



List of recommendations

A sound research base for teacher education

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Australian Government commission a comprehensive longitudinal study into the effectiveness of different models of teacher education across Australia. The longitudinal study should follow cohorts of students from selection into courses, through pre-service preparation, the first five years of service and through their careers.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that the Australian Government establishes a specific Educational Research Fund to be distributed on a similar model to the National Health and Medical Research Council.

A national system of teacher education

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the Australian Government continue to support the work of Teaching Australia in developing a national system of accreditation. The establishment of a high quality system will take some time and the cooperation of state and territory registration authorities. The Australian Government should ensure that sufficient resources are committed to allow for the time needed to reach agreement. Once the national system of accreditation has been established, the Australian Government should require universities in receipt of Commonwealth funding to have their teacher education courses accredited by the national accreditation body.

Entry to teacher education

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that:

- (a) the Australian Government establish a Teacher Education Diversity Fund of \$20 million per annum for universities to access, possibly in partnership with other bodies, to develop and implement innovative programs in order to increase the number of applicants and entrants to teacher education from under-represented groups;
- (b) the granting of funding from the Teacher Education Diversity Fund for programs targeting disadvantaged groups be conditional on the use of diagnostic testing of students with a view to identifying their individual needs so that they can be provided with the support necessary to succeed; and
- (c) the Australian Government monitors closely the impact of the Teacher Education Diversity Fund on the enrolment of students from under-represented groups in teacher education across Australia.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the Australian Government, in making its final decision on the allocation of teacher education places, should align the allocation of places across the teacher education system to meet the teacher shortages identified during the consultations on workforce priorities.

Practicum and partnerships in teacher education

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund, for the purpose of establishing collaborative approaches to practicum, research, induction and professional development, which should distribute up to \$20 million per annum for three years with subsequent funding levels being determined on the basis of the first three years' achievements.

Induction to the teaching profession

Recommendation 7

The committee believes that the Teacher Induction Scheme administered by the General Teaching Council for Scotland in partnership with the

Scottish Executive Education Department be the model of induction that should be followed in Australia.

The committee recognises that, at this point in time, there are a range of impediments to an immediate adoption of this model of induction, in particular, the mismatch between the number of teacher education graduates and vacancies in the teaching workforce. However, with the goal of developing a National Teacher Induction Program modelled on the Scottish Teacher Induction Scheme, the committee recommends that the Australian Government should lead by:

1) investing a sum equivalent to 10 per cent of a beginning teacher's salary towards the cost of a twelve month induction program for that teacher. The funds should be provided to interested employing authorities or schools for each beginning teacher for whom they provide an induction program that meets the following criteria:

- a year long structured induction program (not necessarily spent at one school and extended for beginning teachers employed on a part-time basis);
- a 20 per cent reduction in a beginning teacher's face-to-face teaching load to enable time to undertake professional development, reflection, observing other classes and meeting with mentors;
- the allocation of a mentor who would be trained for the role, who would be given appropriate time to perform the role and who could expect to receive recognition for undertaking the role; and
- access to a structured and tailored program of professional development.

The Australian Government would expect a co-contribution by participating employing authorities and beginning teachers.

The program should be implemented at the start of the school year in 2008 and reviewed at the end of 2013.

2) ensuring that there is a close match between the number of teacher education places that the Australian Government funds in teacher education courses and specific teaching workforce needs.

Supporting career-long, on-going professional learning

Recommendation 8

The committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- works through MCEETYA to encourage all registration authorities to require participation in on-going professional learning as a condition for the renewal of registration;
- encourages education authorities to work with registration authorities and teacher education providers to develop processes for recognising the value of on-going professional learning linked to higher levels of registration and provides some funding to assist in developing these processes; and
- works through MCEETYA to encourage employing authorities to recognise higher levels of registration in salary structures.

