

Investigating the barriers and enablers in attracting and retaining suitably qualified professionals to specialist teaching and non-teaching roles in Queensland Schools

Senior Schooling Conference
Productive pathways — successful futures
Brisbane, March 2009

Authors: Lindsay Greer, Robert Miles, Delwar Akbar and Stacey Tabert
Institute for Sustainable Regional Development, Central Queensland University.

Acknowledgement: *This project was funded by Education Queensland through EIDOS Pty Ltd.*

Disclaimer: *The information and opinions expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of Education Queensland and the Queensland Government*

Abstract

The report identifies some of the particular challenges facing the recruitment and retention of teachers into the more rural and remote areas of Queensland. These challenges include the ageing teacher workforce, significant salary competition from other industry sectors, current teacher salary scales and competitive salary rates, the cost of becoming a Science, Mathematics, Technology or Special education teacher, and the cost of professional development associated with curriculum changes.

Currently the students and teachers consider job security, balance between work and home, personal fulfilment, helping people, cost and length of training, career pathway in teaching and collaborative processes within the schools as the most important variables in choosing teaching career.

In attracting more people to teaching as a career in Queensland, the research indicates six significant career and teaching specific attributes that need to be considered as part of any promotion or recruitment initiatives and these are; reduced education fees, guarantee of permanency after two years of satisfactory service, increased understanding of career paths, promotion of the teaching career websites, better networking with university career advisor and highlighting teaching lifestyle.

Future research into recruitment strategies for the Queensland education workforce could benefit from an allied industry study. This study should include consideration of the impacts of the current and proposed recruitment strategies on allied professions that have potential cross over skill sets required by the education sector in Queensland.

Introduction

Public policy concern has long focused on education reform as a means to develop the nation's social capital and to underpin economic and social progress. Recent reviews such as the Bradley review of higher education and the November 2008 COAG communiqués highlight the importance of a progressive education system that meets the needs of a 21st century and functions as integral part of a globalised economy. This challenge has been recognised and considered proactively within Queensland's secondary school system. The scope of this paper is to consider the strategic imperatives, trends and drivers as they apply to general teaching specialised teaching and professional non-teaching roles

COAG in 2008 set out a national agreement designed to increase the quality of Australian student education outcomes including the setting of targets and implementation of a national curriculum. Of direct interest were the policy and institutional reforms proposed through the National Education Agreement and NP's. The goals were to improve school leadership and teaching quality, with support for school principals, and the need to develop and integrate new comparative performance reporting frameworks. For Schools with a community of 'low socio-economic status' it was proposed that in addition to increased funding, greater discretion be given to 'those school leaders and local school communities facing the greatest educational disadvantage'. The reforms were structured to engage the community in the decision making processes and embrace community based actions. The reforms indicated the need to embrace new incentives to attract high-performing principals and teachers by targeting lifestyle factors and rewarding quality outcomes. The COAG communiqué highlighted best practice performance management and staff arrangements that encourage innovation and flexibility and include innovative opportunities to broaden the scope and provision for external partnerships.

The Bradley report calls for an increase in the funding for higher education and this has implication for state based teacher education programs. One of the recommendations was that consideration be given to the delivery of regional higher education programs coupled with changes to financial assistance packages for students and notably the setting of clear and measurable targets to encourage innovation in the future recruitment of teaching staff within these schools. However the research undertaken through this study show that the proposed innovations in the Bradley review will not necessarily alleviate the identified constraints within the recruitment and retention of teachers in Queensland's education system.

One of the single biggest problems facing education systems with Australia is the attraction and retention of high quality teachers. As such there is a need to build on the existing platforms and transform the recruitment system to bring it in line with the expectations of the future generation of educators within the state.

Aim of the research

The aim of the research is to identify the barriers and enablers to effective attraction and retention of suitably qualified people to specialist teaching and non-teaching roles in Queensland State schools. The objective being the development of innovative strategies generated from a clear evidence base that could contribute to the attraction and retention of suitably qualified people to specialist teaching and non-teaching roles in Queensland State schools.

The research was designed to provide information on possible innovative and novel strategies to recruit and retain staff within Education Queensland in areas specifically identified as at risk of experiencing shortages in the near future.

