

Teach for Australia

By Lauren Djakovac

The Rudd Government recently unveiled its new **Teach for Australia** initiative. Simply put, the program targets the brightest university graduates from fields such as Maths and Science (who don't usually become teachers) and entices them into classrooms. These graduates receive six weeks accelerated teacher training and are then placed in public high schools.

The key aim of the Education Revolution is to improve teacher quality:

- Teacher quality is the greatest in-school influence on student results.
- The top 25 OECD countries recruit their teachers from the top third of graduates.
- A teacher's knowledge of their subjects is directly linked to the performance of students.
- A link exists between a teacher's academic record and student results.
- Students achieve more with teachers who perform well on literacy tests.

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Teach for Australia is based on models operating in the UK and USA. Basically, top graduates agree to teach for two years (bringing advanced subject knowledge to the classroom). At the end of their two years, they will be classified as fully qualified teachers; equivalent to a Diploma of Education.

These *expert teachers* can then continue as teachers, or they can take a guaranteed position in the private sector – with partner companies such as BHP and Microsoft.

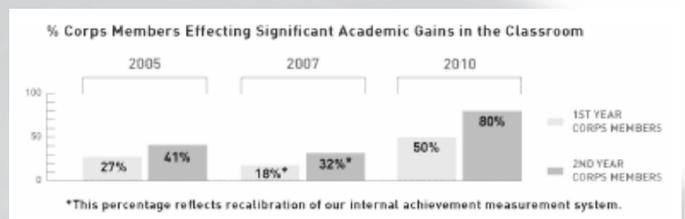
Teach for Australia starts in Victoria next year; with an intake of 90 graduates. The program will then be rolled out nationally. As South Australia could be next in line, SAASSO decided to investigate the success of the overseas models.

Teach for America

Teach for America started in 1990. Since then, more than 6,000 expert teachers have entered the program.

In 2005, the US launched a growth plan to reduce educational inequity by becoming "bigger and better". Their number one priority is to ensure that *expert teachers* accomplish high levels of success with their students.

The table below shows the percentage of *expert teachers* who have moved their students forward at least a year and a half's worth of progress - in a just one year.



A recent survey of principals highlighted the success of *Teach For America*.

Principals report high levels of satisfaction with *Teach for America* expert teachers:

- 96% are satisfied with the *Teach for America* teacher working in their schools.
- 94% report that *Teach for America* has made a positive impact in their schools.
- 90% say they would hire a *Teach for America* teacher again.

Most principals rate *Teach For America* teachers as more effective than other faculty members, and almost none rate them as less effective:

- 95% rate *Teach for America* teachers as effective as, if not more effective than, other beginning teachers in terms of overall performance and impact on student achievement.
- 61% regard *Teach for America* teachers as more effective compared with other beginning teachers in their schools with respect to their impact on student achievement.
- 92% consider *Teach for America* teachers at least as effective as the overall teaching faculty with respect to their impact on student achievement, with half rating them as more effective than the overall teaching faculty.

Most principals rate *Teach For America* teacher's training as more effective than that of other new teachers:

- 93% report *expert teacher* training is at least as good as the training of other beginning teachers.
- 63% rate *Teach for America* teacher training as better than that of other beginning teachers.

The vast majority of principals rated *expert teachers* as good or excellent on a number of indicators of effective teaching and behaviours that *Teach for America* believes lead to significant gains in student achievement, including:

- Having high expectations for students – 94%
- Setting ambitious goals for student achievement – 92%
- Planning purposefully to achieve these goals – 90%
- Executing goal-orientated plans effectively to maximise student learning – 89%
- Knowledge of the subject matter – 90%
- Developing positive relationships with colleagues and administrators – 89%

Teach First UK

In England, *Teach First* was launched in 2002. An education and children's services watchdog, 'Ofsted', conducted a report from July 2006 to July 2007 on the development of the program in the UK.

The report focused on the impact being made in schools by:

1. The 2006 cohort of *expert teachers* during their first year in schools
2. The 2005 cohort during their second year, and
3. The impact Ambassadors (trainees who have completed the two year program).

The results of the report were released in January 2008, and found that;

- Half of the *expert teachers* reached the level of 'outstanding' in Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), while a third reached a 'good' level and others a 'satisfactory' level.
- All *expert teachers* who completed their first year were awarded QTS.
- At least one school 'attributed a rapid improvement in its standards almost entirely to the contribution of *Teach First* teachers'.
- Half the *expert teachers* who completed the two-year program remain in teaching.
- *Teach First* teachers made a strong positive contribution to the work and life of at least 20 of the 28 schools visited. Many participants in the second year were starting to have a notable impact, and in some cases have transformed underperforming departments, and often made a very significant contribution to raising staff's aspirations of the students.
- *Teach First* teachers had a beneficial effect on the subject departments in which they were based through the links they made with other schools and the resources and new ideas they brought to the school. Many had rewritten parts of schemes of work or led professional development sessions, sometimes taking the initiative and responsibility to do so at an early stage in their teaching. ■