



Encouraging Mature Aged Entry into the NSW Teaching Profession

A Discussion Paper
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The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers

South Korean Policymaker

Executive Summary

Education is the foundation of our social and economic achievement. A high quality education system not only provides a basis for a future of prosperity and growth; it underpins the egalitarianism and social cohesion that is such an essential part of Australia's social fabric.

NSW has a world-class education system, but this does not mean there is not room for improvement. Recent OECD research has found that one common factor in relatively high performing countries is strong efforts by authorities to improve the education system, rather than taking its quality and contemporary relevance for granted.¹

Empirical evidence shows that one of the major influences on the performance of an education system is the quality of the teaching profession. As every student, parent and teacher could tell you – high quality teachers produce high quality students.

In order to promote a high quality education system, Governments need to attract and retain the best and brightest in the teaching profession. This is not easy in the current economic environment. Unemployment is at a 34-year low and there is international demand for Australian graduates. The competition for talent is strong.

One potential future source of high quality teachers is mature aged workers – talented professionals who might be considering a career change.

This paper puts forward two proposals that would provide mature aged workers with the incentive to make the transition to a career in teaching. These are:

1. *The creation of a new Lateral Entry Program for Mature Aged Students that would enable participants to complete an intensively delivered Masters of Education with a large practical component, while earning a first-year teacher's salary;*
2. *The recognition of non-education based work experience in determining remuneration.*

Over the next few months the NSW Liberal/Nationals will consult with stakeholders in the education sector on these proposals.

¹ What Makes School Systems Perform? Seeing School Systems Through the Prism of PISA, Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004.

Elizabeth Stone: A Case Study of a System in Need of Reform

The story of Elizabeth Stone is emblematic of an education system that is in need of reform.²

Elizabeth Stone is an Australian success story. She is a Rhodes Scholar and holds three University degrees including a Master in Law from Oxford University and Graduate Degree in Mathematics from the University of NSW. She has also worked as a university lecturer.

What makes Elizabeth Stone especially unique is that she chose to eschew a highly lucrative career as a corporate lawyer to become a teacher. However despite her academic and co-curriculum achievements, the NSW public education system was unable to accommodate her. She subsequently taught at an exclusive private school on Sydney's North Shore while gaining her official teaching qualifications.

NSW deserves an education system that removes the barriers to talented professionals like Elizabeth Stone who wish to pursue a career in teaching; a system that makes the transition to a career in teaching seamless. How else can we hope to attract and retain the best and the brightest?

2 Private sector grabs Rhodes scholar, The Australian, 7 February 2008.

The Importance of Teacher Quality

"I believe that one of our greatest concerns today should be that our best and brightest young people are not entering the teaching profession"

Michael Chaney, Business Council of Australia

When it comes to education there is one area where Government, the business sector, parents and students are invariably in unanimous agreement – that the greatest opportunity to improve educational outcomes lies in the quality of teaching.

In May 2007 Andrew Leigh and Chris Ryan from the Australian National University used the literary and numeracy results of 90,000 Australian students to empirically prove what students, teachers and parents have known for generations – good teachers produce good results.³

Leigh went as far as to quantify the relationship. He found that the top 10 percent of teachers are able to achieve in six months what the bottom ten percent of teachers took more than a year to do.⁴

This Australian research is well supported by a raft of international evidence.

For example, data from the United States shows that if two average eight year old students were given two different teachers, one a high performer and one a low performer, their performance would diverge by more than 50 percentile points within three years.⁵

Given the strength of this relationship it is imperative that Governments recruit and retain the best and the brightest in the teaching profession.

3 Leigh, A. and Ryan, C., How has school productivity changed in Australia?, Australian National University, 2008.

4 Leigh, A., Estimating teacher effectiveness from two-year changes in students' test scores, Australian National University, 2007.

5 Cumulative and Residual Effects on Future Student Academic Achievement, McKinsey & Company, 1996.

A Snap Shot of the NSW Teaching Profession

A brief scan of the NSW teaching profession highlights some of the issues which could be resolved with a more flexible approach to teacher recruitment.

There are currently 78,236 teachers working in NSW schools. This includes 51,385 teachers working in the public education system and 26,851 in independent schools.

The number of teachers in independent schools has grown in line with the growth of students in independent schools. In the period from 1997 to 2007 the number of teachers in the public education system grew at 4 per cent compared to 35 per cent in non-government schools (see table 1).