Recommendation 9

The committee recommends that the Australian Government supports Teaching Australia's proposal to conduct a feasibility study into the establishment of a National Clearing House for Education Research. Should the study find that a National Clearing House for Educational Research would be of substantial value, then the Australian Government should fund its establishment. The value of the National Clearing House for Educational Research would depend on a number of factors including how aware teachers are of it. The level of funding should be sufficient to allow for input from stakeholders into its development as well as for the promotion of its use in informal and formal on-going professional learning.

Funding of teacher education

Recommendation 10

The committee recommends, in order to provide greater transparency and accountability, that universities be required to acquit CGS funds against each funding cluster by providing a table of expenditure corresponding to the table in the funding agreement that sets out the initial allocation of funds.

Recommendation 11

The committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- (a) commission an evaluation of the impact on teacher education courses of fixing the student contribution rate at 2004 levels (indexed) to determine whether this measure, as part of its strategy of identifying education as a National Priority Area, has met its stated objective of responding "to current and emerging national needs, such as shortages in

particular areas of the labour market, and the education of students from low income backgrounds and indigenous students”;

(b) from 2008, increase the Commonwealth Contribution Amount for an Equivalent Full-Time Student Load in the Education cluster from \$7,251 to \$9,037, the same level as that applying to the Foreign Languages, Visual and Performing Arts cluster; and

(c) review the mechanism for determining the level of funding that the Australian Government contributes towards student places in different disciplines and develop an alternative mechanism which more accurately reflects the real costs of delivering those places.

Recommendation 12

The committee recommends that the Australian Government:

a) commission an examination of the cost of providing practicum and increase the amount of the loading for practicum to fully reflect its costs;

b) calculate the amount of funding for the practicum component on the basis of the quantum of placement rather than taught load; and

c) pay the practicum component separately to universities and require them to acquit it separately as part of their financial reporting requirements.



Executive summary

Introduction

Ensuring high quality teacher education is a first and critical step in delivering high quality teaching in schools, particularly in a time when the role of teachers is becoming increasingly complex and demanding.

In the last twenty years, there have been many inquiries into teacher education or related issues. Although some of the recommendations have led to substantial changes in teacher education, and others have incrementally contributed to developments, there are still on-going concerns about the quality of teacher preparation. Some of these concerns are expressed in the responses of beginning teachers and principals in surveys on the adequacy of their preparation and selection. The attrition rate of beginning teachers also suggests that there are inadequacies in either the quality of initial teacher preparation or in the level of support provided to beginning teachers in the induction period.

The persistence of problems in teacher education can be attributed to the following factors:

- the current distribution of responsibilities in teacher education which results in a fragmented approach to teacher education;
- inadequate funding for educational research and for mechanisms to ensure that teacher education and teaching is research evidenced-based;
- a lack of investment in building the partnerships that would help bridge the gap between theory and practice, particularly for practicum;
- inadequate funding of teacher education, particularly for practicum; and
- a failure of policies involving teacher education to reflect that teacher education does not finish at graduation from an initial teacher education course but continues through induction into the profession as a beginning teacher through to established, advanced and leadership stages.

The Australian Government, through its investment of over \$300 million dollars a year for units of study in education and its Australian Government Quality Teacher Program, already makes a substantial commitment to teacher education. It is therefore appropriate that the Australian Government takes a leading role in shaping teacher education in the future. All of the committee's recommendations are directed to the Australian Government.

How effective is teacher education?

Most data available on the effectiveness of teacher education courses is based on surveys of recent graduates, teachers and principals. While the data are useful, they are not sufficient to fully inform policy and practice in teacher education.

A good measure of the effectiveness of teacher education courses is the quality of the graduates teaching in real school settings. While some work has been done to develop instruments for assessing this, more is needed, particularly given the role that the assessment of graduates should play in the accreditation of teacher education courses. In recent years, the Australian Council of Educational Research has conducted some substantial studies into the effectiveness of different teacher education courses and the committee strongly encourages continued work in this area.

