. Neither sector at the moment is adequately funded to support teacher education in that way, so when these extra funding models run out we scratch and think: 'How are we going to continue to provide that type of program?'⁵⁸

Committee view

4.54 The quality and length of practical training for pre-service teachers varies across the country. In general terms, demand for practical placements is too high, and neither schools nor universities are adequately funded to provide the support and training required. Action needs to be taken to ensure that pre-service practical training is of high quality and bridges the gap between theory and practice, regardless of the teaching program in which a student is enrolled. Consideration must also be given to capping the number of pre-service teachers who are eligible for pre-service training.

Registration of teachers – managing supply and ensuring quality

4.55 State and territories have set registration standards for many years. Recently, through COAG, the National Professional Standards for Teachers have been developed and include standards for determining the professional requirements for registration to practice.⁵⁹

4.56 However, there is a sense amongst school principals that some graduates entering the teaching profession lack competency and that that some universities are

56 Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 17.

57 Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 17.

58 Professor Christine Ure, Head of School, Deakin University, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 17.

59 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 5.

passing a small number of students who have 'inadequate levels of literacy and numeracy'.⁶⁰ Professor Geofferey Masters, Australian Council of Educational Research, reported that some principals had expressed concern 'about the extent to which some teachers do have minimum levels of grammar, numeracy and so on'.⁶¹ Mr Hart, Australian Primary Principals Association, advised that many principals when discussing the quality of teaching graduates 'will talk to you with concern in their voice'.⁶²

4.57 Ms Kylie Catto, President of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, emphasised the importance of having minimum registration standards, and submitted that robust registration standards will raise the status of the teaching profession.⁶³

4.58 Dr Kevin Donnelly of the Education Standards Institute was sceptical of the capacity of the new registration process administered by AITSL to improve quality standards:

[They] are going down the wrong pathway, because all they are doing is imposing a whole new series of constraints on schools and teachers which are making it difficult if not impossible, for teachers to do their job and leaders to their job.⁶⁴

4.59 Dr Ben Jensen offered guarded support for the standards, reminding the committee that states and territories have had standards for many years. He stated that the real test is whether or not the new standards have an impact on practice:

I believe the quality of the standards has increased. I think the national standards are better. But I do not think we should believe that now that we have national standards the world is suddenly going to change.

The real change that comes with teaching, as in improving teaching and therefore improving learning in schools, will come with how those standards are applied in practice. There is a tendency in education to believe that, if we have centrally determined standards, that will naturally appear as significant changes in schools and classrooms—and I do not see that happening. I believe we need standards. I believe it is important to have a benchmark but I also believe there are other things that are perhaps much more important. For example, there is a tendency for some to believe that we need standards and that we need some sort of centralised mechanism for

60 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 46.

61 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 50.

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

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

64 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 33.

assessing how teachers reach those standards by various year levels—years of experience. I think the evidence is quite clear that what we want is school leaders and teachers working with each other, observing each other's work, providing feedback on how they can improve their work and therefore improve learning to emphasise that aspect of reform, rather than saying that we need a centralised approach to reform.⁶⁵

4.60 An alternative to increasing entry standards for teachers, particularly given the recent deregulation of university entrance scores, is to introduce a cap on the number of students who can participate in practical training and ultimately on the number of pre-service teachers who can register. Dr Ben Jensen suggested this solution, submitting that graduates who are unsuccessful will still emerge with a university qualification that may serve them well in the marketplace with only the highest performing graduates qualifying to become teachers.⁶⁶ Ms Lorraine Wilson, a former teacher and deputy principal, also rejected the suggestion that pre-service teachers should undergo testing prior to registration.⁶⁷

4.61 Professor Masters submitted that filters should be in place both at entry, and at registration:

Many other countries have systems in place for ensuring that, before they are registered to practice, teachers demonstrate minimum standards in particular areas like literacy and numeracy, but in some cases assessments of their teaching skills as well—their pedagogical content knowledge. I think there is international evidence to support stronger systems for ensuring that, before teachers enter classrooms and practice in Australia, they demonstrate minimum standards that we set. In my view, that needs to be done in a nationally consistent and rigorous way.⁶⁸

4.62 Testing at registration provides an incentive for universities to increase the standards of teaching courses and to ensure that students who are not meeting the minimum standards do not pass. Dr Jensen described the registration process in South Korea:

[In] Korea you have a very, very difficult exam process after you graduate but before you are registered. If you want to be registered, you have to pass a really comprehensive examination process. It is a three-tier process: a multiple-choice exam, a longer short essay exam and then a demonstration

65 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 41.