Table 1: Number of Teachers and Students in NSW 1997-2007

	Non Government		Government	
	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students
1997	20,405	311,303	49,403	762,917
2007	26,851	371,566	51,385	737,637

Source: Schools Australia 2007, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008.

Another important statistical gap in the current teaching profession profile concerns gender. Currently only three in every 10 teachers is male. This gap is even more significant at a primary school level (see table 2).

Table 2: NSW Teachers by Gender 2007

	Male	Female
Primary	6,953	30,854
Secondary	17,774	22,655
Total	24,727	53,509

Source: Schools Australia 2007, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008.

One of the major challenges facing the NSW teaching profession is an ageing workforce. In February 2008 the NSW Auditor General conducted a performance audit focusing on the ageing of the teaching workforce.

The audit found that in 2003/04, 47 per cent of teachers were aged 45-64, the highest proportion of mature age workers in any occupation.

The average age of a NSW teacher is currently 45 years old. This means by 2012, 16,000 teachers, or 33 per cent of the permanent school workforce are likely to retire.⁶

The shortages that will stem from increased retirements will be especially apparent in certain disciplines and demographic areas, particularly:

1. *Mathematics, science and technological applied studies:* The NSW Auditor General noted there was an inadequate overall supply of secondary teachers in these disciplines. This was reaffirmed by an Australian Council of Education survey that found 43 per cent of high school principals had been forced to deal with shortages in fields such as maths and physics by employing staff whose knowledge often did not extend beyond their degree.⁷
2. *Regional and remote areas:* The NSW Auditor General also projected teacher shortages in specific geographic areas. These are likely to be rural and remote areas that have traditionally encountered difficulties in attracting teachers.

In Australia and other jurisdictions around the world, various lateral entry programs for teachers have been introduced in order to address teacher shortages.

6 Ageing Workforce – Teachers, NSW DET Performance Audit, NSW Auditor General, 2008.

7 Staff in Australia's Schools 2007, Australian Council of Education, 2008.

Lateral Entry – the International Experience

International evidence shows that most top-performing school systems remove obstacles to entry into the profession by creating alternative pathways for experienced hires.⁸

Following is a brief description of the innovative approaches and programs adopted by other educational jurisdictions:

1. *England*. The recruitment process in England is arguably the most diversified in the world, with 32 different ways to enter the teaching profession available in 2006. In combining these alternative entry programs with careful marketing strategies linked to recruitment programs, England has improved both the quantity and arguably the quality of teachers entering the profession.⁹
2. *Academy of Urban School Leadership (AUSL), Boston, USA*. This program recruits 40 to 50 mid-career professionals annually. The program begins with three months of intensive study to prepare the Residents for their practical experience. This is followed by an academic year of teaching residency under the tutelage of a trained mentor teacher. After the year of residency is complete, lateral entry program graduates are placed in relevant schools. The AUSL program has a 95 per cent retention rate of its program graduates.¹⁰
3. *Boston Teacher Residency Program, Boston USA*. This program begins with two months of intensive coursework in preparation for the first day of the school year. The Residents then complete an academic year in the classroom four days a week with theoretical coursework one day per week. The program is wrapped up with another month of coursework to reflect on the skills and strategies learnt during the year.¹¹
4. *New York City Teaching Fellows Program, New York USA*. Participants receive a seven-week intensive training course before beginning their classroom placement. The program stipulates the subject area and district that participants must teach in. It has been so successful that it has expanded from 325 participants in 2000 to 2000 participants in 2007. Many of these graduates have progressed to leadership roles, with 64 being promoted to principal or assistant principal, and 66 in other leadership roles such as mentors and coaches.

8 How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top, McKinsey & Company, 2007.

9 How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top, McKinsey & Company, 2007.

10 <http://www.auslchicago.org/>

11 <http://www.bpe.org/btr/>

Lateral Entry – the Domestic Experience

There are a handful of programs within NSW that offer teacher qualifications in a reduced time frame.

1. *Accelerated Teacher Training program.* The program targets people with current industry knowledge and expertise to become teachers in the areas of mathematics and technology and applied studies (TAS). It is the most significant program for mature aged entry to teaching in NSW.

