

Wednesday, 25 January 2023

Media Release

Lengthened teacher training has cost students, teachers, and the economy

The NSW Productivity Commission has released a new report examining the effect of lengthening postgraduate teacher qualifications in NSW from one to two years. The report recommends reintroducing the one-year graduate diploma option for teacher training.

In 2011, a national reform established new Australia-wide standards for initial teacher education. The reform required aspiring teachers who already have a university degree in another area to complete a two-year master's to become a teacher. A one-year graduate diploma previously sufficed. All states and territories have now phased the change in, with NSW doing so in 2014.

New modelling demonstrates that since NSW implemented this national reform, more than 9,000 people have been deterred from training as teachers in NSW alone. The report, titled *The economic impacts of longer postgraduate initial teacher education*, finds that the longer qualification represents an additional year of tuition fees and lost income to people who persevered despite the additional year of study, leaving today's teachers worse off than they might have been. This has left teachers around \$1 billion worse off since 2015.

School children have also lost the benefit of specialist teachers, as high-quality mid-career changers have been deterred by the longer training pathway. Research shows that good teachers have a positive impact on students' marks and, as a result, on their lifetime earning potential. The NSW Productivity Commission estimates that teacher shortages and out-of-field teaching as a result of the lost teachers has cost NSW school students \$2.1 billion in lifetime earnings.

NSW Productivity Commissioner Peter Achterstraat AM warns these costs will continue to mount until the policy is reversed.

"The rationale behind doubling the Initial Teacher Education qualification is unclear," Mr Achterstraat says.

"It was undoubtedly well-intentioned. However, we are now able to show that any benefits the longer qualification hoped to achieve are outweighed by the cost in teacher and student outcomes."

“Unless we reintroduce the availability of a one-year option for people who already have a degree, these costs will keep mounting.”

“There is no evidence that the longer qualification has improved teaching quality. Teachers who completed a one-year qualification before the policy change continue to perform to an equivalent standard to teachers trained since. What we need is more specialist subject teachers in our schools and that will only happen if we can make switching into a teaching career attractive and accessible to more people.”

“You might have a maths degree and be perfect for teaching, but if you also have a family and a mortgage, taking two years off work to do the training is probably not viable.”

“There is no evidence that a teacher with four years of training is less effective than one with five years’ training.”

The report notes that Australia’s results in the well-regarded PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) test have fallen, even as governments have significantly ramped up education funding under the Gonski-led reforms. NSW’s results in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) have not improved in line with the other states.

The report delivers on the 2021 White Paper recommendation to complete a cost-benefit analysis of the two-year master’s requirement and can be downloaded here: <https://www.productivity.nsw.gov.au/economic-impacts-of-longer-postgraduate-ite>