It is imperative that steps are taken to establish what is meant by quality teacher education outcomes and to identify the approaches that best deliver them. Research should be undertaken to assess the impact on the quality of teacher education of a range of factors including:

- the background and characteristics of students and of teacher educators;
- selection processes;
- course length, course location and course structures;
- course content and delivery modes;
- course assessment and evaluation of procedures;
- the nature and length of professional experience;
- the nature and strength of partnerships between different stakeholders; and
- the nature of induction processes.

A longitudinal study should be established to assess the effectiveness of different models of teacher education across Australia. The longitudinal study should follow cohorts of students from selection into courses, through pre-service preparation and into the first five years of teaching. While the first goal of a longitudinal study would be to enable the informed consideration of the

effectiveness of pre-service teacher education, continuing the collection of data throughout the careers of teachers would allow for the investigation, in the future, of a range of other questions including the effectiveness of on-going professional learning.

The committee is concerned that neither current funding levels nor mechanisms for research and research distribution are sufficient to ensure that teacher education, teaching and policy development are as evidence-based as they should be. There is a need to increase the funding available to support high quality research in education. Higher investment in educational research is likely to be offset by later savings on remedial measures. The Australian Government should establish a specific Educational Research Fund modelled on the National Health Ministerial Research Council.

A national system of teacher education

In recent years, in an effort to ensure high quality teacher education and teaching, there has been much work done in different jurisdictions on the development of national professional standards for teaching and the establishment of processes for the registration of teachers and the accreditation of courses. Integrating the work that is being done in this area into a national system of teacher education would provide the structure for a nationally coherent approach to teacher education.

Despite efforts by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs and Australian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authority to promote consistency in the development and application of national professional standards for teaching, particularly in registration processes, progress is still uneven across Australia.

The assessment of graduates against professional standards for teaching should be central to the processes for the registration of teachers and the accreditation of teacher education courses. Rather than each jurisdiction developing its own standards against a national framework, a common set of national professional standards for teaching should be developed to be used by all jurisdictions for the registration of teachers and the accreditation of courses. All key stakeholders should be involved in developing these standards.

The accreditation of teacher education courses by a national body would provide for greater consistency and rigour, facilitate the portability of teaching qualifications and significantly reduce the duplication of effort. There is value in having a single national process for the accreditation of teacher education courses in the long term. The funding of a national accreditation process by the Australian Government would encourage universities to seek accreditation of their courses by the national accreditation body.

A national system of teacher education comprising two parallel processes for the registration of teachers and the accreditation of teacher education courses, based on professional standards for teaching, would allow for diversity and innovation in teacher education courses whilst ensuring that quality is consistently high throughout Australia.

The committee has recommended that the Australian Government should continue to support Teaching Australia to develop a national system of accreditation and it should provide sufficient resources to allow time for all parties to reach agreement. Once the national system of accreditation has been established, the Australian Government should require universities in receipt of Commonwealth funding to have their teacher education courses accredited by the national accreditation body.

Entry to teacher education courses

A number of reports in recent years have focussed on the need to develop strategies to attract more people to take up teaching in areas of shortage and to increase the diversity of entrants coming into teacher education. In examining issues concerning the entrants to teacher education, the committee has focused on the on-going debate on selection processes.

There are significant costs for universities in using processes such as interviews, structured references, written applications, portfolios, etc, in selecting students. Many universities claim that there is no evidence that more comprehensive selection processes are better predictors of the success of applicants as students or as teachers. The longitudinal study recommended would eventually provide evidence to inform future policy and practice in this area.

A second issue is whether there should be a minimum academic score for entry into teacher education courses. There is considerable variation in Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank scores for teacher education courses across the country and, in a system in which the ENTER score is determined by the demand for places, there is concern about how low the ENTER score falls when demand for places is low. However, attention should be focussed on the capabilities graduates have at the end of their courses rather than at the beginning. Such an approach is also more consistent with initiatives to diversity pathways into teaching and to encourage the entry of a broader range of people into teacher education courses.

