

1. How is the national teacher registration framework working across Australia?

One aspect of consistency stands out. Teach for Australia(TFA) candidates appear to be registrable or qualify for permits to teach in some jurisdictions eg Victoria and ACT but not in others. They appear to be registrable without any teaching practicum. Master of Teaching (MTeach) candidates on the other hand need to have completed their final practicum before being eligible for a permit to teach. If a similar approach as with TFA was taken with VET trainers and assessors (considering teaching practicum only) then no change to registration practices would be needed in the jurisdictions open to TFA to allow them to teach.

Whether VET trainers and assessors would willingly follow on with teacher training (as TFA teachers must) while working as teachers would determine whether such a move could be successful as a path to fully registered teaching. Another approach for VET is discussed below in discussion area 3.

A circumstance to be questioned regarding TFA is whether they are currently allowed to teach under misleading circumstances.

The FAQs for TFA state:

We work exclusively with schools in low socioeconomic communities to fill actual vacancies. Almost half of our partner schools are located in regional or remote communities and have difficulty staffing and retaining their workforce. We help to fill critical shortages in the subject areas of English, science, mathematics and languages.
(<http://www.teachforaustralia.org/faqs/>)

My anecdotal knowledge of TFA placements in the ACT suggests that low SES is not the most important factor in the placement of TFA candidates. Or that low SES is secondary to other factors.

There is an equity question to be answered regarding the registration process for MTeach vs TFA.

Regarding teacher quality it is pertinent to consider whether the assumption in the opening sentence of area 1 for discussion is relevant even though it may be somewhat accurate. Where it may not be accurate is in not considering system leadership. System leadership enables school leaders to do their job. UNSW academic Pasi Sahlberg has written extensively on education as well as having worked in a system acknowledged as being a high performance system - Finland. He outlines some characteristics of high performing systems in recent addresses such as:

Pasi Sahlberg at

<https://pasisahlberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NPDL-Talk-2018.pdf>

Some features of high-performing systems -

TEAMWORK
CREATIVITY
PROFESSIONALISM
TRUST & RESPONSIBILITY
FAIR PLAY (=EQUITY)

Trust and responsibility and equity are the stuff of system control not of schools or teacher registration. However the framing of the discussion area for Term of Reference 1, suggests that high performance is the responsibility of teachers and school leaders, at least to the extent that high performance is attributable to them.

Sahlberg again addresses the notion of teacher quality at <https://www.teachers.ab.ca/Publications/ATA%20Magazine/Volume%2095%202014-15/Number-4/Pages/Myth-Pasi-Sahlberg.aspx>

THREE Fallacies

When education budgets are questioned or cut, teachers are often asked to do more with less. Some economists have calculated how much students' achievement could be improved by enhancing the quality of the teaching force. An efficient way to do that, they argue, is to find poorly performing teachers and get rid of them. Then, bringing young, enthusiastic talent into these classrooms will actually lead to the betterment of education at the same time when resources diminish. Within this logic lie three fallacies that, if taken as facts, will be harmful for the teaching profession and thereby for the entire education system.

The first fallacy is to believe that the best way to elevate the teaching profession is to attract the best and the brightest to become teachers. In many countries the teaching profession has suffered from declining social respect, trust and thereby popularity among young people as prospective and admired lifelong career. Education system leaders, such as Arne Duncan in the U.S. and Michael Gove in the U.K., have suggested that recruiting academically smarter people to teach in schools would enhance the quality of teaching and improve academic outcomes in schools.

Those who rely on the idea of "the best and the brightest" often point to Finland and Singapore as examples of education systems that have built their success on that principle. We frequently hear that the best education systems systematically recruit new student teachers from the top 10 per cent of their applicant pool. But a closer look at how students are selected into initial teacher education programs reveals that the truth is not that straightforward.

The University of Helsinki in Finland selects 120 new students from approximately 2,000 applicants each year for its primary school teacher education program. This pool is large enough to actually pick up all 120 students from the best quintile. But that doesn't happen.

