

Rewarding Quality Teaching

By Lauren Djakovac

'Rewarding Quality Teaching' is a report commissioned by the Howard Government and recently released by Julia Gillard. Developed by consultant Gerard Daniels and accepted by MCEETYA, the report will form the basis for the reform of teacher pay arrangements in each State and Territory.

Rewarding Quality Teaching

It is well established that teacher quality is the single greatest in-school influence in education. The cornerstone of the Education Revolution is attracting, training, placing, developing and retaining quality teachers. A key aspect in achieving this is rewarding teacher quality - in other words 'Performance Pay', where teachers are rewarded according to how well they do their job, rather than how long they have been doing their job.

The report reviews the various performance pay models, the basic standards necessary when creating a model, and canvasses the views of education stakeholders.

Why Performance Pay?

Presently, teacher salaries are paid and reviewed on an incremental scale. Each year of service sees them move up a pay level. In South Australia, there are eight levels to this scale. This ultimately means that after eight years, a teacher's salary reaches the highest possible level, which has resulted in:

- Not having the best people entering the profession, as pay advancement is limited.
- No incentive for teachers to continue developing their skills and qualifications.
- Decline in desire for a long career in teaching as the only way to increase income is to move out of the classroom.

Performance pay involves additional benefits, usually money (but can be non-monetary), which reward performance. The report states that 13 of the 32 OECD countries already have additional pay linked to outstanding performance or professional development. Australian stakeholders are in strong agreement that rewards should be largely cash-based, but non-cash elements could include scholarships for teaching related study, conferences or HECS and PELS relief.

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Performance Pay Systems

In recent years, the concept of performance pay has been discussed in numerous Government reports and independent research and position papers.

One example that the Gerard Daniels report considered was the 2007 'ACER Research on Performance Based Pay for Teachers', where three types of common performance pay models were examined:

- Merit Pay – usually assessed within the school, often by the principal and tied to student performance; attracts a bonus payment from a pool in the school budget.
- Knowledge and Skill-Based Pay - values the input of the teacher (their knowledge, skills and expertise) and is based on accepted criteria and multiple forms of evidence of attainment. Is judged locally and often with external assessment input.

- Certification-Based - similar to schemes in other professions, is designed by an external body to the employer and represents high standards developed within the teaching profession. Is portable and recognised by employers and is voluntary.

Another example, 'Performance-Based Pay for Teachers: the Research' by Dr Gerard Calnin, analyses the evaluation source for performance pay systems in a similar manner:

- Student Outcome Model - assess teacher performance based on student performance.
- Teacher Review Model - internal review, sometimes standards-based and observational, seeking input from peers, leaders, and occasionally students and parents.
- Standards-Based Evaluation - teacher performance measured by carefully crafted standards determined and assessed externally with internal feedback to the assessor.

The 'Rewarding Quality Teaching' report also draws on analysis of teaching systems that have developed performance management and remuneration programs:

- England and Wales - focused upon rebuilding the teaching profession brand by restructuring remuneration. The reforms implemented a centralised regime of standards and teacher performance management that was then applied in a decentralised system in the schools, who are the employers.



- Scotland - reforms restructured the remuneration of classroom teachers, introduced mandatory continuing professional development of teachers and created a designation and pay point for accomplished teachers based on an external assessment.
- USA - The Denver ProComp is a school-based performance model that has modest bonuses for teacher development and student outcomes.
- Western Australia - A performance management system drawn from the wider public sector system, and while not linked to remuneration can assist teachers with feedback from their manager.

The Health Profession, Public Service and Armed Services use performance pay as a system of employee payment that links compensation to measures of work quality or goals. These professions were considered in the Gerard Daniels report to determine best practice approaches to performance pay and limitations of the design of those systems. Characteristics highlighted in the report include:

- The System Design; directed at facilitating regional performance and quality outcomes through linking performance pay to specific individual, group or institutional outcomes.
- Assuring that the system provides flexibility in setting measures and managing personnel.
- Most appropriate indicators are based on a balance of structural, process and outcomes-based measures.
- The system utilises a funding model approach that can function in a standalone environment or work collaboratively with state, regional or localised schemes.
- Based on the voluntary participation of employees and institutions.

Assessing Teacher Performance

There are a number of ways to assess teacher performance. In terms of the models presented in the report; the UK model provides a comprehensive set of standards to guide a teacher's career; the Denver ProComp scheme presents a set of standards that are contextualised for each school in different regions; while in Scotland and WA specific accomplished teacher programs provide standards for smaller groups of high performing teachers. The report states that a pay system should assess the broader effectiveness of teachers.

Summary

The research found that any teacher reward system must be:

- Sustainable and accessible.
- Meaningful to teachers.
- Based on clearly established and valid criteria.
- Evidence based.

While stakeholders overwhelmingly supported teacher performance pay, they were unable to identify an ideal model; but agreed that a pay system "should not be based solely on student testing and their benchmarks". Only a small number have seriously considered team-based remuneration.

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Many stakeholders, including the Business Council of Australia, believe that students in all schools across Australia should have access to accomplished teachers. However, they hold concerns that high performing teachers will be recruited by already advantaged schools and measures will need to be put in place to ensure this does not occur.

While the report analyses a variety of research and performance pay systems, stakeholders hold different views regarding the following key issues:

- Should performance pay be linked to time served or should it be available at any point in a career?
- Should it only focus on one pay point for accomplished teachers?
- Should there be a re-write of remuneration bands to accommodate performance pay or should new pay points be added to existing structures?
- How much performance should be judged within the school, and external to the school?

'Rewarding Quality Teaching', shows strong stakeholder support and arguments for national performance pay. But the most significant outcome of the report is its declarative support from Julia Gillard (who herself espouses a national accreditation system). This endorsement makes it clear that, while the model is still to be determined, Performance Pay is now a certainty for Australia's teachers. ■