Those areas considered to be at risk of experiencing shortages in the coming years included;

- Teaching Principals;
- Specialist teachers in: Maths, Science, Industrial Technology and Design, and Special Education; and
- Non-teaching professional roles, such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and registered nurses providing services in schools to students with special needs.

Systemic human resource issues confronting education

In August 2007, there were 9,581 schools in Australia, of which 6,853 (71.5%) were government schools and 2,728 (28.5%) were non-government schools.¹ According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), there were 276,822 working teachers in 2007, or 244,358 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers. On average, teachers in the workforce have been teaching for seventeen years, while school leaders have been teaching for twenty five years. One in ten teachers has taught in a remote location (DEST, 2003). Additionally, one in five current teachers have resigned and returned to teaching (McKenzie, Kos, Walker and Hong, 2008). The most common gross teacher salary ranges are \$60,001-\$70,000 and \$50,000-\$60,000.

The research reaffirmed the considerable concern held in Australia about teacher shortages in secondary specialist areas such as the Sciences and Mathematics. There has also been concern expressed about the number of secondary teachers teaching ‘out-of-field’. The *Staff in Australia’s Schools* study (McKenzie, Kos, Walker and Hong, 2008) specifically highlighted four secondary subject areas that are experiencing teacher shortages: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Information Technology (IT). In 2006, there were an estimated 400 unfilled vacancies for Mathematics teachers and 300 unfilled vacancies for Science teachers across Australia. In 2006, over 600 Special Needs teachers were required to fill the vacancies across Australia. These statistics are graphic and provide a useful snapshot

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008). *Schools Australia 2007*. Cat. No. 4221.0. Canberra: ABS.

of the situation. However these statistics need to be considered in the context of the current economic climate, recruitment strategies and professional development pressures. As such there is a need for a more detailed analysis.

Some of the more systemic challenges faced by rural and remote areas include:

- An ageing teacher workforce - by 2009, about 86 000 teachers will be aged over 55, and another 48 000 teachers will reach this age between 2010 and 2014
- Competition for staff - from other industry sectors and professions,
- Current 'relatively horizontal' teacher salary scales – salary caps and limits to career progression,
- Competitive salary rates – from other States and pay scales in other industries,
- Cost of professional development - in terms of access, time, travel and expense.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER 2008) estimates that there are around 20,000 principals and deputy principals in Australia, and notes that there are serious leadership supply problems in Australian schools. Examples include the problems of filling principal vacancies, identifying the 'next generation' school leaders, and workplace wellbeing issues associated with leadership. There is also evidence that these trends are likely to become a more serious issue in the immediate future.

The ACER (2008) report focused on the kinds of strategies that different national and international educational jurisdictions have been using to overcome teacher supply problems. In addition insight has been provided on some of the more innovative recruitment strategies that other sectors, such as Allied Health, Corporate Human Resources, and the Resource Industries have been using to attract and retain employees. Strategies such as increased overseas recruitment, targeted domestic recruitment campaigns, attracting qualified professionals back to the workforce via re-entry schemes, increased workforce flexibility coupled with flexible work patterns.

Evidence from the literature indicates that career opportunities and job security, lifestyle and salary are amongst the most important factors for attracting and retaining teaching professionals and para-professionals. Family issues such as the availability of quality educational and medical facilities, job prospects for spouses, and affordable housing are all issues that influence whether more remote positions are seen as attractive. A lack of career options and changing attitudes toward employment mean that younger teaching professionals are less keen to work in regional areas. The research shows that the retention and recruitment of teaching professionals in Queensland is likely to continue to be a major challenge for the sector into the immediate future and that this trend will be influenced by current demographic lifestyle choices and patterns and by cultural and generational shifts.

While the scale and extent of the recruitment problems within education (Australia wide) are likely to be impacted on by the change in current economic climate there is a need to seriously consider recruitment and retention strategies based on market segmentation. This is

needed due to the trend to toward multiple careers and the emerging need to facilitate and accommodate career changes such as the entry into and out of teaching. These needs are driven by changes in community interests and values as well as the lifecycle changes in the financial circumstances of individuals and households.