Students entering teacher education courses should undergo diagnostic testing of their literacy and numeracy skills. On the basis of the results, teacher education programs should provide assistance to students to ensure they develop literacy and numeracy skills to the required level. As part of the course accreditation process, accreditation authorities should establish that all students who will

graduate with a qualification in education will have demonstrated that they have high level literacy and numeracy skills.

Concerns were expressed that teacher education students do not reflect fully the diversity of the Australian population and that more effective measures are needed to attract more people from a wider variety of backgrounds to teaching. The committee has recommended a fund to enable universities to do more to reach out into communities and down into schools, to attract and encourage more people from under-represented groups – indigenous, male, rural/remote/isolated, non-English speaking background and low socio-economic status entrants – to apply for places in teacher education, and, if necessary, provide them additional support enabling them to succeed.

Given current and projected teacher shortages in some subject and geographic areas, there should be a closer match between teacher workforce needs and the allocation of teacher education places. The committee has recommended that the Australian Government, in making its final decision on the allocation of teacher education places, should align the allocation of places across the teacher education system to meet the teacher shortages identified during its consultations on workforce priorities.

Practicum and partnerships

Practicum is a critically important part of teacher education courses and is consistently valued highly by student teachers. Notwithstanding its importance, and the number of recommendations that have been made in past reports about the need to improve practicum, problems continue. The problems include: the shortage of practicum placements; the weak link between practicum and the theoretical components of courses; the variable quality of supervision; the inadequacy of funding for practicum; and the difficulty of ensuring that students have an opportunity to undertake practicum in rural and remote areas.

Many of the problems are a result of the fragmented distribution of responsibilities in teacher education. Universities, as providers of teacher education courses, are obliged to offer practicum as part of their courses, but there is no corresponding obligation on schools or employing authorities, the main employers of graduates, to ensure that placements are available.

Problems in securing practicum placements are likely to continue until all stakeholders develop a stronger sense of shared responsibility for preparing the next generation of teachers. The Australian Government should encourage a more collaborative approach to teacher education and better partnerships would provide a mechanism to achieve this.

The committee has recommended that the Australian Government establish a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund for the purpose of establishing collaborative approaches to practicum, research, induction and professional development. The fund would distribute up to \$20 million per annum for three years with subsequent funding levels to be determined on the basis of the first three years' achievements.

Induction to the teaching profession

Since at least the early 1980s, successive reports on teacher education have called for more attention to the induction of new teachers into the profession. The reports have consistently called for beginning teachers to be given a reduced teaching load; to be assigned to appropriate schools and classes; and to be provided with a mentor who would support them in their first year of teaching. Recommendations have also called for those teachers acting as mentors to be given appropriate preparation for the role and to receive appropriate recognition for assuming the responsibility.

Education systems and schools are endeavouring to improve induction processes, particularly by recognising the importance of mentors. However, beginning teachers need opportunities to take on teaching duties that are appropriate for their level of experience and in environments that will enable them to consolidate what they have learned in pre-service teacher education courses. Adequately addressing the needs of beginning teachers will require systemic changes and a partnership approach by the major stakeholders.

The Teacher Induction Scheme administered by the General Teaching Council for Scotland should be adopted in Australia. There are a range of impediments to its immediate adoption, in particular, the mismatch between the number of teacher education graduates and vacancies in the teaching workforce. However, with the goal of developing a National Teacher Induction Program modelled on the Scottish Teacher Induction Scheme, the committee has recommended that the Australian Government should lead by:

- (1) investing a sum equivalent to 10% of a beginning teacher's salary towards the cost of a twelve month induction program for that teacher. The funds should be provided to interested employing authorities or schools for each beginning teacher for whom they provide an induction program that meets the following criteria:
 - a year long structured induction program (not necessarily spent at one school and extended for beginning teachers employed on a part-time basis);

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- a twenty per cent reduction in a beginning teacher's face-to-face teaching load to enable time to undertake professional development, reflection, observing other classes and meeting with mentors;
 - the allocation of a mentor who would be trained for the role, who would be given appropriate time to perform the role and who could expect to receive recognition for undertaking the role; and
 - access to a structured and tailored program of professional development; and
- (2) ensuring that there is a close match between the number of teacher education places that the Australian Government funds in teacher education courses and specific teaching workforce needs.

