



Schools Workforce study

Productivity Commission Issues Paper

QCEC response, August 2011

1. Introduction

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) submits this response on the Schools Workforce Productivity Commission Issues Paper (June 2011) following consultation with the five Catholic diocesan education offices in Queensland. The response is limited to issues within the Issues Paper most relevant to their context. The Commission is the peak body representing all Catholic schooling authorities in Queensland which operate 290 schools.

2. Catholic schooling in Queensland Staff profile

Catholic schools in Qld Staff FTE 2010	Principal			Teaching Staff (Including Librarians)			Senior Executive Staff	Admin (including aides & assistants)	Area Supervisors	Specialist Support	Maintenance & Other Staff	Total
	m	f	total	m	f	total						
	179	111	290	2434	5763	8197	58	3455	7	513	586	13106

3. Workforce issues

Catholic schooling authority respondents referred to the following:

- Strengths – leave provisions, improved wages and superannuation, part-time and job share positions
- Weaknesses – leave provisions can make it difficult to find replacement staff (especially in some regional centres). The National Partnership model of funding has been administratively onerous. Whilst welcoming the additional funding to local improvement reforms determined by schools and diocese, the BER

4. Recent policy developments

Q *Do the reforms, in train or in prospect, address the right issues?*

- Reforms addressing literacy and numeracy, low SES, Indigenous outcomes, students with disability and improving teacher quality have the potential to address appropriate issues BUT
- The Australian Government’s focus on rewards and outcomes, with an assumption that ‘one-size fits all’, does not reflect any current educational research findings or the diversity of school communities across Australia. What is a successful outcome for a teacher in remote Australia or in a school for students with disabilities is not the same as for a teacher of a secondary college in a capital city.

Q *What reform areas should be afforded the highest priorities?*

- Teacher professional development across all areas of education.

Q *Are there any significant gaps in the reform agenda, or reforms that are unlikely to be particularly beneficial?*

- Performance pay for teachers, “Rewarding Schools” and “Rewards for Great Teachers” will be complex and expensive to administer and have the potential to cause disharmony within the profession. Benchmarks to base performance pay are essential but are yet to be identified
- There is a depth of research available that notes the relationship between teacher effectiveness and student performance. Therefore it is imperative that as a nation education authorities continue to investigate ways to improve the effectiveness of Australian teachers
- Catholic Education Authorities in Queensland challenge reforms that imply improved learning outcomes for students are the result from the input of just one teacher. More often there are many people, who form the school community, contributing to the learning and development journey of a student
- Improving teaching is more complex than just an examination of student test results and respondents suggest devolving some autonomy to schools to engage in meaningful teacher development.

Catholic schooling Authorities in Queensland propose:

- The Australian Government move from an ‘individual reward’ model to one that supports collaborative professional exchange and quality opportunities for ongoing learning by teachers in schools
- The principles that AITSL develops inform school/system programs that will lead to sustained improvement and further peer professional learning for teachers
- The school/ system program developed using the AITSL principles, receive Australian Government funding.

Q *Are the implementation/evaluation/review arrangements likely to be effective?*

- Evaluation processes are unnecessarily complex and time consuming. Resources may well be better utilised in providing necessary education support.

5. Balancing supply and demand

Q *What are the key factors, whether across the board or specific to particular areas, that may contribute to current or future workforce shortages? Are all of these factors amenable to policy action?*

- In Queensland it is expected that the transition of Year 7 to Secondary will exacerbate the current oversupply of primary teachers and the current undersupply of secondary teachers, particularly in certain subject areas
- QCEC expects that retirements from secondary colleges (and other jurisdictions) in the coming 5-10 years will contribute to shortages in secondary teachers, especially in the areas of Maths, Science, Religious Education, Technology and Vocational Education
- QCEC expects that the continuing centralisation of the Queensland population in Brisbane will contribute to staffing shortages in schools in regional and remote locations
- Schools experience a limited ability to attract male teachers to primary setting
- Rural or remote schools experience limited ability to attract specialist teachers
- In areas with high cost of living (industry based locations) such as Gladstone and Mackay there is difficulty in attracting both teaching and non-teaching staff
- The low number of students completing teaching degrees outside of Brisbane contributes to difficulty in attracting employees from outside to regional diocese
- Good planning and policy action with commitment from Government, Universities and Catholic schooling authorities will be necessary e.g. workforce planning, targeted recruitment and scholarships and courses to match ‘real’ supply and demand
- Growth of real wages in teaching is curtailed when compared to other industries.

