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The Victorian Institute of Teaching : standards and professional learning

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FINAL REPORT

The Victorian Institute of Teaching Standards and Professional Learning Evaluation of Implementation in 2004

submitted to

Standards and Professional Learning Branch,
Victorian Institute of Teaching

by

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Australian Council for Educational Research

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	4
Purpose of the evaluation	4
METHOD.....	4
SECTION ONE: School and teacher information	5
Gender	5
Teacher Education Course	5
Location of school	5
Level of School	6
School Sector:	6
Teaching allotment in accordance with qualifications	6
Employment Arrangements	6
Support offered to beginning teachers	6
Attendance at VIT training sessions	7
SECTION TWO: Mentoring Experiences	7
SECTION THREE: Induction Experiences	11
SECTION FOUR: Analysis of Teaching and Learning – The first of the portfolio tasks.....	16
SECTION FIVE: Collegiate Classroom Activities – The second portfolio task.....	18
SECTION SIX: Professional Activities – The third portfolio task.....	21
SECTION SEVEN: Evaluation Processes	26
SECTION EIGHT: General Responses	27
SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	35
Perceptions of Fairness, Validity and Rigour	36
Difference in results between teachers and mentors/principals	36
Difference in responses between primary and secondary PRTs	37
The time factor	38
The role of the school leadership and the level of professional community in a school	39
Conclusion	39

List of Figures

Figure 1: Mean level of agreement among PRTs that mentor feedback has changed aspects of their classroom work for the better by level of school	10
Figure 2 Mean mentor quality by school level (Primary, Secondary and combined).	10
Figure 3 Satisfaction with support provided by the school by whether induction information provided	13
Figure 4 Mean level of satisfaction with consolidation of professional practice among PRTs for each level of schools (Question 23c)	14
Figure 5 Mean level of satisfaction with increasing amount of professional knowledge among PRTs for each level of schools (Question 23d)	14
Figure 6 Mean level of satisfaction with folio preparation among PRTs for each level of schools (Question 23e)	15
Figure 7 Mean level of team planning and evaluation of curriculum programs and lessons among PRTs for each level of school (Question 21f)	15
Figure 8 Mean level of attitude to ATL task among PRTs for each level of schools	18
Figure 9 Mean level of attitude to CCA task among PRTs for each level of schools	21
Figure 10 Mean level of attitude to PA task among PRTs for each level of schools	24
Figure 11 Mean level of perceived impact of PA task among PRTs for each level of schools	24
Figure 12 Mean attitude of PRTs to Professional Activities for each course type showing 95% confidence intervals	25
Figure 13 Mean perceived impact of Professional Activities on PRTs for each course type showing 95% confidence intervals	25
Figure 14 Mean of perception of evaluation processes for each level of school	27
Primary PRTs were more likely to say that completing the program had an impact than PRTs in secondary schools (See Figure 15)	29
Figure 16 Proportion of principals reporting the experience of the VIT standards process had benefited their own practice	30

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Victorian Institute of Teaching implemented its new registration procedures for Provisionally Registered Teachers (PRTs) in 2004. A pilot version of these procedures was trialled in 2003, and evaluated by ACER (Kleinhenz and Ingvarson 2004). Background information about the development of the Standards and Professional Learning Project can be found in this report. As part of the process for full registration, PRTs were required to prepare a portfolio with three components: an analysis of teaching and learning, collegiate classroom activities and a list of and commentary on professional activities undertaken.

In 2004 the new requirements for PRTs were extended to include all schools. ACER was once again commissioned to undertake the evaluation of this implementation. The full implementation of the evidence-based process in 2004 was supported by a state-wide and cross-sectorally supported professional development program for provisionally registered teachers, their mentors and their schools.

The program included two full day professional development activities for mentors, two afternoon seminars for provisionally registered teachers and two principals briefings. A range of support documents were distributed to all groups and a CD-ROM was produced for PRTs to use in preparing their evidence.

Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to gather the perceptions of PRTs, their mentors and principals, about the new procedures for registration in Victoria. The main evaluation questions focussed on perceptions of the validity and rigour of the new procedures and their effects on professional learning. Questions were also asked about mentoring and induction arrangements in schools to support beginning teachers, and the impact of these arrangements on professional collaboration and learning. Respondents were also given the opportunity to make comments on the new procedures for full registration.

METHOD

For this evaluation ACER developed and distributed three survey instruments for provisionally registered teachers, mentors and principals. These instruments were developed in collaboration with the Standards and Professional Learning Branch (SPLB) project team. Surveys were distributed and collected by the VIT and analysed by ACER.

The survey instrument was divided into eight sections:

1. School and Teacher Information.
2. Mentoring Experiences.
3. Induction Experiences.
4. Analysis of Teaching and Learning task.
5. Collegiate Classroom Activities task.
6. Professional Activities task.
7. Evaluation Processes.
8. General responses.