To support the induction scheme the Australian Government should expect a co-contribution by participating employing authorities and beginning teachers.

On-going professional learning

Teachers must continue learning throughout their careers in response to social changes, technological developments and developments in the knowledge base of pedagogy and the field in which they teach. On-going professional learning is a shared responsibility with employing authorities, schools, principals and teachers all having a role.

As professionals, teachers should be expected to commit to on-going professional learning and this should be formalised by being made a requirement for the renewal of registration. Some jurisdictions have already introduced this requirement while others are moving towards it. Participation in significant on-going professional development should be recognised as one of the ways to achieve higher levels of registration.

The committee has recommended that the Australian Government: work through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs to encourage all registration authorities to require participation in on-going professional learning as a condition for the renewal of registration; encourage education authorities to work with registration authorities and teacher education providers to develop processes for recognising the value of on-going professional learning linked to higher levels of registration and provide funding to assist in developing these processes; and work through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs to encourage employing authorities to recognise higher levels of registration.

In undertaking professional learning and incorporating that learning into practice, teachers are also generating new knowledge. There is a dynamic relationship between teaching, on-going professional learning and research.

Much of the educational research that is being done in Australia does not easily find its way into teaching practice. The committee strongly supports Teaching Australia's intention to develop a mechanism for making research more accessible by establishing a National Clearing House for Educational Research. Improving access to current relevant research would enrich the formal and informal on-going professional learning opportunities available to teachers. A National Clearing House for Educational Research would benefit all teachers but has the potential to be particularly beneficial for teachers in rural and remote locations. There is also the potential for research available through the proposed National Clearing House for Educational Research to contribute to the development of on-line professional learning modules.

Funding of teacher education

Claims were made in the course of this inquiry that education funding was being used by university administrations to cross-subsidise other areas. The evidence on this issue was mixed. While the committee considers that universities should retain the flexibility in determining the distribution of funds allocated to them, there should be greater transparency in the system.

Teacher education is an expensive undertaking largely because of the need for programs to offer significant opportunities for professional school experience. Funding for teacher education is generally considered to be inadequate. Concerns about the level of funding for teacher education centred around three themes: the cost of teacher education being underestimated by various funding regimes; the impact of teacher education being identified as a National Priority Area and the inadequacy of funding for practicum. Funding for teacher education needs to be substantially increased and the committee has recommended a package of measures to achieve this.

First, the committee has recommended that universities be required to acquit Commonwealth Grants Scheme funds against each funding cluster by providing a table of expenditure corresponding to the table in the funding agreements showing the initial allocation of funds.

Second, the committee has recommended that the Australian Government commission an examination of the real cost of providing practicum and then increase the amount of the loading for practicum to fully reflect its costs.

Third, the committee has recommended that the Australian Government commission an evaluation of the impact on teacher education courses of fixing the

student contribution rate at 2004 levels (indexed) to determine whether this measure, as part of its strategy of identifying education as a National Priority Area, has met its stated objective of responding “to current and emerging national needs, such as shortages in particular areas of the labour market, and the education of students from low income backgrounds and indigenous students”; that from 2008, it increase the Commonwealth Contribution Amount for an EFTSL in the Education cluster to the same level as that applying to the Foreign Languages, Visual and Performing Arts cluster; and that it review the mechanism for determining the level of funding that it contributes towards student places in different disciplines and develops an alternative mechanism which more accurately reflects the real costs of delivering those places.