Q *What is contributing to the ongoing surplus of workers (who have teaching qualifications) in some disciplines and locations? Are such surpluses a cause for concern?*

- There is a surplus of primary teachers with Universities currently producing more than are needed. To the extent that this oversupply is associated with a decrease in the quality of teaching graduates, or with the prestige of the profession, then this is a concern
 - Inability and unwillingness of people to move from their established locations – especially mature age graduates, becomes problematic.
- Q *Are there weaknesses in specific recruitment and/or retention strategies that could be exacerbating imbalances in supply and demand? Are there any underlying problems in workforce planning strategies?*
- Recruitment strategies are limited by availability of funding
 - Succession planning is limited by lack of skilled teachers in specific areas.
- Q *What lessons, if any, can be learned from other sectors of the economy in dealing with the staffing challenges in the schools sector?*
- Incentives to recognise specific roles, specialisations and locations could be considered
 - Retention bonuses in regional / remote areas could be considered
 - The drivers for Catholic education are embedded in valuing the uniqueness of each individual and the acceptance of a person as a life-long learner. The Australian Government currently states its electoral commitments using the language of business and economics and it is this approach which is in stark contrast to the philosophy of the Catholic Education Authorities that use person-focused drivers.

6. Job design and innovation

- Q *Are the roles of and relationships between different school workers appropriate to meet current and emerging needs? In what ways might changes in job design be useful?*
- One area that appears to be in growing demand is that of counselling/social work. More and more families are dependent upon this 'service' being offered in the school. The relationship between health and education is well established. Healthy children are better able to learn, and higher educational achievement is strongly associated with better health. Health and education professionals have complementary roles in securing better outcomes for our children and young people. Further developments in job design might assist in accommodating this emerging need
 - One in four Australian children and young people will experience a mental illness in any one year, yet only a quarter of these will receive any professional assistance for their difficulties. Increasingly, teachers and student support staff are providing a crucial role in the early detection and support of children and young people with mental illness. Teachers and student support staff are often the first to notice when a student is experiencing difficulties, and are in a unique position to ensure that students access the assistance that they need. Mental health first aid training for teachers and support staff would assist the ability to respond effectively and appropriately to student needs.
- Q *Does the current design of teaching roles give sufficient recognition to issues such as extra-curricular activities, interaction with parents and the community, or to assisting students with the transition to further education or employment?*
- Our respondents believe they do.
- Q *Would further decreases in student-teacher ratios significantly improve student outcomes? How should empirical research on the cost-effectiveness of class size reductions as a means to improve student outcomes be interpreted?*
- The appropriate student-teacher ratios seems to depend on context and no one answer applies to all situations.

Q *Is there appropriate sharing of Australian and international experiences regarding changes to the role and mix of teachers, leaders, para-professionals, and other school workers?*

- Yes this information is available.

7. Training and professional development

Q *What are the advantages and disadvantages of the traditional Diploma and Bachelor of Education entry pathways? Do postgraduate studies in education contribute significantly to teacher quality?*

- Advantages of the Bachelor of Education degree is its focus on teaching and learning across a course delivered over 3 or 4 years of full-time study.
- Post-graduate study contributes significantly to teacher quality as
 - Teachers study in an area of interest
 - Teachers' knowledge of classrooms and of individual students contributes positively to the education afforded by the post-graduate study

Q *How effectively do pre-service training courses (and the national accreditation standards for such courses) meet the current and prospective needs of the education system and teachers? Do courses place sufficient emphasis on practicum?*

- The practicum experience is dependent on the teacher chosen to mentor the practicum student. Mentors should be exemplary practitioners. Mentors require training in mentoring practicum students
- To improve the experience of pre-service teachers in schools, funding for the support of supervision by universities and pre-service practicum teachers will be required.

