

Productivity Commission Study

Education and Training Workforce: Schools

Submission

August 2011



Schools in Tasmania

The Department of Education provides its services through:

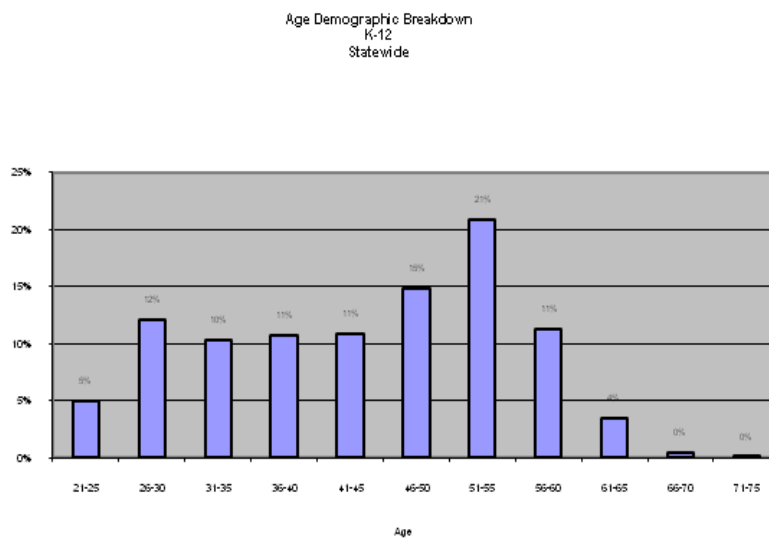
- 134 Primary Schools
- 30 Secondary Schools
- 27 Combined Schools (some which provide VET)
- 9 Special Schools
- 8 Colleges
- Numerous Polytechnic Campuses across the state

The department provides education services for approx. 65,000 (K-12) students across the state, employing over 10,000 staff. School based staff is broken down into the following school sectors:

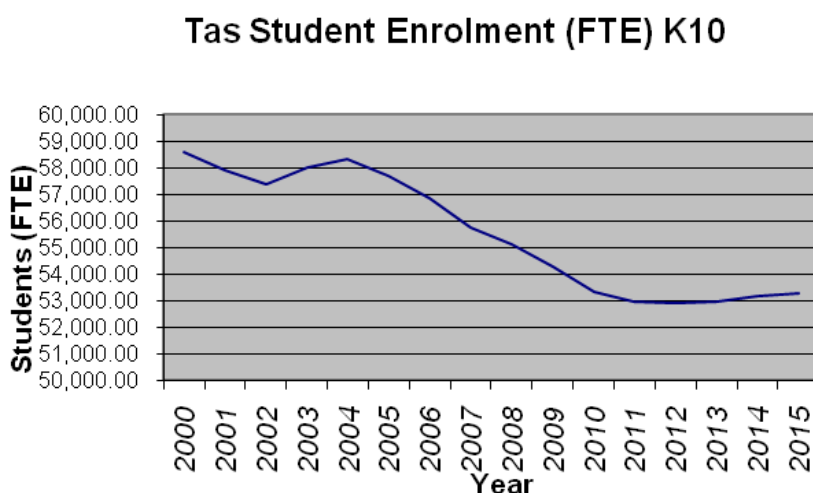
- Primary 53%
- Secondary 25%
- Combined 14%
- Special 3%
- College/Polytechnic 5%

Tasmania, like other jurisdiction across Australia faces the challenges of an aging workforce.

The age profiles of teaching staff in Tasmania in 2011 are shown in table 1 below.



Tasmania student population has been in decline over recent years. As can be seen in table 2 below it is projected this trend will not continue in the future at the same level as recent years.



Supply and Demand

There is a range of factors that contribute to the supply and demand of staff required in the school system. Some of these include:

- Separation rates
- Student enrolments
- University graduate numbers
- Skill requirements
- School resourcing models (human) and initiatives

Teaching Staff

In Tasmania, we have a very low teacher separation rate. Only 1.5% of teaching staff separate up till the age of 55 years. This indicates that retirements are by far the biggest contributor to our teacher separations.

There is currently only one local source of teacher graduates in Tasmania, the University of Tasmania which has healthy Teaching course enrolments. The challenge the Department faces in relation to these graduating teachers is the skill mix requirements. University data indicates that the largest proportions of graduates are Primary trained.

The department's teacher population in the College sector (which includes employees who have specialisations in teaching pre-tertiary teaching), is currently the oldest cohort with approximately 25% currently of teachers over the age of 55. Teaching staff in this sector are predominantly recruited from our high school sector, we therefore face significant challenges in recruiting appropriately qualified teachers in the high and secondary specialised areas - Maths, Science, English and Technology in particular.

University of Tasmania data indicates an increase in enrolments in these areas over coming years which is positive.

On average the Department projections indicate that approximately 200 teachers will be required to be recruited every year - this number slightly increases each year. Secondary and senior secondary specialists in the areas outlined above will be in most demand during this period. It is anticipated other specialist teachers will be in high demand in coming years in both metropolitan and rural schools. Managing our recruitment and retention strategies to ensure the appropriate skills are available for rural and/or remote schools remains as our biggest recruitment and retention challenge.

