

Theme 3: Teacher Quality

Chair's response: Fran Hinton, former Chief Executive, Teaching Australia

What we are going to do now is to throw this open to questions and discussion, and I'd ask you to think again about the sorts of things that we would like to see to make a difference in moving forward on teacher quality. While you are just thinking about that, I'm going to put two semi-concrete thoughts into the mix. The first is one that Angelo has already picked up on, and that is pre-service teacher education.

This is one of the lost opportunities of the past 10 years, and as Angelo said, report after report has highlighted needs in pre-service teacher education. We know what needs to be done - that's not the issue. We just need to get on and do it. What we need is a national system of accreditation of teacher education. Accreditation of initial teacher education needs to be focussed on quality improvement in the same way school accreditation systems are based on quality. There needs to be assistance to universities to implement change and an acceleration of university school partnerships so that school practitioners, who are the experts in this area, along with universities, are closely involved in the process. This is an essential precondition given what's going to happen in school education and our teaching workforce over next few years.

My second thought relates to professional development and is just a little bit more left field. I think that we've seen significant developments and improvements through coaching. Andrea talked about that very powerfully. But I think we've also seen over the last possibly 10 years a domination of professional development by training and skill development, at the expense of broader developmental opportunities.

Skill development is useful and indeed essential in some areas, and a significant part of PD needs to address that, but it is not sufficient for the kind of education system that we need to be providing in the 21st century. Jim made that point when he put up Rudd's statement about human capital growth driving productivity.

We've heard Daniel Pink talk about fundamental shifts in knowledge production and transfer, and the importance of ideas in the future. People like Erica McWilliam take it even further, and talk about the need in the future to be able to select, reshuffle, combine, synthesise existing ideas, wrestle with complexity. And this is just some of the work that teachers will need to do.

So what we need to do is build the capacity of teachers and principals to solve problems, to make judgments on the ground, to work in networks, and develop innovative approaches.

What that means is giving, as part of the repertoire of PD opportunities - giving teachers the opportunity to develop as individuals, exposing them to a range of ideas outside the

classroom; outside education, for that matter too - giving opportunities for new thinking, opportunities to grow.

We know that a lot of innovations and innovative thinking is left field, and that the transformational changes often come by taking a principle, an approach from one area and applying it quite outside that same initial area.

Giving teachers and principals that opportunity, I think is quite critical. It is not such a radical thought. The Asia Education Foundation has been doing it for some time—giving teachers of any subject the opportunity to travel in Asia and be exposed to different cultural experiences.

The Leading Australia Schools Program, the flagship national PD program for principals, developed by Teaching Australia, does that. The National Schools Network, in its focus on rethinking, exploring new ideas, also does some of this. So I would like to see, as one of our investments in a strong intellectual teaching profession, that some professional development opportunities are provided to teachers, to stimulate thinking and to just give them opportunities to expand horizons.

So this is my tuppence worth. Over to you for suggestions and questions, thinking always about what we might take forward out of this session.