The NSW Department of Education and Training meets the cost of the 18-month teacher education program, provides a one-off training allowance of \$1,500 to recipients of the scholarship and guarantees employment in a NSW public school. Graduates finish with a Bachelor of Education (BEd) qualification.

Admission to the program is based on an assessment of qualifications and industry experience. Depending on which field they enter, applicants require three to five years of recent related industry experience and/or hold a relevant TAFE diploma or Bachelor degree.

The Accelerated Teacher Training program is conducted by flexible delivery involving a mix of distance education, on-campus schooling and on-line delivery. There are approximately 75 to 100 graduates per year.

However there are major limitations to the Accelerated Teacher Training program. While the program represents a small-scale lateral entry scheme, it does not notably reduce the financial and accreditation barriers faced by persons wanting to join the teaching profession. As these are the major barriers facing mature age workers wishing to enter teaching, the Accelerated Teacher Training program contains significant shortcomings.

Additionally, the program only targets individuals within the areas of mathematics and TAS. This is despite research that projects significant shortcomings in remote and regional areas in the near future. Similarly, the Accelerated Teacher Training program does not address the lack of male teachers in the education system. Finally, concerns have been raised regarding insufficient induction and mentoring within the program, which can ultimately lead to poor retention rates and the failure of program graduates to succeed in the teaching profession.

2. *Masters of Teaching/Graduate Diploma in Education.* Several Universities within NSW offer a Masters of Teaching or Graduate Diploma in Education, which is open to students who have completed a Bachelor Degree with a major in a teaching-related subject (e.g. history or mathematics).

Students must undertake anywhere between 12 to 24 months of full-time study to obtain teaching qualifications. Most courses also involve a few weeks of compulsory in-school experience.

As with the Accelerated Teacher Training program, the Masters of Teaching and Graduate Diploma in Education do not notably reduce the financial and accreditation barriers faced by persons wanting to join the teaching profession. Students, especially those returning to study after a period of absence (mature age), still face serious deterrents in the form of length of training and loss of salary.

3. *Classmates.* This program is a joint effort between the University of Western Sydney and the NSW DET which allows students to complete a Masters of Teaching Degree while being gradually immersed in practical teaching. Students attend university lectures/tutorials for approximately one to two days per week and work in a disadvantaged high school on the other days.

The Classmates program is considered to be more demanding than a normal Masters, but it also has the potential to be a more effective way of preparing students for the start of their teaching career. However, the program is in its infancy and is relatively small, with only 17 students participating in 2006, its inaugural year.

Encouraging Mature Age Entry into Teaching

A key recommendation of the NSW Auditor General's 2008 Performance Audit *Ageing Workforce - Teachers* was:

That the Department including TAFE NSW continues to develop new measures to enhance its workforce capabilities such as by targeting the recruitment of mature aged workers from industry.

Further, The Commonwealth Government's *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future* report (2003) argued:

More people with experience in other occupations and professions should be... attracted to teaching, bringing with them a richness of wider world experience. For example, engineers, agricultural scientists, health professionals, statisticians, and others with appropriate qualifications and experience in government and industry...Career change professionals have much to offer as teachers, including in school vocational and education courses.

There are many reasons that young professionals might choose to pursue a career in teaching. For example:

1. A social worker may believe he/she can better assist special needs students through the teaching profession;
2. A CEO may be looking for a better work/life balance; or
3. A wife/husband may be looking for a new career after following their partner to a new city or town.

A Government that is serious about attracting and retaining our best and brightest in the teaching profession must be committed to removing the barriers to mature aged workers accessing the teaching profession.

The most significant barrier facing mature aged students is financial. Currently a person who wishes to retrain as a teacher must undertake one-year fulltime study, including full time in-school placement. This may be close to impossible for someone servicing a mortgage or supporting a family.

This situation is well summarised in a strategy paper by international Management Consultants McKinsey&Company¹²:

Top performing systems have also found ways to recruit more experienced graduates. Typically teacher-training requirements create barriers to recruiting such people. Applicants to teaching who have already completed their university studies and started work generally have to undertake a year of training in which they lose a years earnings, as well as having to bear the cost of their course in addition. This makes entry into the profession unattractive to experienced hires, particularly those with families or other financial commitments. Opening up alternative routes into teaching in which entrants are relieved of this financial burden increases significantly the pool of potential applicants into the profession.