Relief teachers, particularly in the winter months continue to be a major problem for a large number of schools in Tasmania – this is evident for schools outside the metropolitan areas, and those with specific skill requirements – particularly in the Secondary and Senior Secondary sectors.

Specialist Staff – Speech Pathologists, School Psychologists and Social Workers.

Speech Pathologists

The department continues to experience moderate difficulties in recruiting suitable Speech Pathologists. This is not an issue particularly unique to Tasmania. Other jurisdictions across Australia have experienced similar issues in the area of Speech Pathologist recruitment in the school sector.

Tasmania has found it difficult to combat this issue as there is currently no training facility in the state that produces qualified Speech Pathologists. The department has found without local graduates, recruitment in this area is particularly difficult.

The Department has invested in numerous marketing and incentive programs without a great deal of success, however, at this point in time there is not a major issue across the state with Speech Pathology vacancies that cannot be filled, however this area continues to be a major risk for recruitment.

The department has experienced moderate separation rates in this area. Long leave requests are also relatively high in this area of the workforce.

School Psychologists

The department has experienced moderate difficulties recruiting suitable staff, mainly in relation to particular locations that continue to experience some difficulty attracting suitable staff. Attracting staff to rural and/or remote location continues to be an issue as does some local competition with other government departments and the private sector.

Local graduates and connections to the local University have helped with recruitment and retention.

The department has experienced relatively low separation rates in this area, however part-time workload requests are relatively high in this area of the workforce.

Social Workers

The department has experienced some minor difficulties recruiting suitable staff, mainly in relation to particular locations that continue to experience difficulty in attracting suitable staff. Attracting staff to rural and/or remote locations continues to be an issue as does some local competition with other government departments in particular.

Local graduates and connections to the local University have helped with recruitment and retention.

The department has experienced relatively low separation rates in this area.

Other school based staff

The department generally does not have any significant issues with recruitment and retention in other areas of the school workforce with the exception of some particular positions in rural and/or remote locations.

Initiatives, Incentives and Partnerships

The department has provided a wide range of initiatives, incentives and scholarships in all areas of the workforce over a number of years with varied success.

The department currently has the following initiatives in place;

Partnerships in Teaching Excellence Scholarships (PiTE)

The department, in partnership with the Faculty of Education (UTas), provides scholarships for selected students in the second year of their Master of Teaching and fourth year of their Bachelor of Education.

General scholarship benefits include

- More time in schools with support and mentoring from experienced mentor teachers who are given time release to specifically work with students throughout their course and into their early years of teaching.
- Experiencing a school year from start to finish (as well as experience in other selected teaching schools).
- Access to specialist training courses with DoE teachers – in literacy, numeracy, e-learning, other Curriculum areas and behaviour management.
- Specialist assistance with classroom establishment, lesson planning and student management.
- Support through a professional learning team structure.

Incentives

- Permanency – students who complete the scholarship program and their teaching degree studies will be offered
 - a permanent position with the DoE
 - a \$6,000 scholarship allowance
- Upon completion of your Master of Teaching or Bachelor of Education coursework and upon the recommendation from the scholarship program you will be offered;
 - paid Employment in DoE schools on top of the scholarship allowance
 - a fully maintained laptop and full access to the DoE network.
- Study payment – an \$8,000 contribution towards the graduates study debt will be paid in three annual instalments (while the graduate remain as a teacher with the DoE).

Professional Experience in Isolated and Rural Schools (PIERS)

The PIERS program encourages pre-service teachers to undertake school experience in participating rural and isolated schools by providing support for accommodation and travel.

Travel costs

For most placements 3 return trips by car or 3 return flights from the Bass Strait Islands from your home to the location of the placement.

Accommodation

Accommodation costs are covered which may be in DoE housing or private rental organised on your behalf and paid directly by the participating school.

Welcome Package

A Welcome package of basic food supplies may also be provided depending on the style of accommodation.

Graduate Recruitment Program

The department offers teaching graduates the opportunity to gain permanent employment as a teacher in the Tasmanian public education system.

Successful applicants are offered permanent employment and are paid at a salary one level above that normally paid to similarly qualified graduates in their first year of employment.

Isolated Location Incentive

The following financial incentives are available for staff employed at identified locations (rural and/or isolated);

- \$2237.00 upon beginning work;
- \$2237.00 upon completing 3 years continuous work in that location;
- \$4479.00 upon completing 3 years continuous work in that location;
- \$4479.00 upon completing 4 years continuous work in that location;
- \$4479.00 upon completing 5 years continuous work in that location;
- \$4479.00 upon completing 6 years continuous work in that location;

Various district allowances also apply to identified schools.

Ray Richardson Tas Uni Scholarship

The Ray Richardson Tasmanian University Scholarship in Education is provided to a student educated in north-east Tasmania. This scholarship provides the following;

- \$3000.00 per year for a maximum of 4 years;
- Permanent employment with the Department of Education upon graduation.

Speech Pathologists Placement Program

The Speech Pathologist Placement Program provides Speech Pathology students with the opportunity to undertake a practicum placement in a Tasmanian school.