There are generally four basic market segments to consider:

- Less than 25 (No children)
- 25-35 (Young children),
- 35-50 (Maturing children)
- Greater than 50 (Post children phase)

These basic workforce segments also reflect significant generational drivers and gender differences.

Materials and methods

The research presented in this paper is based on primary survey data, supported by secondary data sources. The research adopted an in-sector focus on education providers located within Brisbane, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Mackay regions. In addition the research analysed and evaluated the innovative recruitment strategies from other industry sectors, within Australia and internationally.

The research participants were recruited from metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations in Queensland. Queensland based universities (ACU, CQU, Griffith, JCU, SCU, UQ, and USQ) and discrete secondary schools (n=7) were targeted. The secondary schools were aligned with the MCEETYA Schools Geographic Location Classifications. All research participants were grouped into four homogenous subgroups prior to sampling: Year 12 school students, higher education students, secondary teaching and non-teaching staff, and para-professional organisations.

The research utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine both within and outside the core 'at risk' cohorts for the education system. The qualitative research consisted of focus groups and personal interviews with teachers, school leaders and para-professional organisations. Quantitative data was collected from Year 12 students (n=239) and secondary teachers (including HODs and Principals) (n=91) within schools via a paper-based survey instrument. University students (n=1243) were invited to participate in an online survey. The project team surveyed approximately 1633 participants across the four subgroups.

Data analysis included the following: Spearman Rank Order correlation to show the strength and direction of linear relationships between variables; Factor analysis was used to uncover the interrelationships among variables and to explain these variables in terms of underlying factors; Weighted average techniques and ordered mean values were used to rank variables; Thematic analysis was employed to categorise qualitative data sets.

Results and research findings

The initial research findings designed to inform future recruitment strategies, initiatives and programs are presented under the sub-group headings.

- *Year 12 students*

Year 12 students were invited to complete a paper based survey '*Career Aspirations and Attitudes to Teaching as a Career: Year 12 Student Survey 2008*'. This resulted in a total of 243 completed Year 12 surveys collected from four sub-sample areas. The surveys were completed on a self selection basis and were evenly spread across the locations of Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Brisbane. Completions in the Mackay area were small due in part to the small school populations of the participating schools which were located outside of Mackay in rural locations.

The results indicated that after completion of Year 12 (and including a possible gap year) 62.5 percent of the respondents aspired to undertake university study and 16 percent wished to undertake TAFE studies. Teacher education studies were a QTAC preference for 28.8 percent of students.

The Year 12 students were asked to rate the status of teaching compared to other careers on a five point likert scale ranging from 'among the lowest' to 'among the highest'. Just fewer than 64 percent of the students rated the status of teaching from 'about average' to 'among the highest'. When asked to rate the pay for beginning teachers to other careers almost 92 percent selected from 'about average' to 'among the lowest' with 36 percent rating the pay below average.

Year 12 students were asked whether they would consider working in either a rural or remote location, or in another state or territory, or perhaps overseas. The most popular location was an overseas location in which either 'yes, definitely' or 'yes, maybe' were selected by 37.6 percent of the Year 12 students, this was followed by teaching in another state or territory (27.2 percent) and teaching in a rural or remote location (26 percent).

The students were asked to list the incentives that would encourage them to consider teaching in ITD, Mathematics, Science, Special education and heading the list of suggested incentives were financial incentives (26.4 percent) followed by having the choice of the subject taught (20.7 percent).

Suggestions were collected from the Year 12 students about what could improve the attractiveness of teaching to students. The main factors were to increase the salary rates for teachers and to improve the overall teaching conditions and requirement to becoming a teacher.

- *University students*

Participation in the University student survey *'Education Careers with a Difference: University Student Survey 2008'* included seven Queensland based universities with the largest response being from USQ with 37.5 percent of the sample followed by CQUniversity with almost 24 percent.

