



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019

DEVELOPING A CAREER STRUCTURE FOR SUBJECT EXPERTS



Excellent teachers have a significant impact on the students that they teach – leading to better knowledge and understanding, and increased motivation. This paper proposes a career structure that would allow expert teachers to remain in the classroom. It argues that the expert teacher role is different from specialist classroom teachers (SCT), within school teachers (WST) and across community teachers (ACT) in that it prioritises the teaching aspect of the role, and that its inception will contribute to raising the status of teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report be received.
2. That PPTA explores expert teacher models through the tripartite Accord and related workstreams.

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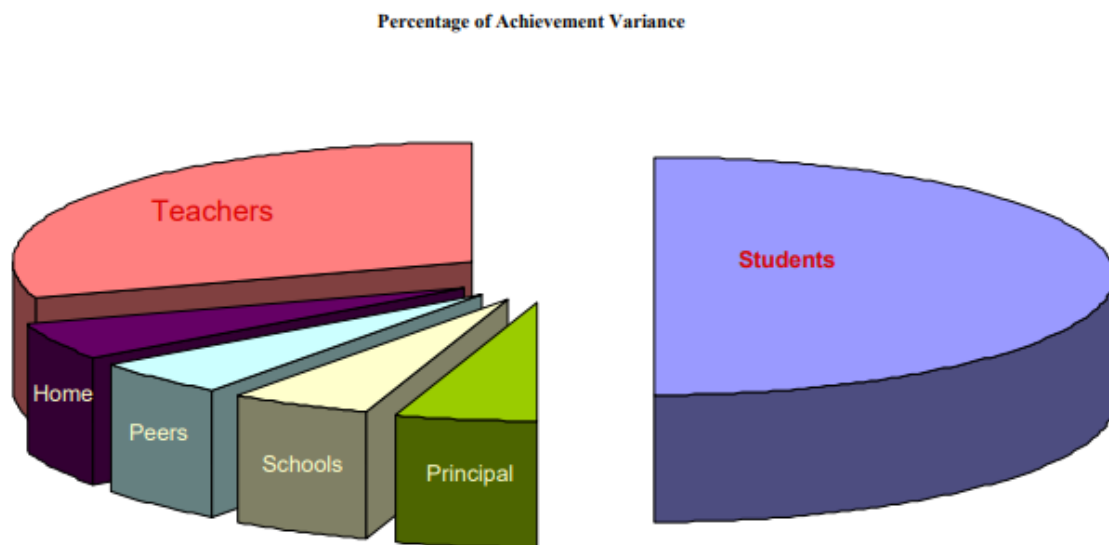
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. With fewer and fewer people deciding to become secondary teachers, our education system is heading towards a crisis. An antidote to low recruitment rates is to raise the status of the teaching profession. The government is clearly committed to doing this as shown by the Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards. However, these, and similar schemes, do not recognise the contribution of the many excellent teachers who daily kindle the fire of learning in students around the country.
- 1.2. This paper builds on the 2018 PPTA Conference paper 'Career Pathways – Subject Pedagogy Specialists'. It argues that the role and contribution of the excellent teachers who foster learning in our young people, inspire and mentor their colleagues but want to remain in the classroom doing what they do best, should be recognised.

2. DOES THE TEACHER MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- 2.1. Ask anyone about their schooling and they will immediately relate a story about a teacher that they did not like or one who changed their life for the better. Teachers have a significant impact on student learning. Hattie¹ estimates that individual teachers account for 30% of the variance in student achievement.



- 2.2. As teaching is the single most powerful in-school influence on student achievement the ministry should be actively promoting and supporting excellent teaching. The following table demonstrates how significant the teacher's influence is.

¹ Hattie, J.A.C. (2003, October). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? Paper presented at the Building Teacher Quality: What does the research tell us ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, Australia. Retrieved from http://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2003/4/

Influences on student learning²

<i>Influence</i>	<i>Effect Size</i>	<i>Source of Influence</i>
Feedback	1.13	Teacher
Students' prior cognitive ability	1.04	Student
Instructional quality	1.00	Teacher
Direct instruction	.82	Teacher
Remediation/feedback	.65	Teacher
Students' disposition to learn	.61	Student
Class environment	.56	Teacher
Challenge of Goals	.52	Teacher
Peer tutoring	.50	Teacher
Mastery learning	.50	Teacher
Parent involvement	.46	Home
Homework	.43	Teacher
Teacher Style	.42	Teacher
Questioning	.41	Teacher
Peer effects	.38	Peers
Advance organisers	.37	Teacher
Simulation & games	.34	Teacher
Computer-assisted instruction	.31	Teacher
Testing	.30	Teacher
Instructional media	.30	Teacher
Aims & policy of the school	.24	School
Affective attributes of students	.24	Student
Physical attributes of students	.21	Student
Programmed instruction	.18	Teacher
Ability grouping	.18	School
Audio-visual aids	.16	Teacher
Individualisation	.14	Teacher
Finances/money	.12	School
Behavioural objectives	.12	Teacher
Team teaching	.06	Teacher
Physical attributes (e.g., class size)	-.05	School
Television	-.12	Home
Retention	-.15	School