The program provides the following;

The Department of Education provides up to \$1500 towards the cost of a placement in Tasmania. The expenses incurred may consist of any or all of the following:

- payment of \$150 per week to the Homestay host (paid directly by the DoE to host family)
- reimbursement of travel costs to Tasmania either by air or sea including costs for bringing a vehicle on the Spirit of Tasmania ferry (receipts required)
- reimbursement of petrol costs if driving your own vehicle to the ferry terminal in Melbourne (receipts required)

- three days car hire during the placement (note the details for this below)

University Partnerships

Partnerships with the University of Tasmania provide a great mutual opportunity to enhance the quality of teachers in the state. We currently have a number of partnerships and links with the University.

Opportunities capacity to have some input into Education course content and provide support with student practicum placements is a benefit to the education system in Tasmania.

The department and University are continuing to work together in many ways to ensure graduates are well placed to meet the needs of the state education system. Work with the University is critical to the success of our future teaching workforce requirements.

Future data availability will help us to continue to work with the University to ensure graduates have (where possible) the required skill mix and teacher training to support future teacher requirements.

Other

The department is currently undergoing a Workforce Study which is determining current and future workforce needs. The study is reviewing all current initiatives.

Expectations from the study include:

- Development of electronic future workforce modelling – including future staff and skill requirements.
- Review of all current initiatives.
- Recommendations for recruitment and retention strategies and initiatives;
- Further development of partnerships with relevant parties.

The department is also developing an online recruitment register to support schools to find suitable fixed term and relief staff.

Job Design

Job design is an area which has evolved over a number of years without a great deal of strategic intent. The roles and requirements of school based staff has changed in recent times.

Teachers

The role of the teacher in recent times has, at least as reported by media and other outlets, changed dramatically. The role and functions of the classroom teacher have changed as community expectations have changed in line with societal change.

Students with complex needs and schools striving to provide increasing personalised programs are developing trends within a policy that supports inclusion for all.

The systemic challenge for the department is to ensure teachers are adequately supported to keep up with the changes in the role. When it is considered that these changes have predominantly occurred over the past 15-20 years and over 50% of our current teacher workforce began their teaching career before these major changes occurred and who entered the workforce with dramatically different expectations and skills for what the role now requires.

Role clarity is important to ensure teachers are clear of the function of the teacher role and the expectations this role brings. This will also help give clarity that will improve public perception and ensure professional learning and training and development can be targeted towards the key aspects of the role.

The teacher into the future will also be required to provide curriculum flexibility. The requirements of a teacher in rural schools to be able to offer a range of subjects in the timetable have become more demanding in recent years.

In Tasmania, with a decline in student enrolments in rural schools, schools have to offer full-time positions to attract suitable candidates with the requirement that the teacher has the capacity to offer a range of subjects. Further work could focus on additional training opportunities specifically for staff in these areas to help support student outcomes.

Principal

The main focus of the Principals role in Tasmanian schools is to provide “educational leadership”. Principals are finding it a challenge to develop their resources to effectively lead for improved teaching and learning.

The department is continuing to work towards increasing the Principal’s capacity to focus more of their time as an educational leader at the school level.

Areas of school management that require time and resources included but are not exclusive to Financial Management, Facilities Management and HR operational issues and performance management.

The expectation that Principals will have expertise in such a wide area is not realistic or practical. Systemic change, further role development and training is required to ensure these services are delivered in an efficient and economical way whilst maximising the Principal role in educational leadership.

Further autonomy for schools without the training and strategic management of roles, including that of the Principal, could have a negative effect on the role of Principal as an educational leader.

Other School Staff

In order to ensure teachers and educational leaders in schools are able to focus their time predominantly where they are the most effective, support roles need to be designed to support teachers and Principals to spend the majority of their time directly supporting student learning.

Further work could be done in this area to ensure that school based roles, functions and expectations are consistent and that work can then be done on the public perceptions and expectation can be clarified which will help improve the community view on a range of educational issues.

Data

The collection and use of data is continuing to have a significant impact on policy design teaching and learning and resource allocations. Data that supports strategic workforce management is critical to ensure that resources and policy reflect the factual reality of the future requirements of the school workforce.

The department is currently developing systems to help inform future workforce requirements to ensure policy and resource management are implemented to support the future needs of schools.

As the focus of this study is workforce based it must be pointed out that by far the majority of educational investment is in the workforce – therefore policy and strategic management and support must reflect the importance of this investment to maximise student learning by ensuring resourcing models and policy development continue reflect the needs of all students.

Data plays a critical role in this management and policy design. Current, accurate and robust data is the starting point to this management and policy design process.

Conclusion

Resource and policy development must be focussed on the most critical aspect of student learning (outside the home) – that is the quality of the teacher. The main factors that impact on this are the following;

- Education courses and the skills or specialisations of graduate teachers;
- Appropriate incentives and conditions to attract and retain staff in hard to staff schools
- Workforce Data to support policy development and resource allocations
- Professional learning and development of staff
- Leadership capacity in schools
- Community value for profession
- Highly qualified staff