The *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future Report (2003)* confirmed this statement, finding that high personal and family costs were faced by those wishing to make a career change move to teaching.¹³

12 How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top, McKinsey & Company, 2007.

13 *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future*, Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003.

Attracting the best and brightest

This NSW Liberal/Nationals discussion paper puts forward two ideas to reduce the barriers that face mature aged workers making the transition to a career in teaching:

1. The creation of a new Lateral Entry Program for Mature Aged Students that would enable participants to complete an intensively delivered Masters of Education with a large practical component, while earning a first-year teachers salary;
2. The recognition of non-education based work experience for Mature Aged Teachers.

Creation of a new Lateral Entry Program for Mature Aged Students

The NSW Liberal/Nationals propose a new lateral entry program designed specifically for mature aged students with qualifications in another field.

The program would enable participants to complete an intensively delivered Masters of Education with a large practical component, while earning a first-year teacher's salary.

Participants would enter a program lasting one full university year, with an emphasis on practical experience. This would provide students with the foundation knowledge to begin teaching including:

1. Pedagogy and curriculum
2. Effective learning and teaching
3. Student behaviour management
4. Educational psychology and child development

Course time would be divided between theoretical study at University (one-third of total time) and a practical component in the school classroom (two-thirds of total time).

The practical component would involve students working as non-assigned teachers at NSW government schools (as over-establishment staff). In the classroom, students would be individually mentored and closely monitored by an experienced teacher. This mentoring would provide the student with professional feedback – critical to the pedagogical process.

Graduates would finish with a Masters of Education after two full-time semesters, after which they would be bonded to a NSW government school for a period of two years.

The course specifics would be designed in consultation with Universities and major stakeholders including the NSW Teacher's Federation. The course would meet all of the criteria of the traditional Masters of Education and would be developed in line with standards from the NSW Institute of Teachers to ensure there is no weakening of teachers' standards. Graduates would be encouraged, via professional development programs, to acquire further qualifications.

Priority of entry would be given to applicants who have experience and availability directly relevant to areas of teacher shortages including:

1. Mathematics and science
2. Rural and remote areas
3. Males working with primary aged students

Recognising non-education based work experience in determining remuneration

Life experience is one of the ingredients that makes a teacher successful. The obstacle facing many professionals looking to transition to a teaching career is that the experience they have gained in other professions is currently not recognised.

The NSW Liberal/Nationals proposes that the Department of Education and Training be provided with the flexibility to appoint first year, mature aged teachers with previous employment experience and a graduate Diploma in Education to a higher salary grade.

For example a social worker, University tutor or engineer with a decade of employment experience might apply to enter the teacher profession on Salary Step 10 (\$63,536 pa) as opposed to the traditional graduate entry level of Salary Step 5 (\$50,522) (see table 3).

Table 3. NSW Teacher Salary Levels

	Per annum \$
Salary Steps	Salary as of 1/1/2008
Step 13	75,352
Step 12	68,744
Step 11	66,137
Step 10	63,536
Step 9	60,933
Step 8	58,331
Step 7	55,726
Step 6	53,121
Step 5	50,522

Source: NSW Department of Education and Training, 2008.

Mature aged teachers seeking to have their alternative teaching experience recognised would have their application assessed by the Department of Education and Training using the NSW Institute of Teachers guidelines. Assessment would be on a case-by-case basis.

This proposal would do more than simply increase the remuneration of selected mature age teachers. It would provide them with important career recognition.

Conclusion

Perhaps the greatest threat facing education in NSW is complacency. Our state shares a world-class education system, but it cannot be taken for granted.

OECD research has found that one common factor in relatively high performing countries is strong efforts by authorities to improve the education system, rather than taking its quality and contemporary relevance for granted.¹⁴

One challenge facing our education system is attracting and retaining the best and brightest people in the teaching profession. As the NSW Auditor General stated this year, a potential deep pool of talent is mature aged workers.

The NSW Liberal/Nationals are committed to developing innovative new approaches to attracting mature aged workers to the teaching profession. Research indicates that the most successful approaches will be those that remove the financial barriers to individuals making a career transition.

This paper has put forward two ideas to remove these financial barriers. The NSW Liberal/Nationals will now take these to stakeholders for their input and suggestions.

¹⁴ What Makes School Systems Perform? Seeing School Systems Through the Prisms of PISA, Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004.