3. WHAT MAKES A TEACHER EFFECTIVE?

- 3.1. Expert teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject content and skills. Through this, they inspire in their students a love of learning. They understand how students best learn concepts, content and skills, and communicate their subject knowledge effectively. They use a specialised set of technical skills and abilities to convey instructional content and facilitate learning so students can develop bodies of knowledge and advance their systems of thinking. They use subject pedagogical expertise in the teaching and learning processes, as well as the dynamic between student needs and content demands³.

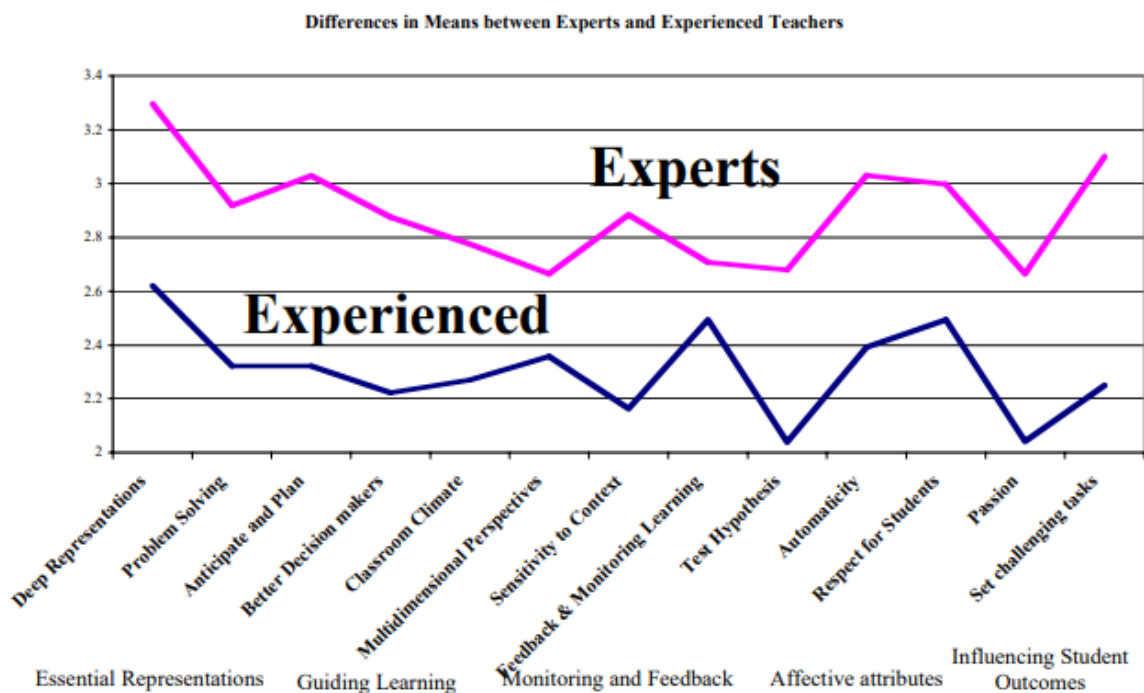
² Hattie, J.A.C. (2003)

³ Western Australian Government – the Department of Education and Training – School Teacher Roles

3.2. Hattie⁴ maintains expert teachers can be identified by the degree to which they:

- identify essential representations of their subject,
- guide learning through classroom interactions,
- monitor learning and provide feedback,
- attend to affective attributes, and
- influence student outcomes