Surveys were sent to 1972 provisionally registered teachers who had applied for full registration using the new evidence based process as of February, 2005, 1540 mentors and principals from 939 schools. Responses from 724 PRTs, 510 mentors and 396 principals were received.

The survey for the full implementation of the VIT program in 2004 was broader in scope than the previous survey. It included more question items requesting information, such as school level and type of teacher preparation course. It also included more questions about the impact of the different portfolio tasks on professional learning.

Questions for PRTs, mentors and principals were, in almost all cases, identical.

SECTION ONE: SCHOOL AND TEACHER INFORMATION

The researchers were interested to find if key demographic differences were related to differences in teachers' perceptions of the process or the benefits they derived from having completed it. The survey instrument provided a range of background data including gender, teacher education course, location of school, level of school, school sector, and a number of other factors such as teaching allotment in accordance with qualifications, employment arrangements, support offered and participation in the VIT support program.

Gender

The gender breakdown of respondents was as follows:

Provisionally Registered Teacher (PRT) Respondents:	Female 79%, Male 21%
Mentor (M) Respondents:	Female 77%, Male 23%
Principal (P) Respondents:	Female 56%, Male 44%

Gender did not appear to be a factor in explaining respondent's views.

Teacher Education Course

Fifty-three percent of PRTs had a post graduate qualification such as a Diploma of Education, 21% had a double degree such as BA BEd, and 25% had a "straight" teaching degree such as BEd.

Where there were differences between PRTs according to the type of course they studied, those who completed a BEd ("straight" degree) responded more positively on average than those who had completed a post-graduate course. These differences may be related to the extent of subject-specific pedagogical training in the respective teacher preparation courses, a possibility that would need further investigation. It could also be related to whether PRTs were teaching at primary or secondary level, where definite differences exist in some areas of the survey.

Location of school

Sixty-three percent of PRT responses came from Melbourne metropolitan schools, 17% from large regional towns or cities and 20% from schools in rural areas. Location did not appear to be a significant factor affecting the nature of responses.

Level of School

Forty-three percent of PRT responses were from primary (Prep to 6) schools; 35% were from secondary (7 to 12 schools); 12% were from P to 12 schools; 4% were from secondary (7 to 10) schools; 2% from secondary (9 to 12) schools; 1% from special settings and 2% from other settings. There were similar response levels from mentors and principals. When the principal respondents are divided into exclusively primary and exclusively secondary, the respective percentages are 55% and 32%.

Level of school appears as a significant factor in relation to PRT responses. This is less obvious in Section One of the survey, although primary respondents reported more support in the area of fewer non-teaching duties. When respondents are divided into exclusively primary and exclusively secondary groups, there is a significant difference in responses in almost all areas of the survey. For purposes of clarity, school levels in the report have been divided into three groups:

Group 1: Secondary schools (7 to 12, 7 to 10, 9 to 12)

Group 2: Primary schools (Prep to 6)

Group 3: Prep to 10 schools, Prep to 12 schools, special setting and other schools.

Note that these groupings also reflect school sector, to some extent, with most of Group 1 and 2 being government and Catholic schools, and most of Group 3 being independent schools.

School Sector:

Sixty-five percent of PRT responses were from Government schools, 22% from Catholic schools and 14% from independent schools. There were similar response levels from mentors and principals.

School sector appeared to have some relevance to the responses of participants, mainly in quantifiable areas, such as the number of hours taught and forms of support. Again, note that P to 12 schools were mainly independent schools.

Teaching allotment in accordance with qualifications

Sixty percent of PRTs were teaching all of their allotment in areas where they were qualified to teach, 39% were teaching most or some of their allotment in these areas and only 1% were teaching none of their allotment in areas where they were not qualified. This was not a significant factor in responses.

Employment Arrangements

Fifty percent of PRTs had permanent/ongoing appointment and 42% had fixed term contracts. The remaining 8% of PRTs were part-time or casual relief teachers.

Conditions of appointment did not emerge as being a significant factor in responses

Support offered to beginning teachers

A majority (60%) of PRTs reported being supported by a reduction in hours taught in teaching allotment, 25% by fewer non-teaching duties, and 14% by a reduction in the number of subjects or classes taught. A higher number of mentors and principals report PRT support in reduction in hours (75% and 89%) and fewer non-teaching duties (38% and 50%). This suggests that in some instances PRTs may not have been aware that they were being given this support.

There were some differences between sectors in the type and extent of support offered. Government and Catholic schools were more likely to support beginning teachers by a reduction in teaching hours than were independent schools. Both Catholic and independent schools indicated a higher level of “other” support than government schools. Examples included being given an extra day for their reports, one or more days block release to complete the portfolio, or one day off per term and no emergency teaching during specialist time, “a day off when I felt I needed it, about one a term.” PRTs at independent schools were also more likely to indicate that they were receiving a reduction in the number of students in their classes than were teachers at government or Catholic schools.