The overwhelming majority of student participants were undertaking a Bachelor degree (93.3 percent) with a small number (4.3 percent) undertaking a Graduate diploma. There were 723 male respondents (n=58.2 percent) and 519 female respondents (41.8 percent), with 94 percent of the respondents being Australian citizens. More than half of the respondents (53.2 percent) had put teacher education on their QTAC application form and seventy percent of the students had the status of deferred FEE-HELP. Those students paying FEE-HELP upfront accounted for 18.8 percent of respondents, with 5.2 percent being domestic fee paying students and 4.9 percent international fee paying students. Eighty nine point seven percent of the students were expecting to graduate from their university courses by the end of 2011.

As with the Year 12 survey results the University students mostly reported a good level of knowledge of teaching career pathways (45.4 percent) but there was still a significant proportion (36.7 percent) who indicated that they had either a poor level of knowledge or didn't know anything at all about teaching career pathways.

Knowledge of para-professional employment opportunities within Education Queensland was on a par with the level of understanding of Education Queensland recruitment processes, which was poor. Just fewer than 60 percent of university students either have a poor or don't understand at all the EQ recruitment process and 62.3 percent have a poor or don't know anything about para-professional employment opportunities. These results suggests at the least a need for better communication of teaching career pathways and teaching recruitment processes and an examination of the opportunities to re-structure career and recruitment processes.

The knowledge of obtaining a Queensland teaching qualification is considerably better with over 81 percent of students having at least a little bit of knowledge and 41.3 percent having quite a lot of knowledge.

Primary teaching is the most popular option with 65.8 percent followed by Secondary teaching (58.4 percent) and then Special education teaching (46.1 percent).

The university student cohort appears quite willing to re-locate in order to work as a teacher with 66 percent definitely or maybe willing to work in a rural or remote school, this compares with Year 12 students with just 26 percent. There is a similar result for working in another

state or territory in Australia with 66.6 percent of university students compared to 27.2 percent of Year 12 students.

For university students a key attraction measure is the level of financial remuneration along with employment security. In contrast to the Year 12 survey results the inclusion of a laptop computer is not as attractive to university students who are looking for more tangible long term incentives.

- *Secondary teachers*

Queensland teachers (n=91) from seven diverse secondary schools were invited to participate in the paper based survey titled '*Attraction strategies for knowledge workers*'. The largest group of participants self reported their level of employment as teachers (54.4 percent) followed by senior teachers (16.7 percent), Head of Departments (14.4 percent), Principals (6.7 percent) and also Special Education teachers (7.8 percent).

The majority of teachers were employed on a permanent basis (90 percent) with slightly more females than male teachers. There were 5.5 percent who were employed on a temporary basis with twice as many female teachers in this category than males although 7.4 percent of males did not respond to the question.

The results suggest quite strongly that more frequent professional interaction is occurring on an informal basis with colleagues (67.8 percent) rather than at the regional level (6.7 percent). The importance of developing a working partnership with key education stakeholders was also examined with partnerships with School communities the highest 'very important' selection (46.7 percent). The Teachers union was seen as either moderately or of little importance by 46.7 percent of respondents.

Forty nine of the teachers (54.4 percent) felt that the status of teaching could be improved by increased professionalism while 31 percent thought that it was maybe possible while 7.8 percent thought that it could not.

The highest level of satisfaction for teachers within schools is with 'feeling part of an effective team at your current school' along with the importance given to extra-curricula activities.

The majority of teachers cited 'job satisfaction' (63.1 percent) as the main reason they stay in teaching. This was followed by 'employment conditions and benefits' that suited the respondents (30.1 percent). There were a small number who said they stayed in teaching because of barriers such as limitations in transferring to other professions.

The two most important incentives to retain teachers within the profession were to increase the status of teaching and to further professionalise employment conditions. Incentive based payments to teachers were third in importance, even though ‘performance based pay schedules’ were rated last on the list of incentives.

Aspects of current teacher employment were rated with the measures seen as most important being financial benefits in the form of the remote area allowance, subsidies for housing and the relocation allowance. The most highly rated incentives were ‘increasing the remote area allowance’, ensuring ‘affordable and adequate housing’, and offering a ‘guarantee of a teaching placement at a coastal/city school after 2 years of service’.