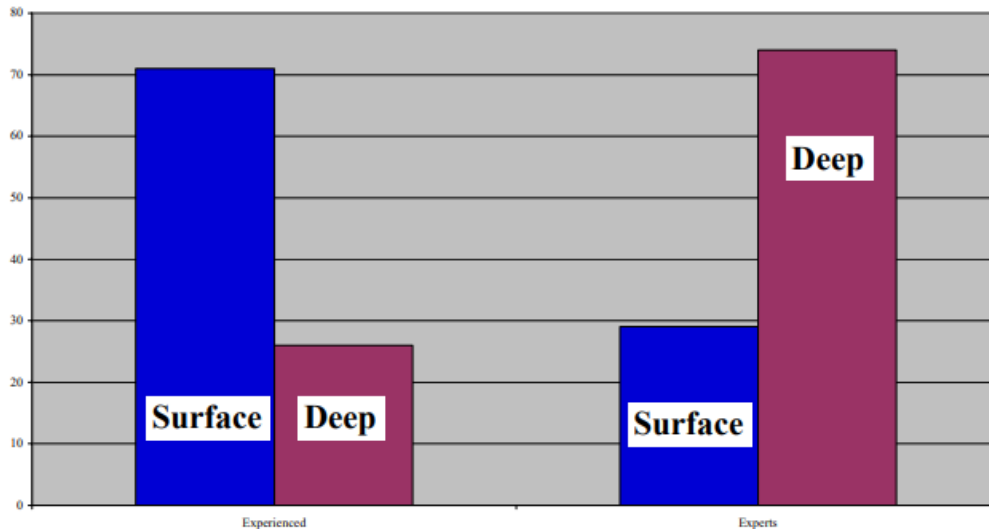
3.3. Hattie compared the impact of expert and experienced teachers on student learning, including analysing student work from 65 teachers who had attempted the US National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBCT) for excellence. Teachers who attained the excellence standard were considered 'expert', and those who did not, 'experienced'.



- 3.4. In short, students taught by expert teachers exhibited an understanding of the concepts targeted in instruction that was more integrated, more coherent, and at a higher level of abstraction.
- 3.5. In the same study there was a reversal in rates of surface vs deep learning between the students taught by the two groups of teachers.

⁴ Hattie, J.A.C. (2003)

Percentage of Student Work classified as Surface or Deep



Surface learning – knowing the content

Deep learning – showing understanding, able to relate to and extend ideas

- 3.6. In summary Hattie⁵ concludes, “Expert teachers do differ from experienced teachers – particularly on the way they represent their classrooms, the degree of challenges that they present to students, and most critically, in the depth of processing that their students attain.”
- 3.7. There are clear benefits to students if expert teachers are retained in the classroom.

4. WHAT MAKES EXPERT TEACHERS MORE EFFECTIVE?

- 4.1. The Western Australian Department of Education⁶ states that excellent teachers possess a command of their subject areas, especially the major themes and concepts. They use creative investigation and inquiry, whereby discoveries are made and new knowledge is formed. They anticipate and respond to common misconceptions within content areas, address challenging aspects of learning acquisition, and accommodate prior knowledge, experience, and skills that students at different developmental levels typically bring to the classroom.
- 4.2. Hattie found that while expert teachers had deep representations about teaching and learning they did not differ from experienced teachers in the amount of knowledge they have about curriculum matters or teaching strategies. Where they did differ was in how they organised and used this knowledge. Experts possessed knowledge that was more integrated - they combined new subject knowledge with prior knowledge and related the current lesson to other subjects in the curriculum. They also made lessons their own by changing, combining, and adding to them according to their students’ needs and their own goals. Interestingly, he found that experts took more time than experienced teachers to build representations.

⁵ Hattie, J.A.C. (2003)

⁶ Western Australian Government – the Department of Education and Training – School Teacher Roles

5. AREN'T THERE ALREADY INITIATIVES TO ALLOW TEACHERS TO BE PROMOTED YET STAY IN THE CLASSROOM?

- 5.1. Teachers usually reach the top of the basic scale after eight years. Until recently the only way for further promotion was to take on middle or senior management roles which meant time was divided between teaching, and administering and managing a department - roles which require different skills to teaching, and result in less time being spent in the classroom.
- 5.2. Alternative career paths designed to retain teachers in the classroom were introduced in 2006 with the SCT and in 2014 the WST and ACT roles. The SCT role focused on providing professional development and mentoring teachers, and the WST and ACT roles focused on mentoring and leadership within the school and across the community of schools, respectively.
- 5.3. None of these additional roles focus on being expert teachers in their own classroom, and feedback from members is that there is a need for a role that celebrates subject experts and encourages teachers to remain in the classroom to share their knowledge and expertise with students.
- 5.4. Surprisingly, countries like Finland do not single out and support expert teachers. This, of course, may be because teaching there already has high status.
- 5.5. However, many countries with education systems similar to NZ recognise and reward excellent teachers - Australia (Highly Accomplished Teacher), UK (Advanced Skills Teacher), Singapore (Master Teacher) and US (Accomplished Teacher). In most of these jurisdictions a teacher is required to demonstrate that they meet an 'expert teacher' standard.