66 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 37.

67 Ms Lorraine Wilson, Response to question taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 20 March 2013).

68 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 45.

of teaching in front of a panel. Very few people pass. You have to be very good to get through. Most people will fail their first time.⁶⁹

4.63 Students in South Korea who fail can reapply, and the success rates of each institution are made public. As a consequence, universities who have a high success rate attract more and better quality students, and universities with a very low success rate will have to change their programs or lose students.⁷⁰ If applied to the Australian context, this may informally result in feedback to universities where the quality of graduates is not adequate.

4.64 Professor Cherednichenko, of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, advised that her organisation is working closely with AITSL to develop the graduate standards for registration. However, she did not recommend a single registration test, describing such an approach as 'incredibly limiting and not at all rigorous in the sense that we would want it to be'.⁷¹ Professor Mayer agreed, suggesting that a simple test is inadequate because a more sophisticated measurement at the end of the practicum is required:

It might be a whole range of things, using artefacts and cohesive portfolios. I hesitate to use the word 'portfolio' because it is invariably this sort of box that you just throw everything in, but there are examples throughout the world of highly structured, very rigorous and valid ones that have been through all sorts of technical validity and reliability tests to show that these are really good measures against particular sets of standards. I think that is the work we need to do in Australia.⁷²

4.65 The federal government was unable respond to questions by the committee about the number of pre-service teachers who applied for registration who were unsuccessful, as it 'does not collect this type of information from state and territory registration authorities'.⁷³ It is concerning that the federal government, who through AITSL has developed new teacher registration standards, does not collect data to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of training courses preparing graduates for registration.

69 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 42.

70 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 42.

71 Professor Cherednichenko, President, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 25.

72 Professor Diane Mayer, Teacher, Education Specialist, Australian Council of Deans of Education, 4 March 2013, p. 26.

73 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to questions taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 27 April 2013), Q11. See also, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Response to questions taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 26 March 2013), Q4.

Committee view

4.66 This chapter has provided an analysis of the selection, training and registration of teachers. The evidence presented to the committee, and summarised in this chapter, offers strong support for the argument that teacher selection processes should be more robust and targeted, to ensure that selected applicants possess the requisite academic skills and personal attributes necessary for quality teaching.

4.67 Particular attention also needs to be given to the quality of teaching education courses and practical training in the classroom. Witnesses agreed that there must be a systemic approach to quality standards. While there has been some progress recently in articulating education standards, there remain a number of disparate institutions who act with 'an element of self-interest'.⁷⁴ The committee is particularly concerned about the ability of primary school teachers to teach literacy and mathematics.

4.68 To prevent an over-supply of teachers and to ensure that only the most competent teachers are registered, thought must also be given to capping registration places and introducing robust selection processes. Work must also be undertaken to ensure that students studying mathematics and sciences at university are aware of the pre-requisites required in order to become teachers of these disciplines.

Recommendation 11

4.69 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and the Australian Council of Deans of Education consider the research conducted by Incept Labs and the conclusion that multiple methods should be used to select entrants to teaching programs. These methods may include: academic ability; psychometric testing; behavioural based interviews; role-plays; and teaching practice.

Recommendation 12

4.70 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and the Australian Council of Deans of Education work to ensure that adequate funding is directed to schools to provide quality mentoring and support programs for pre-service teachers during practicum.

Recommendation 13

4.71 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood work to ensure that demand for quality teachers is high and consider:

- **restricting the number of places available to pre-service teachers for practical training;**

74 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 37.

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- capping the number of graduates who can register as teachers (any cap imposed should be reviewed each year and reflect the expected demand for teachers in particular disciplines); and
 - introducing a registration exam to be used in conjunction with the current registration standards to assess graduate suitability.

Recommendation 14

4.72 The committee recommends that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency conduct an audit of literacy teaching programs at education faculties in universities to establish whether graduating primary school teachers have an appropriate level of literacy and are equipped to teach the English language. This may indicate a need to moderate student assessment across faculties.

Recommendation 15

4.73 The committee recommends that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, in consultation with the Australian Mathematic Sciences Institute, conduct an audit of mathematics teaching programs at education faculties in universities to establish whether graduating primary school teachers are equipped to teach mathematics and numeracy to students. This may indicate a need to moderate student assessment across faculties.

Recommendation 16

4.74 The committee recommends that the Australian Council of Deans of Education liaises with the relevant Deans of Sciences and Mathematics to ensure that students in those disciplines receive timely and accurate advice about the pre-requisites required to become secondary mathematics and/or science teachers.