

Induction to the teaching profession

- 6.1 The period between graduation from a pre-service teacher education course and full registration as a teacher is an important, yet often neglected stage, in teacher education.
- 6.2 Since at least the early 1980s, successive reports on teacher education have called for more attention to be given to the induction of new teachers into the profession. These reports have consistently called for beginning teachers to be given a reduced teaching load, to be assigned to appropriate schools and classes, and to be provided with a mentor who would support them in their first year of teaching. Recommendations have also called for those teachers acting as mentors to be given proper preparation for their role and to receive, in turn, appropriate recognition. While induction processes have improved in recent years, much more needs to be done in this area.
- 6.3 Graduates from teacher education courses must be ready to take on the full responsibilities of a class or classes. Notwithstanding this, it is generally acknowledged that there are limitations on what can be covered in a teacher education course and that beginning teachers are still learning. In some jurisdictions this is reflected in the different sets of professional standards for teaching that registration bodies have developed for provisional registration and for full registration. In others, it is reflected in the competency or standards frameworks that have been established by employing authorities. Similarly, the National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching recognises the developmental nature of teachers' knowledge, skills and practices through identifying four career dimensions, the first of which is the graduate dimension. Despite the acknowledgement that beginning teachers are in an intense developmental phase, much in current systems (with some notable

exceptions) works against beginning teachers being provided with an appropriate level of support as they move from being a provisionally registered teacher to a fully registered teacher.

Distinction between internships and induction

- 6.4 A variety of internship models operate across Australia. Most involve a student teacher having an extended 'practicum' placement in a school towards the end of their initial teacher education. This approach seeks to ease the transition between initial preparation and taking on the responsibilities of a provisionally registered teacher. The committee strongly supports the internships approach to providing professional school experience and suggests that partnerships around internships would be a good example of initiatives that could be funded under the National Teacher Education Partnership Fund recommended in Chapter 5. However, it is important to distinguish between the internships mentioned in evidence to this inquiry and approaches to induction that are the subject of this chapter.
- 6.5 While internships often share some of the features of effective induction programs, such as access to a mentor and a reduced face-to-face teaching load, there are some important distinctions. Internships are for teachers who have not yet fully qualified. A key distinction is in the final level of responsibility taken by the student teacher or teacher. In nearly all of the internships described to the committee during this inquiry, the student teacher may take full charge of the class but the class is still the responsibility of a qualified teacher and the student teacher is still under the supervision of that teacher. By contrast, beginning teachers in induction programs have full responsibility for their class.
- 6.6 In the interest of clarity, the committee will use the term 'internship' when referring to practices prior to graduation and the term 'induction' to practices after graduation.

What form of support do beginning teachers need?

- 6.7 Previous reports into teaching and teacher education have identified the following needs of beginning teachers:
- to be mentored/supported by an experienced teacher;
 - to have access to on-going professional learning that is relevant to their specific circumstances; and

- a reduced face-to-face teaching load for the first twelve months to allow time to reflect on their practice, to meet with their mentor, to observe other classes and to undertake appropriate on-going professional learning.
- 6.8 Beginning teachers also need an opportunity to put into practice all that they have learned during their initial teacher education course as soon as possible after graduation. This requires that they be given reasonably stable employment, ideally for a period that is the equivalent of twelve months of fulltime teaching or until they have been granted full registration. It also means assigning beginning teachers to classes in a school environment that is appropriate for beginning teachers and at a level or in a field within their area of expertise.

Are beginning teachers getting what they need?

- 6.9 Throughout Australia there is wide variation in the quality and provision of support that is given to beginning teachers.

For beginning teachers, and usually confined to the first year, some kind of formal induction is standard practice. This is both a form of initiation and potentially at least the first stage of continued professional learning once probation requirements have been met. But in practice the experience is highly variable. Moreover, those teachers who begin their careers on a series of temporary and short term contracts often miss out on programs that do exist, at the time when they most need them.