6. HOW SHOULD EXPERT TEACHERS BE IDENTIFIED AND SUPPORTED?

- 6.1. The process could be similar to that used to identify an advanced classroom expertise teacher (ACET) in primary schools. This would require the sector to establish a standard for excellence in teaching. Teachers would then compile and submit a portfolio presenting key aspects of their classroom and professional practice to demonstrate that they meet the standard. This evidence would be assessed by a panel of independent experts.
- 6.2. There needs to be a sufficient financial incentive to encourage teachers to apply to be expert teachers. The primary teachers' experience with ACET is that there is a significant amount of work required to demonstrate that they meet the standard. While standards and a portfolio approach do not impose further study on teachers, it is still a substantial burden. An ACET receives an ongoing allowance of \$5000 per annum.
- 6.3. The financial impact of this initiative will take a number of years to reach full cost. First standards for an expert teacher need to be developed, and a process for application. Only then would the first teachers begin collating their evidence. If the number of teachers was limited to 800, (as is the case with ACET), and expert teachers were paid the equivalent of a management unit (\$5,000) then the additional salary cost would be \$4 million per annum once it was fully up and running. There would be additional costs if, for example, these teachers received an additional non-contact period per week to mentor teachers within the school, prepare resources or observe other staff.

7. ISN'T THIS PERFORMANCE PAY?

- 7.1. A valid concern about developing career structures like the subject expert teacher is that this could be perceived as performance pay. What starts out as a strong desire to provide greater recognition to teachers who can show evidence of attaining high standards of professional performance can, with only a small logical step, require this to be backed up by student results; the outcome - performance pay.
- 7.2. PPTA has strongly held views on performance pay. The big battle took place in 1989 when the State Services Commission attempted to give authority for setting teacher pay and conditions to school boards, thus giving them the ability to introduce performance pay. Fortunately union opposition forced a government back-down on bulk funding but the threat has not gone away and we have repelled a number of attempts since. In fact one of PPTA's prime motivations to be involved in the design of IES was to ensure that it did not become a vehicle for performance pay.
- 7.3. There are many reasons why PPTA has taken a firm stance on performance pay. A 2012 OECD report⁷ found no relationship between average student performance in a country and the use of performance-based pay schemes. In addition, research shows that 'out of school' factors are a stronger predictor of achievement than having even the best teachers. Student achievement and a teacher's effectiveness can be undermined by so many different factors that students bring with them to the school gate - level of early childhood education, their health status, their home life, and the level of parental learning support they receive. One teacher may in fact be putting in more effort and accomplishing more educationally, while another receives more money based on student outcomes.
- 7.4. In studies where performance pay has been shown to increase student achievement it is often difficult to tell whether the association is between teacher incentives and student performance, or due to better schools adopting teacher incentives.⁸
- 7.5. The problem with any model where extra is given to some teachers and not others based on some notional set of criteria is that it's discriminatory and could have negative implications, such as breaking down collaborative and collegial relationships and replacing them with competitive ones.

8. WHAT ELSE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED?

- 8.1. The current freeze on new Kahui Ako means that there will be a cap on further WST or ACT roles being established, so while there will still be churn in the IES existing roles, classroom-based promotion has been limited. Teachers who are in schools that do not belong to a Kahui Ako are shut out of this opportunity for promotion; this could be an argument for supporting alternative classroom-based opportunities.
- 8.2. However, members have to be aware that the cost of new positions will almost always come from within the bargaining constraints. Simply put, \$4 million spent on expert teachers will mean \$4 million less elsewhere. There are always worthy causes competing for scarce funds: teachers

⁷ OECD (2012) Does performance-based pay improve teaching?

⁸ Journal of Public Economics (2007)

who increase their qualifications, mentor teachers for beginning teachers, SENCOs, guidance counsellors, and deans.

- 8.3. Finally, the current education system is under review. We are still waiting on the decisions by the minister in response to the Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce and the work being undertaken by the Education Workforce Strategy Group. Conference needs to consider if now is the right time to push for this particular role when there are so many unknowns. PPTA favours a career structure that is integrated and cohesive. While members appreciate the opportunities provided by the WST and ACT, these roles did not fit into a coherent whole and subsequently caused issues around equity and relativity.

9. THE ACCORD

- 9.1. PPTA has a unique opportunity to advance the teaching profession through the tripartite Accord and other forums such as the Education Workforce Strategy Group and the Teacher Supply Working Group. It should use these opportunities to highlight the contribution that expert subject teachers make to student learning and explore whether there is a way to recognise these teachers so that they will be retained in the classroom but in a way that will not open the door to performance pay.