

AITSL National Review of Teacher Education Review

As you are reviewing teacher accreditation, it is time for me to reflect on what teacher accreditation has meant to me so far as a pre-2004 teacher. I am now obliged to undergo time-consuming processes so that some functionary (who is not a teacher, nor are eight of the nine members of the panel reviewing this process) can deem that I am adequate to continue to do my job.

The time that these compliance processes have cost me a would have spent improving my practice as a teacher, therefore they have made my practice worse. Furthermore, it is extremely disheartening and discouraging to have to justify my continued professional existence to someone who is neither capable nor willing to do my job.

If you want to know why so many experienced teachers are leaving the profession, look in the mirror. It's your fault. This is only the start, nearly every teacher over the age of forty-five is looking for an exit strategy and the best ones are looking the hardest. Teaching talent is leaking from the top. This is largely because of the increasing burden of complying with more and more rules which are increasingly unrelated to what we actually do.

It is also pointless to argue about more Professional Learning hours improving teacher performance. I have always maintained contact with professional networks, gone on worthwhile professional development courses (often not in school time) and undertaken further study relating to my profession. I would have done these things whether required to by law or not. All that has happened as a result of compulsory professional learning hours is a proliferation in professional learning courses, many of which are of extremely limited value. They comply with your outcomes, certainly, but do not necessarily improve teacher performance. Actually, because the teacher has been away from school to attend them, their net effect is to make that teacher's performance marginally worse.

In the case of New Scheme Teachers, the situation is even more dire. The first few years of professional life for a teacher are very difficult and have high rates of attrition. There is a good deal of literature to support the anecdotal evidence and it is safe to say these are established facts. One of the reasons for the difficulties new teachers face is the creation and establishment of all of the systems that will maintain them in later years. These include programs, resources and relationships. All of these things take a great deal of effort and energy to maintain. To establish them from scratch is an enormous task.

Someone in that situation needs encouragement and practical support, including help managing time. What these new teachers do not need is a massive imposition of compliance-based paperwork which consumes hours of their time and ultimately adds little to the sum of their professionalism. Indeed, what it subtracts in terms of sapping their energy, enthusiasm and stealing their time is

far greater than any benefit it could possible add. Add it costs the teacher \$100 per annum. Can you imagine how dispiriting it is for a young teacher to have to pay for anonymous non-teachers to make them do the important parts of their job worse? And you wonder why there is a crisis of talent in the teaching profession.

I fully realise the futility of what I am arguing. It is a truism that the first priority of any bureaucracy is to ensure that it continues to exist. Therefore any advocacy for the complete abolition of this entire process and structure is doomed to fail. Nevertheless, it is my considered view that the teacher registration program has had the net effect of making teaching and learning worse and will continue to do so irrespective of adjustment and reform. The best answer is for AITSL to cease to exist.

Don't worry about trying to replace it. Just pack up and go home. Honestly, we were better teachers before you existed.

Jim Coyle.