The nature and quality of induction programs vary widely: from nothing more than a brief, formal introduction to the rules, procedures and resources of a single school, to systematic provision at the district or regional level, to more substantial mentoring and buddy arrangements within individual schools, to systematic career planning and support. For decades, studies and reports have advanced arguments for a more comprehensive model, involving all of these elements and available in practice to all new entrants. To achieve this would require the establishment of a more substantial structure that exists at present, system-wide and including school-based teacher mentors or educators. Yet there is, now, an expectation across all jurisdictions and systems

that such a structure should be fully operative. In practice, it is not.¹

- 6.10 Induction responsibilities are typically shared between employing authorities and the schools to which beginning teachers are assigned. Guidelines for induction programs, professional development programs and resource materials to support induction are often provided at a central, regional and/or district level while schools are generally responsible for providing the all important on-going mentoring aspects of induction as well as basic school orientation activities.
- 6.11 The committee recognises that there has been some progress in improving the support that is given to beginning teachers in recent years. Some of the jurisdictions which have made substantial progress in incorporating standards into registration processes have also effectively mandated the role of the induction process in assisting beginning teachers to move from provisional to full registration. The committee was particularly impressed by the structured, state-wide, coordinated mentoring and induction program established by the Victorian Institute of Teaching and the Department of Education and Training. In order to be granted full registration, provisionally registered teachers are required to demonstrate that they have met the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration. The Induction and Mentoring program specifically supports teachers as they undertake activities to meet this requirement. The support includes the provision of a mentor who has been specifically trained for the role.
- 6.12 Beginning teachers in New South Wales must also be allocated a supervising teacher to support them in gaining accreditation at the level of Professional Competence.² As in other jurisdictions, in New South Wales it is largely the responsibility of principals to provide for the induction of beginning teachers in their schools. The NSW Department of Education has also introduced a formal mentoring program, in which it invests \$5 million per year, in areas where there are schools which have a potentially high number of new teachers. The program reaches approximately 90 schools.³ Tasmania also informed the committee that all schools employing beginning teachers have implemented comprehensive induction programs.⁴ While these and other initiatives suggest that there

1 M. Skilbeck & H. Connell, *Teachers for the Future; The Changing Nature of Society and Related Issues for the Teaching Workforce*, MCEETYA, 2004, p. 52. (*Exhibit No. 50*)

2 <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/employment/recruit/beginnteach/inductionprog.htm>

3 Mr Andrew Cappie-Wood, Director-General of Education and Training and Managing Director, TAFE New South Wales, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 March 2006, p. 8.

4 Tasmanian Government, *Submission No. 127*, p. 19.

has been progress in all jurisdictions in recent years, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is still considerable variation in the degree to which systems and schools are providing personal and professional support to beginning teachers.

Beginning teachers and attrition

6.13 The impact of unsatisfactory induction can be severe.

One of the problems we have with people when they come out of college is that they very rarely get a full-time position. They do not go into a classroom situation. When I came out of college, I went straight into a class and it was a completely different environment. What they end up doing is temporary relief work. That is nothing like taking your own class, because you cannot establish patterns of management – behaviour management, curriculum management or whatever – in that situation. You are really in a situation where many students will try and take advantage of you as the teacher and make things really difficult. You therefore revert to a very closed sort of style, if you like. You do not develop those skills... What happens with some of those people is that they experience the TRT round for a year or whatever and they say, "Hang on, teaching is not for me," because of how difficult it is to walk into a class and control it... If they had the opportunity to go out into either a mentoring situation or into a class, they would get a different perspective...⁵

6.14 Up to 25 per cent of beginning teachers may leave their current teaching position or the profession within their first five years of teaching.⁶ The high level of attrition is of concern, particularly in light of the investment made in initial teacher education and the current and anticipated teacher shortages. While there are many contributing factors to attrition, the evidence suggests that a key factor is the inadequate level of support that is given to beginning teachers. The role that quality induction programs may have in reducing attrition is explicitly acknowledged in the materials that the Victorian Department of Education and Training has prepared to support its Induction and Mentoring Program.

One of the important functions of induction programs is to provide optimum professional support for beginning and

5 Mr Goode, Principal, Darlington Primary School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 September 2005, p. 48.

6 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 59*, p. 3.

returning teachers in order to maximise their retention in the system.⁷

- 6.15 The longitudinal study that the committee has proposed in Chapter 2 would yield useful data on the attrition of beginning teachers and its causes. In the meantime, it is a safe assumption that improving the support that is provided to beginning teachers will assist in reducing the attrition rate.

