

Recipient Details

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Reference Type: Teacher - University

State or territory: Vic

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Responses

Curriculum and assessment

Rating: 0

Teachers and teaching

We are reporting on the findings from our current longitudinal study of out-of-field (OOF) teachers in secondary mathematics and science (ARC Discovery Project DP150102089 Out-of-field teaching 2015-2017). The participants for this study are located in RRR schools in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

The incidence of OOF teaching is much higher in remote locations (41%) than provincial (32%) and metropolitan locations (24%). Of concern is the very high proportion of beginning teachers teaching OOF (37%). We found that some OOF teachers reported positive experiences such as development of content and pedagogical knowledge. However, other teachers reported negative experiences and challenges including additional workload in planning due to lack of knowledge as well as poor access to quality planning documents, limited access to support people (within the school and district), changes in teaching allocations from year to year and lack of commitment to undertake professional development in their out-of-field area.

A respectful and trusting school culture is required to support OOF and beginning teachers. The following elements are important to retain OOF teachers in teaching:

- Maintaining some connection to in-field area,
- Access to professional learning in the out-of-field area that is based on their needs
- Time and collaborative processes to enable constructive relationships with colleagues within the school or local network,
- High quality resources for teaching (programs and materials) from in-field colleagues or mentors,
- Giving the teacher some agency in identifying mentor/critical friend and teaching load
- Significant workload reduction for OOF teachers,
- Continuity in teaching to enable OOF teachers to re-teach the same subject and year level in consecutive years, and
- Provide opportunities for on-going employment.

Many schools in our study do not have experienced or enough IF teachers, to act as mentors and in schools with a high turnover of teachers are suffering mentor fatigue.

Rating: 0

Leaders and leadership

Rating: 0

School and Community

Rating: 0

Information and Communication Technology

Rating: 0

Entrepreneurship and schools

Rating:

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Rating for enrolments: 0

Rating for clusters: 0

Rating for distance education: 0

Rating for boarding: 0

Diversity

Rating: 0

Transitioning beyond school

Rating: 0

Additional Comments

Many schools in our study do not have experienced IF or enough IF teachers, to act as mentors. Schools in our study that are succeeding in retaining OOF and beginning teachers use whole school collaborative approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers in schools with a high turnover of teachers are suffering mentor fatigue. To successfully implement whole school and collaborative approaches to planning, teaching and learning, school leaders need to develop and support respectful and productive relationships between teachers. This means attending to teachers' well-being, acknowledging strengths and enabling OOF teachers to remain connected to their IF subjects and passions. It also requires effective management of teachers' workload, including reduced teaching for OOF and beginning teachers and mentors/coaches to enable collaboration.

State and Federal governments need to do a better job of monitoring the supply and demand for teachers in RRR schools and the number of teachers who are teaching out-of-field (OOF) and the number of students who are taught by OOF teachers.

The registration of teachers should identify their discipline specialisation and education sector qualify – not to disqualify them from teaching but to ensure that school leaders are aware that they are asking teachers to teach OOF. NSW already requires that students obtain 'Approval to teach'

Principals should provide reduced workload for beginning OOF teachers; at the moment the workplace agreement in operation in Victoria only provides a 0.05 reduction for beginning teachers and no acknowledgement or allowances for OOF teachers. A similar situation exists in NSW.

Professional learning and development (PLD) needs to be based on OOF teachers' learning needs. This more likely to occur when PLD programs are provided locally and where teachers and the providers of the PLD have been able to establish trusting relationships with the teacher.

Funds need to be provided to provide coaches or mentors within the school or local network of RRR schools to provide professional learning leadership of development collaborative practices.

There needs to be change to the emphasis given to disciplinary background of teachers so that teachers are 'expected' or at least 'encouraged' to become 'qualified' or 'specialised' in an OOF subject they are expected to teach long term. All states and territories should provide Graduate Certificates in the STEM subject areas, Geography, ICT and other high incidence OOF subjects. Funding should be provided for CRT release and course fees. This is already occurring in some states but it needs to be a national priority.

While we accept that OOF teaching is a part of education in Australia, Governments and educationalist need to decide the threshold of OOF teaching that schools should be willing to tolerate. This threshold should be influenced by understandings of what is needed for high quality teaching, as well as local needs. A strategy for responding to 'beyond threshold' situations should consider alternative funding arrangements, provision of professional development and mentoring/coaching, and leadership training.