The final question in the teacher’s survey invited submissions from the teachers on the ‘novel and innovative strategies’ that they would adopt to improve recruitment to teaching. The main theme to emerge from the submissions were focused around increasing support for training in two particular ways, first to increase the amount of time trainee teachers spend in paid training within the school system and second to increase the amount of practical and relevant training within university education training programs. The second theme revolves around re-evaluating the teaching position description to capture the changing expectation of teachers within communities particularly in rural and remote location. This was seen as a systemic issue requiring contemplation and actions throughout the education human resource system from teachers in class to education department bureaucracy.

- *Principals*

Research assistants conducted focus group discussions with school principals, teaching staff, and special education teams in five Queensland state high schools. The results of the focus groups were structured around three main thematic ideas; firstly what attracts individuals to the teaching profession, what are the main barriers to attracting individuals to specialised teaching roles, and thirdly what are the innovative strategies that the department can employ to attract and retain teachers into specialist teaching areas.

There were three aspects that emerged from discussions of what attracted people to teaching: job conditions; career opportunities; and having a clear sense of purpose. Issues such as employment security and employment conditions were looked upon favourably. It was suggested that the ability to transfer employment was positively viewed, in particular overseas opportunities.

Discussion of the barriers to attracting qualified people to specialist teaching roles generated lively debate, and was not limited to recruiting specialist teachers. The main barriers that were identified fall under the following categories: financial, work conditions, professional status, training opportunities.

Participants reiterated what the academic literature has stated about why many people pursue teaching as a career. The main reasons beyond basic survival were that they liked working with young people; have a passion for the subject area that they teach; share in the excitement of knowledge and discovery; and find the position generally rewarding and a challenge to help young people.

Administrators and teachers were enthusiastic about being given the opportunity to engage and suggest innovative strategies to help attract and retain specialist teachers into their schools. The following areas were highlighted as areas that need to be addressed; financial remuneration; professional development and support; flexibility of work conditions and the employment/recruitment process; and marketing and recruitment.

- *Para-professional organisations*

Engagement was undertaken with Queensland based para-professional organisations in the areas of nursing, speech pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and psychology. Organisation representations were asked to respond on the basis of their professional knowledge of the profession's standing in relation to the Queensland education system. Telephone based interviews were semi-structured in design and covered three key themes:

- the current relationship between the profession and para-professionals working within the education system,
- the extent of knowledge within the profession on the employment opportunities available to para-professionals,
- the possible incentives that would assist in attracting para-professions to seek employment within the Queensland education sector.

In summary all of the professional organisation interviewed were aware of the career opportunities in schools and were confident that their members would be aware of the employment opportunities. Awareness was not seen as the main barrier to increased recruitment and also to many retention issues which seemed more related to the incapacity of schools to satisfactorily fund the positions that were required and to offer security of tenure for more difficult to fill locations.

Knowledge of the working conditions within schools was generally easy to locate as with many of the Education Queensland based incentives for para-professional employment. The consensus was that para-professionals could easily locate relevant information via their professions website or organisational representatives. Additional information was available on the Education Queensland website.

All of the organisations contacted believed that a better incentives package would assist in attracting more para-professionals to seek employment within Education Queensland schools. For example nurses believe that if the remuneration was comparable to other areas such as

hospitals and/or private practice, more would choose school nursing as a career. Speech pathologists would like to see comparable pay rates to those awarded elsewhere in the profession. They believe that advertising school work conditions, such as the school work hours and holidays, would be successful in recruiting more speech pathologists in schools. In addition, they would like the formation of professional networks to avoid professional isolation, especially in rural areas. Occupational and physiotherapist along with psychologists also expressed that their members are currently professionally isolated in many rural areas, and would therefore like the formation of professional networks in these areas, and access to funding for professional development training and activities.

Discussion and conclusions

The Year 12 students, university students and teachers who participated in this study have indicated that job security, balance between work and home, personal fulfilment, helping people, cost and length of training, career pathway in teaching and collaborative processes within the schools are the most important variables of choosing teaching as a career in general.

In attracting more people to teaching as a career in Queensland, students and teachers indicated six significant career and teaching specific attributes that need to be considered as part of any promotion or recruitment initiatives. These are reduced education fees, job security, increased understanding of career paths, the promotion of the DETA website, better networking with career advisors and highlighting the teaching lifestyle.