In 2014, as I have shown elsewhere [Sahlberg, P. 2015. "Q: What makes Finland's teachers so special? A: It's not brains." The Guardian, March 31.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/mar/31/finnish-teachers-special-train-teach> (accessed on April 24, 2015)], only one of four students selected into the teacher education program at the University of Helsinki came from the top quintile. Furthermore, one in four

students had an academic record that placed her or him in the bottom half of the pool, as measured by their performance in diploma examinations. Clearly it is important that criteria beyond strictly defined academic qualifications must be considered in selecting teacher candidates.

Singapore follows similar academic admission procedures for students who study at the National Institute of Education.

The second fallacy is that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. This statement became known in education policies through the influential McKinsey & Company report entitled *How the World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out On Top*.³ It has since appeared in the 2012 reports of the Programme for International Student Assessment — by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) — as well as several policy reports and documents. Although these documents often take a broader view of enhancing the status of teachers through better pay and careful recruitment, this statement implies that the quality of an education system is defined by the quality of its teachers.

Many educators, and certainly experienced teachers and school principals, perceive teaching in school as team play. The role of an individual teacher in a school is like a player on a football team or musician in an orchestra: all teachers are vital, but the culture of the school is even more important for the quality of the school. Team sports and performing arts offer numerous examples of teams that have performed beyond expectations because of leadership, commitment and spirit.

Take the U.S. ice hockey team in the 1980 Winter Olympics, when a team of college kids beat both the Soviets and Finland in the final round and won the gold medal. The quality of Team U.S.A certainly exceeded the quality of its players. Or take Neil Young and his band Crazy Horse. Without five-star musicians that always hit all the chords perfectly they have performed better than the quality of each player and created music enjoyed by millions for almost half a century. So can an education system.

The third fallacy is that the most important single factor in improving quality of education is teachers. This is the driving principle of former New York City public schools' chancellor Joel Klein in his new book as well as many other education "reformers" today. If a teacher were the most important single factor in improving quality of education, then the power of a school would indeed be stronger than children's family background or peer influences in explaining student achievement in school. But we have known since the mid-1960s that that isn't so.

Research on what explains students' measured performance in school remains mixed. However, researchers generally agree that up to two-thirds of the variation in student achievement is explainable by individual student characteristics like family background and such variables. **The American Statistical Association concluded recently that teachers account for about 1 per cent to 14 per cent of the variability in test scores, and that the majority of opportunities for quality improvement are found in system-level conditions.** (American Statistical Association (ASA). 2014. *ASA Statement on Using Value-Added Models for Educational Assessment*. Alexandria, Va: ASA.) In other words, most of what explains student achievement is beyond the control of teachers or even schools, and

therefore arguing that teachers are the most important factor in improving the quality of education is simply wrong.

This doesn't mean that teachers would not be important or that individual teachers could not turn the course of children in school. Of course they do. But it is often a combination of powerful factors that makes the most positive impact on students. Most scholars agree that effective leadership is among the most important characteristics of good schools, equally important to powerful teaching. Effective leadership includes leader qualities, such as being firm and purposeful, having a shared vision and goals, promoting teamwork and collegiality and frequent personal monitoring and feedback. Several other characteristics of more effective schools include features that are also linked to the culture of the school and leadership: maintaining focus on learning, producing a positive school climate, setting high expectations for all, developing staff skills and involving parents. In other words, school leadership matters as much as teacher quality.

There are three important points within this long quotation. First is that the fraction of student achievement attributable to teachers is relatively small. School leadership seems at least as important. Teacher registration should perhaps run in tandem with Principal Certification at a national level. Teacher quality alone will not make the difference that is desired, meaning that teacher registration has a limited part to play in increasing student achievement.

Second is teamwork. The standards do not address teamwork in a way that suggests it is more than 'collaboration'. And addresses teamwork not all in the 'proficient' descriptors. Yet teachers and school leaders know that teamwork is an important characteristic of an effective teacher. And in a school considering whether a teacher meets the standard to move beyond the initial period of registration, one of the unmentioned criteria (these are present in any judgement process as outlined for example by Sadler in Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems Instructional Science, 1989, Volume 18, Number 2, Page 119

D. Royce Sadler) will be 'team player'. None more so than the chair of the expert panel knows the value of teamwork.

Third is the place of a system vs the teacher standards in improving teacher quality. In Finland, it seems, Teacher quality is warranted by the selection process, the ITE and ongoing professional development. The thesis of the review seems to be that the standards alone should provide the same quality assurance. This seems ambitious. The recent addition of literacy and numeracy testing and now the teacher performance assessment (TPA) as a requirement for graduation/registration seems inadequate as a response to improving teacher quality compared with the process briefly explained in Sahlberg's outline.