Q *Are adequate resources available to mentor new teachers? Is there a need for formalised system-wide mentoring structures, or should the processes for inducting new teachers be left to each school?*

- There is a need for induction processes and mentoring structures at both diocesan and school level
- Processes for inducting new teachers should be conducted systemically within each schooling authority but with resourcing assistance from Government.

Q *What role do pre-service training providers play in directing aspiring teachers into areas of teacher shortage?*

- Pre-service training providers should play a role. One example of this is the QUT project "Exceptional teachers for disadvantaged schools" (Lampert, J and Burnett, B).

Q *At what point (or points) in time should the quality of aspiring teachers be assessed: before pre-service training, before practicum, before entering the workforce as new teachers, or elsewhere in the training and development cycle? What scope is there to increase standards for entering courses, placements or the profession without exacerbating current or future shortages?*

- QCEC recommends that the quality of aspiring teachers be assessed before entry to ensure that the top students enter the profession. It may well be impractical as there are a number of non-OP pathways into University courses, however, the first semester is critical to identifying those criteria that are important to teaching and for specialist areas, and to evaluate new enrolments over this time. Although a certain amount of remediation/ assistance and support is good practice, it is also a waste of resources and finances to not be selective as soon as possible. This filtering out of pre-service

teachers not meeting the standards for teaching should be ongoing throughout the pre-service program.

8. Remuneration and performance evaluation

Q *How important are the level and structure of remuneration for recruitment and retention of teachers? What impact does the level of remuneration have on the capabilities of those entering the teaching profession? Should differentiated remuneration be used more widely to address imbalances in supply and demand?*

- The level and structure of remuneration is important to the retention of teaching staff. A number of teachers leave the profession to take up industry specific roles to seek greater remuneration
- The flat structure of the teaching scale leads to discontent and fails to encourage professionalism. Compared to other industries, which have a greater range of salaries, career paths are limited to a greater degree.
- The level of remuneration upon entrance appears adequate but the flat progression system does not keep pace with other areas of employment. Average graduate rate in 2010 was approx. \$49 000. Graduate teacher rate in 2010 was \$51 025 at start of 2010 and \$53 066 from July 2010.

Q *Are there non-remuneration conditions of employment that, if changed, would enhance teacher quality and student outcomes? Is there sufficient recognition of the work associated with the delivery of extra-curricular programs?*

- There are a number of non-remuneration conditions that would lead to greater satisfaction of the teaching workforce which ultimately increases the quality of work. Some of these areas include greater incentives for superannuation, increased benefits of salary packaging (reduced FBT rates), tax free or reduced tax incentives relating to rural or remote locations, including relocation assistance.
- The nominated hours of work in the teaching industry make it difficult to assess extra-curricular programs. A number of professional positions undertake additional work outside of hours (based on a 38 or 40 hour week) that is not directly remunerated.

Q *What makes a quality teacher? How should teacher performance be measured? To what extent can computable performance metrics indicate the 'value added' by a teacher?*

- If teacher performance is to be measured it should be measured and recognised from within the teaching process.
- Recognition can only be based and assessed on recognised, agreed and established criteria.
- The recognition of Highly Accomplished or Lead Teachers provides recognition only and does not directly affect pay. Any affect on pay is left to the employer.

Q *If a well-designed performance-based pay scheme could be implemented, would it significantly enhance teacher quality and student outcomes? What risks and costs are associated with performance-based pay?*

- The outcomes of the implementation of performance based pay are unknown. What is known is that the introduction of performance based pay in other countries has not been successful. There is also no direct link between improved student learning and performance incentives.
- One of the greatest risks associated with performance based pay would be the creation of disharmony amongst the teaching profession. The ability to provide consistent and unbiased results throughout the process is a risk
- Establish agreed benchmarks on which to base performance pay would be essential to a well designed performance-based pay scheme

- The costs involved are significant and could greatly outweigh the benefits. Each teacher would be required to undergo a rigorous assessment including observation of classroom practice and interviewing of appropriate parties (peers, principal, parents).

Q *Separate from whether financial rewards should be attached, are there ways to enhance performance appraisal processes for school workers?*

- Performance appraisal processes for school workers can be enhanced through exemplar appraisal systems being provided as examples. Appraisal systems vary across schools, schooling authorities and states.
- Any implementation of a performance based pay scheme would require standardisation of appraisal systems.