The study findings indicate that educational authorities need to consider ways to reduce fees and costs associated with attaining a teaching qualification. This may mean asking the government to reduce university fees related to teaching qualifications as well as providing and promoting more teaching scholarships in order to increase the number of graduates and career changers pursuing a teaching qualification.

Increasing the number of teaching scholarships, which generally require recipients to work for a specified amount of time in a specific school or location, will address to some extent the second criteria of guaranteeing job permanency. Year 12 students, university students and teachers all indicated that job security is a significant variable in choosing a career. A plan that reduces education fees and guarantees employment for a specified period of time may both attract and retain qualified candidates to teach in Queensland schools.

The remaining four variables identified in this study are all associated with better promoting DETA as an employer of choice. Investing in a promotional campaign that highlights the professional aspects and career pathways teaching can provide may attract a more diverse group of school leavers, university graduates and career changers. While about 40% of participants indicated that they had little or no understanding of career paths related to

teaching, an increased understanding of career paths was the third most significant variable when choosing teaching as a career.

Additionally, many participants were unfamiliar with the department's recruitment process. Since students indicated that they rely significantly on the career information given by their teachers and lecturers, it is important for DETA to network closely with educational institutions and career advisors, and promote the DETA website as a place where relevant information can be found.

The findings indicate that using the DETA website as a vehicle to provide information about recruitment, career pathways, and financial assistance available to pursue teaching qualifications will be a worthwhile endeavour. A promotional campaign that highlights the teaching lifestyle as personally fulfilling and providing a balance between work and home may also attract more people to pursue teaching as a career choice.

In relation to rural and remote locations there is a need to consider the lateral potential and challenges presented by remote areas in isolation, peer review and support, mentoring and professional development and career paths.

Possible pathways forward

The findings drawn from the consultation with students, educators and para-professional organizations fall into two broad approaches, (a) systemic issues and (b) strategies and interventions. Firstly the research offers the chance to reflect on current practices and make suggestions on the broad systemic issues that have been identified as barriers to recruitment and retention. Secondly there is an opportunity to focus on more discrete strategies and interventions that target specific generational groups.

There is consistency in the themes for reform derived from this research as those distilled from previous research. These include:

- Income parity,
- Increased professionalism,
- Increased quality outcomes.

A systems approach is needed to address in any sustainable way these three areas of reform. It is recommended that further research be undertaken to explore the policy options and to model the social and economic outcomes of the introduction of an integrated performance management system (to increase professionalism and status). The system needs to be nested at the central, regional and local level as well as within school clusters integrating departments and ensuring localized needs are met.

It is also recommended that modelling be undertaken to examine the impacts of the introduction of a more substantive differentiated pay scale. This needs to be coupled with

performance reviews. Emphasis should be placed on achieving a high quality workforce, to re-define the incentives and clarify career pathways as well as position roles within specialist education and the professional non-teaching human resource sector.

Income parity has been identified as a barrier to the recruitment of professionals. This is particularly evident in attracting professionals from other disciplines which have traditionally attracted high incomes. There are a number of issues that also need to be addressed such as the accurate and more effective recognition of prior expertise and the facilitation of appropriate dual professional practice. This entails the development of specialized support services in partnership with professional organizations.

Increasing professionalism will require incentives to be formulated under a collaborative partnership between the stakeholders (i.e. department, unions and associated professional bodies). A systems approach is required that stresses quality through the tertiary enrolment process and academic training. This must be coupled with and underpinned by, extensive practical knowledge, and recruitment that affords choice and flexibility with respect to generational and career drivers.

Increased professionalism needs to be underpinned by a very mature and functional performance review system. This system must allow for individual assessment criteria to be set against local, regional and state objectives for educational outcomes. This must not be seen as a punitive system and must be developed and sold as a proactive collaborative exercise that works to encourage individual assessment and advancement. This must be a reward structured system that offers clear incentives to seek quality improvements.

Increased quality begins with increased educational outcomes. These can be achieved by refocusing on the craft of teaching and enhancing the training regime by re-balancing university training to include more in-service training. The nurturing and mentoring of quality teachers begins with and affords graduate trainees a professional structured approach outlining clear career pathways which are flexibly and adaptable to 21st century careers.