The way forward

- 6.16 Given that for many years reviews of teacher education have stressed the importance of proper induction, what are the impediments to achieving this across Australia? Why has progress been so uneven and so slow? In considering the issue of induction, the committee sees little value in simply reiterating the calls that have been made in previous reports on teacher education. While the responsibility for induction is very clearly the responsibility of employing authorities in each jurisdiction, the Australian Government should provide some impetus to achieving the long called for improvements in this area.

Providing beginning teachers with the opportunity to consolidate and build on what they have learned

- 6.17 Beginning teachers need to be given the opportunity to consolidate what they have learned in their pre-service teacher education course. This necessitates that they are able to take on the full teaching responsibilities for a class or classes over an extended period of time. The committee acknowledges that a number of the excellent internship programs that some teacher education students participate in prior to graduation approximate this experience. However, they are generally for no longer than a ten week period.
- 6.18 In a recent DEST survey of Former Teacher Education Students “just over 85 per cent of respondents reported that they were currently working as teachers, under one-third of these (28 per cent) were employed on a permanent basis. Over half of the respondents currently working as teachers (57 per cent) were engaged under contracts, and 15 per cent were engaged in casual or relief work.”⁸ It is simply not possible to provide

7 Teacher and SSO Development Unit, Victorian Department of Education and Training, *Planning an Induction Program*, 2005, p. 11.

8 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Survey of Former Teacher Education Students (A Follow-up to the Survey of Final Year Teacher Education Students)* December, 2006, p. 1. (Exhibit No. 122)

induction in a structured and effective way if teachers are moving around from class to class and school to school in casual/relief teaching positions. This is not only from the perspective of the beginning teacher but also from the perspective of mentor teachers and principals.⁹

- 6.19 The situation is better for beginning teachers employed in short-term contract positions but still far from ideal. While beginning teachers on short-term contracts are able to participate in induction and mentoring programs and are able to move from provisional to full registration, many of the features of quality induction programs assume that a beginning teacher will be employed at the same school for a full year. Not least of these features is the nature of the relationship between the mentor and the beginning teacher. Conditions which promote a quality relationship include those that provide for continuity, proximity and flexibility. Although it is possible for a beginning teacher to retain the same mentor while moving from school to school, it is more difficult to achieve the conditions that facilitate the best mentoring arrangements. The situation is even less satisfactory for beginning teachers whose entry into the profession consists of a broken series of short-term contracts.
- 6.20 Remedying a situation in which a large proportion of graduates occupy casual or short-term fixed contract positions represents a major challenge, particularly for employing authorities. It has significant planning, administrative and resource implications. The review, *An Ethic of Care*, noted that “forces of supply and demand generally limit the ability of systems or districts to be selective in the placement of beginning teachers, although there is some evidence of guidelines being applied with particular regions.”¹⁰
- 6.21 The committee does not underestimate the logistical and operational challenges that would be involved in ensuring that more beginning teachers are given an opportunity to work for at least a specified minimum period in an appropriate school. The committee also fully recognises that supply and demand will determine the number of teachers who are employed on an on-going/permanent basis. However, market forces should not be an excuse not to provide beginning teachers with what is essentially a critical part of their education. Administrative difficulties are not insurmountable obstacles. Ensuring that beginning teachers have access to stable employment for long enough to experience

9 According to a recent survey of beginning teachers, 44% reported having problems gaining permanency, 42.3% were on fixed term contracts over six weeks but not permanent and 6% were relief/supply only.

10 Department of Education, Science and Training, *An Ethic of Care: Effective Programmes for Beginning Teachers*, 2002, p. 39.

quality induction into the teaching profession will require the Australian Government to take very seriously its consultation process with the employing authorities about labour force needs when it negotiates the number of teacher education places to be allocated with the universities. It will also require employing authorities to redevelop school staffing formulas and mechanisms.

Beginning teachers should be allocated a mentor

- 6.22 Beginning teachers should be supported by an experienced teacher who would act as a guide and mentor through the induction year. In recognition of the importance of the role of mentor, the mentor teacher should be allocated time to observe the beginning teacher at regular periods, to model teaching strategies, to meet with the beginning teacher to discuss teaching approaches and matters of concern and to help identify and arrange for appropriate on-going professional development. In the committee's view, the role of mentors should be linked to their registration status. For instance, mentors could use their participation in induction programs as evidence of progress towards meeting professional standards for teaching at higher levels of accomplishment. Mentors should receive training for their mentoring role. There is the potential for employing authorities to work with teacher education providers on the development of programs to prepare mentor teachers for the role.