9. School leadership

Q *Has sufficient policy attention been paid to school leadership and its contribution to education outcomes?*

- There is sufficient attention being paid to policy.

Q *What motivates teachers to become school leaders? Is enough being done to identify current and future leaders?*

- Some strategies being employed are: encouragement, support, desire, support programs for aspiring leaders, positive mentoring, positive observations of current leaders at work.

Q *What skills do school leaders require beyond those acquired as teachers? Is enough being done to facilitate leaders' acquisition and development of ancillary skills? Do principals necessarily require a teaching background?*

- Principals do need a teaching background to understand the school/teacher/student culture and for credibility. Many of the skills that a Principal needs are similar to that of a teacher but they need to be at a much higher and in depth level. In addition the principal is the educational leader of the school community, manager and director of the day to day running of the school as well as guiding its strategic direction and upholder of its mission. The ability to build and maintain relationships across all members of the school community is essential.

Q *In an environment of greater autonomy for schools, how is the role of the principal likely to change? To what extent do changes in job design for school leaders have feed-through effects to other members of the schools workforce?*

- Greater autonomy is not necessarily a positive move. How the school and Principal are supported is important. System support and subsidiarity ensures support would then flow onto staff.

10. School autonomy

Q *What are the advantages and disadvantages of increasing school autonomy? To what extent can currently centralised responsibilities be sensibly devolved to the school level? What lessons can be learned from approaches in Victoria and other countries, as well as from experiences in independent schools?*

- Advantages – greater ownership of decisions, more control over what suits the local context, may decrease the level of 'red tape', ownership of staffing.

- Negatives – May decrease schools working together (market share), less support at a system level, staff mobility/transfer is decreased or stopped, challenging for remote/western schools to attract quality staff, promotion pathway may not be as clear for leaders.

Q *Is a ‘one size fits all’ approach to school autonomy appropriate, or should the degree of autonomy enjoyed by schools vary according to their performance?*

- School autonomy should be a factor which can be determined by each schooling authority, to support maximum subsidiarity and autonomy in accordance with the school context as appropriate.

11. Meeting the needs of particular student populations

Q *Are school workers sufficiently trained to deal with special needs students, students from cultural and language backgrounds other than English, and students with any other specific educational requirements?*

- While some may have adequate training, the majority do not. Special needs/inclusion of all is a challenge for schools. Catholic school authorities do as much as possible with the limited funds available. The Government needs to attend to this if we are to have inclusive education in our schools. Often it is capital costs that are the issue, or the access to trained therapists particularly in rural and remote areas.

Q *Are there workforce changes that would assist disadvantaged students make a successful transition from school to work or further education?*

- There needs to be a pathway from training courses to employment. For many they receive training but there is no access to employment at the conclusion of training.

Q *What are the main factors that influence the choice of teachers and other professionals to work in areas of educational disadvantage or with students with specific educational needs?*

- Caring nature
- Training
- Prior experience working within these situations
- A “significant person” who encouraged them to move into this field.

12. The surrounding institutional framework

Q *How responsive is the overall institutional regime to changing circumstances? Is the established culture and practice within education departments and related regulatory agencies, as well as in government and non-government schools, an impediment to workforce reform?*

- Catholic Education sees no immediate impediment to workforce reform as a result of our structure, both locally and state wide.

Q *Are industrial relations arrangements in the schools sector sufficiently flexible? Are there particular regulatory or institutional factors that may impede the recruitment and retention of high quality school workers? How can these be addressed?*

- IR arrangements in schools are set by our industrial agreements and the Fair Work Act. Although our agreements contain little flexibility, changes to federal conditions or requirements are acted upon as they happen. Changes to our agreements only happen when they are due for renewal through negotiation.

- The main impediment to recruiting and retaining high quality school workers is our ability to pay attractive rates to attract and keep staff. This is particularly so where the school is located within mining centres that make it hard to keep and retain staff, many being lost to the mining industry.
- Improved funding can provide us with greater means to adequately remunerate and retain staff long term.