An initial low cost strategy for increasing recruitment across all target groups is to review and enhance the online education websites. This needs to increase usability and importantly to organise the content structure to better inform prospective employees. The emerging 'quality' niche and value proposition of the teaching profession should be explicit within the content design and articulate a clear 'point of difference' with other competing professions.

Specific messages that increase the understanding of career paths should be developed for internal and external audiences. Information highlighting the advantages of a teaching lifestyle should also be a feature.

More use should be made of the comparison of salaries between teaching and other professions with – consideration of the cost of living differences between states and in regional areas, as well the cost of becoming a Science, Mathematics, Technology or Special education teacher factored in. Continuity of the message should be carried through multiple delivery platforms i.e. print and electronic media, promotional materials etc.

It is suggested that greater flexibility be allowed in the recruitment system to allow for individual work location choice and greater mobility based on merit selection by individual school principals and leadership groups. It is argued that high quality recruits may be further encouraged to re-locate once they have been recruited, however if by limiting the location choices quality candidates may opt for interstate or overseas opportunities. Targeted recruits should be given location incentives (allow the choice of flexible locations or a particular location when available – waiting list for locations)

Partnership strategies should be adopted that take advantage of federal government priorities and maximize the benefits for the state government such as the emphasis on universal access to early childhood education. Partnerships with community organizations in remote and rural locations should focus on the development of dual function roles combining teaching and community based work. This could generate attractive positions for generation Y teachers who are looking for more flexible working conditions and the opportunity to combine community service roles in a formalized employment contract.

Given the considerable criticism of teacher training course structures it is recommended that further examination of this issue be carried out in partnership with the university providers with the objective of enhancing the practical training aspects of teacher training. Consideration should be given to the introduction of additional ‘enhanced’ assistant teacher roles that utilise student teacher traineeships and integrate student teachers into schools earlier and for longer periods.

In addition as mentioned earlier clarity should be given to career paths that extend further than currently is the case. (see Primary Industries, Police Force, University HR systems examples include eminent professional career structures and pathways). Clearer recruitment pathways should be combined with better networking with university career advisors.

Targeted recruitment need to focus through the years 10-12 within schools with the possible use of teachers as recruiters of better quality and more suited candidates for specialized teaching and leadership roles. Consideration should be given to the use of specific regional recruitment strategies with conditional agreements for regional employment subject to satisfactory performance. Regional recruitment could include within degree school placement (work experience) targeted at working in the regions. Most city based youth don’t realize the fun they will have and the social network gained from these activities – this is seen as a perceived blockage.

Professional development based on the clear needs of the profession and with consideration of the flexibility and mobility of the new generation of teaching professionals. Professional development should be delivered with the expectation that teachers will leave the industry sector to gain further experience; this in turn will create a more experienced teacher cohort that can be recruited back into the industry.

Overall strategies need to be focused on the different cohorts that are identified through the HR research and analysis group. Strategies that focus on the broader impediments such as salary parity and limited career pathways should align with the federal government funding initiatives designed to improve quality outcomes. This will involve both the introduction of more selective recruitment practices targeted for specific positions and locations and the incremental introduction of flexible market based solutions.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008). *Schools Australia 2007*. Cat. No. 4221.0. Canberra: ABS.

Australian Council for Educational Research (2008). *OECD Improving School Leadership Activity: Australian Country Background Report*.

Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H., Scales, B. (2008) Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report, DEEWR, available www.deewr.gov.au/he_review_finalreport

Council of Australian Governments Meeting, Communique, Canberra, 29th November 2008
Available: http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/communique_20081129.pdf

Council of Australian Governments Meeting, Communique –Nation Building and Jobs Plan, Canberra, 5th February 2009
Available: http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-02-05/index.cfm

Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). (2003). *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future – Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics*. Canberra; Commonwealth of Australia. [online]. URL: http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education (Accessed 21/07/08).

McKenzie, P., Kos, J., Walker, M. and Hong, J. (2007). *Staff in Australia's Schools 2007*. Melbourne: ACER.