Beginning teachers should be given a reduced teaching load

- 6.23 Beginning teachers need time to reflect on their experience and practice, time to meet with their mentor teachers and time to attend on-going professional development courses. The committee concedes that some jurisdictions may provide beginning teachers with a reduced face-to-face teaching load but the amount by which is it reduced is less than sufficient. The time allocated needs to be more than a token amount of time. The committee considers that beginning teachers should be given a reduced face-to-face teaching load of at least 20 per cent for the first twelve months. This clearly has resource implications. However, with collaboration between employing authorities, unions, teachers, and the Australian Government, it is achievable.

A better approach

- 6.24 Induction should be seen as an integral part of teacher education. It is not an add-on, a finishing touch. While there is evidence that systems and schools are endeavouring to improve induction processes, particularly by

recognising the importance of mentors for beginning teachers, further changes are needed to provide beginning teachers with the opportunity to take on teaching duties that are appropriate for their level of experience and in an environment that will enable them to consolidate what they have learned in pre-service teacher education courses. Adequately addressing the needs of beginning teachers will require systemic changes and a partnership approach by the major stakeholders. That it is achievable is demonstrated by the Teacher Induction Scheme in Scotland.

General Teaching Council for Scotland - Teacher Induction Scheme

- 6.25 Under the Teacher Induction Scheme, administered by the General Teaching Council for Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Executive Education Department, all eligible students graduating with a teaching qualification from one of Scotland's universities are guaranteed a one year training placement. The placement is often referred to as a probationary period and the teachers on the scheme, probationary teachers.
- 6.26 The scheme, which is not compulsory, offers probationary teachers:
- a guaranteed one year training post;
 - a maximum class commitment of 0.7 full-time equivalent;
 - dedicated time set aside for professional development;
 - access to an experienced teacher as a nominated probationary supporter; and
 - a probation experience of consistently high quality.
- 6.27 Under the scheme, probationary teachers meet regularly with their supporting teachers who observe each probationary teacher's classes at regular intervals. At the end of the year, provided requirements and teaching standards have been met, the probationary teacher is granted full registration. The scheme is voluntary but offers a considerably shorter route to full registration than the alternative process.¹¹ All probationary teachers are placed on the first level of a seven point salary scale.

11 Graduates can choose not to take part in the Teacher Induction Scheme but they are advised that their probationary period is likely to then consist substantially of periods of short-term employment in a supply capacity and that they would not be guaranteed access to the benefits of the induction program. They may also be required to complete a probationary period of more than one year. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/11/02144156/41565>

Conclusion

- 6.28 There is clearly the potential for effective induction initiatives to be funded under the proposed National Teacher Education Partnership Fund. However, the committee considers that the situation also demands specifically focussed action. Although induction is primarily the responsibility of employing authorities, the committee considers that teacher education should be a shared responsibility with all major stakeholders having an increased role, as partners, in each of the stages of teacher education.
- 6.29 The Australian Government invests well over \$320 million dollars per year in teacher education courses in universities.¹² The high attrition rates during the first five years of teaching have been linked to poor support in the early years of teaching. To ensure a better return on its \$320 million the Australian Government should also invest in the induction phase of teacher education. However, achieving change in this area will require the committed and collaborative efforts of governments, employing authorities, schools, teachers and unions.

12 In 2005, the Australian Government provided around \$329 million in funding for units of study in education: Department of Education, Science and Training, p. 1. (*Exhibit No. 121*)

Recommendation 7

The committee believes that the Teacher Induction Scheme administered by the General Teaching Council for Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Executive Education Department be the model of induction that should be followed in Australia.

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

- 1) investing a sum equivalent to 10 per cent of a beginning teacher's salary towards the cost of a twelve month induction program for that teacher. The funds should be provided to interested employing authorities or schools for each beginning teacher for whom they provide an induction program that meets the following criteria:
 - a year long structured induction program (not necessarily spent at one school and extended for beginning teachers employed on a part-time basis);
 - a 20 per cent reduction in a beginning teacher's face-to-face teaching load to enable time to undertake professional development, reflection, observing other classes and meeting with mentors;
 - the allocation of a mentor who would be trained for the role, who would be given appropriate time to perform the role and who could expect to receive recognition for undertaking the role; and
 - access to a structured and tailored program of professional development.

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

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

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