2. Should early childhood teachers be part of a national approach to teacher registration?

Short answer: yes. It is not sensible for early childhood educators to be registered as teachers in one jurisdiction and not need registration in another. A national approach should already have been in place before any registrations occurred if registration is significant in ensuring quality. If it is not then no change is required.

In the case of ██████████ in the ACT (birth to 8 years of age) all teachers are required to be registered (<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/qualifications/early-childhood-teacher-registration-and-accreditation>) but at the childcare centre staffed by early childhood teachers across the street in the next suburb the early childhood educators are not required to be registered. As above, there is no change required if the standards are not significant in recognising or improving teacher quality.

There is nothing explicit in the standards which prevents early childhood educators meeting requirements for registration. The standards need only to be interpreted in context as they would be for other school education sectors. What does standard 5.5 Report on student achievement mean in early childhood. What does standard 2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians mean in early childhood. And so on.

3. What role does teacher registration play for VET teachers in school settings?

As noted above, VET trainers and assessors could be brought readily into teaching by treating them as TFA teachers are treated. That is, they are able to teach without completing practicum or having more than introductory pedagogical training.

An important difference is that TFA teachers have a first degree while VET trainers have (usually) a certificate which is not equivalent to a degree on the Australian Qualifications Framework (Level 3 or 4 for a trade Certificate vs Level 7 for a Bachelor degree - <https://www.aqf.edu.au/aqf-qualifications>).

Alternatively, there is an opportunity to develop recognition of prior learning (RPL) to a new level. Does the combination of some years of work experience (including induction of new staff, training apprentices and so on) and the training of VET trainers and assessors contain sufficient of initial teacher education (ITE) course content that they could meet requirements for registration? It is the case now that registered teachers can RPL with training providers a significant amount of the Certificate IV in training and assessment (TAE) so that they can become VET assessors. Can this apply to VET trainers and assessors whereby they could be RPL'd for teaching as provisionally registered?

There is some theoretical support in the literature for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. [See for example Bridging In-school and Out-of-school Learning: Formal, Non-Formal, and Informal Education, Haim Eshach, Journal of Science Education and Technology, Vol. 16, No. 2, April 2007 (2006) DOI: 10.1007/s10956-006-9027-1]

4. How does teacher registration support entry into the teaching profession?

Teachers employed as casuals have the greatest difficulty in demonstrating proficient levels of performance in the standards. In particular, teachers who are employed for short periods would have difficulty demonstrating much of the professional knowledge domain. Many of the standards in this domain require some ongoing relationship with a school or class. At my own school it is common to employ beginning teachers on contracts which are sufficiently long to allow them time to develop contact with a mentor teacher and have access to

professional learning on the same basis as permanent teachers. Having the opportunity (ie a place in a school for an extended period) to meet the standards is more a school or system responsibility than an individual one and is not the same thing as induction. It is difficult to see how the registration process can help a teacher in a process which requires continuity for success but who may not have continuity of opportunity.

5. How can we ensure that registered teachers satisfy the fit and proper person requirement?

The answer is that you cannot ensure this. Any moderately complicated system of rules (think about Commonwealth Games selection criteria or teacher registration criteria) will meet a set of facts where the result based on the rules is wrong. So the rules might say that someone is fit and proper, but they are not. Or they will say that someone is not fit and proper but they are. It is a question of which result you prefer.

Something which could be done to make some difference to ensuring quality in a mobile workforce is to have the Principal of the most recent employing school answer a direct question about whether the teacher is regarded as a fit and proper person according to some defined criteria other than legal ones. A 'no' would trigger further enquiry by the body responsible for registration. More than one former teacher at schools where I have taught would be a 'no' if such a question was asked. The persons otherwise were able to meet registration requirements.