Attendance at VIT training sessions

A large majority of PRTs (89%) reported that they had attended VIT training sessions. PRTs were much more likely to be satisfied with the level of support when their mentor had attended VIT training sessions. They were also more likely to be satisfied if the principal attended. Mentors and principals report having attended more sessions than those of which the PRTs were aware. In the case of principal attendance, 67% of PRTs indicated that their principal attended a session, whereas 93% of principals indicate such attendance. This may indicate that the content of the sessions was not necessarily discussed among attendees at school level.

SCETION TWO: MENTORING EXPERIENCES

As part of the full implementation of the evidence-based process, as in the 2003 development project, schools were encouraged to support provisionally registered teachers with both induction and mentoring processes at the school level. Advice from the experiences of the 2003 Project participants was disseminated to all schools and a PD program focussing on the skills and attributes for effective mentoring was made available to all teachers undertaking this role in 2004.

A large majority (96%) of PRTs were provided with a mentor. Most PRTs (70%) did not have input into the choice of mentor. The majority of mentors taught in the same subject area (74%), taught in the same year level (69%), were mentors in the teaching and learning team (70%) and shared the same staffroom or workspace (73%).

The majority of PRTs were very positive about their mentoring experiences (See Table A) A large majority (Question 20a 84%) of PRTs agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of guidance and feedback from their mentors and other colleagues, they had significantly changed aspects of their classroom work for the better. A larger majority (Question 20b 95%) or strongly agreed that their mentor was highly knowledgeable and experienced, and (Question 20i 82%) were satisfied with the mentoring they received. The lowest positive responses occurred in responses to questions about the mentor using the VIT standards (Question 20e 70%), mentor preparation/professional development (Question 20f 64%) and

regularity of meetings (Question 20g 72%) Again the mentors reported more positively than the PRTs in all respects, as did the principals.

Table A

Q 20 To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. As a result of guidance and feedback from my mentor and other colleagues I have significantly changed aspects of my classroom work for the better	T	4	12	59	25
	M	1	7	68	25
	P	1	4	69	26
b. My mentor was highly knowledgeable and experienced	T	2	4	34	61
	M	-	-	-	-
	P	1	2	36	61
c. My mentor was very interested in my progress	T	4	9	36	51
	M	1	-	29	71
	P	1	1	28	70
d. My mentor gave sufficient time to his or her mentoring tasks	T	7	14	41	39
	M	2	12	55	31
	P	1	4	48	48
e. My mentor used the VIT professional teaching standards as a basis for providing me with guidance and feedback	T	10	20	43	27
	M	3	13	60	24
	P	1	5	54	41
f. My mentor received sufficient preparation/professional development to carry out his/her mentoring role	T	10	26	44	20
	M	3	18	58	21
	P	1	14	55	30
g. My mentor and I met regularly to discuss my progress as a teacher (including portfolio development)	T	8	19	39	33
	M	1	8	47	45
	P	1	4	50	46
h. Overall, the choice of my mentor was appropriate	T	6	10	31	53
	M	1	3	52	44
	P	1	3	36	61
i. Overall, I was satisfied with the mentoring I received	T	7	12	31	51
	M	1	6	60	33
	P	1	4	37	59

Sector appears to have had some influence on responses. PRTs from government schools were more likely to say that their mentor was knowledgeable and experienced, interested in their progress, gave sufficient time to their task and used the VIT standards, than were PRTs in the other sectors. They were also more likely to report satisfaction with the mentoring process. These differences in response were not marked and were more of a general trend.

Some clear differences did emerge, however, between the responses from exclusively primary and exclusively secondary schools. There is a clear difference between the level of satisfaction with the mentoring process and quality, with primary teachers reporting significantly higher levels of satisfaction.

In this report, error bar graphs have been provided where interesting and/or significant differences in responses from different groups – for example, type of teacher preparation

course or level of school – have been noted. While statistical significance is indicated by a gap between the top and bottom bars of the groups being compared, it is also possible to discern a probable general trend from the position of the mean responses across a range of these analyses. The Confidence Interval (CI) indicates the range in which the true average will be found from repeatedly drawn samples. In the case of the CIs used here, there is a 95% chance that the true mean lies along the range indicated by the bar.

Figure 1 indicates the level of agreement with regard to the following survey item: *As a result of feedback from my mentor and other colleagues, I have significantly changed aspects of my classroom work for the better.* (Question 20a). Primary teachers were more likely to agree than secondary teachers.

Where a range of effective mentoring practices is evident, such as, regular meetings and sufficient training for mentors, PRT perceptions of the process and the benefits of the overall process are likely to be more positive. The continued development of the mentoring component of the process should lead to further positive effects.

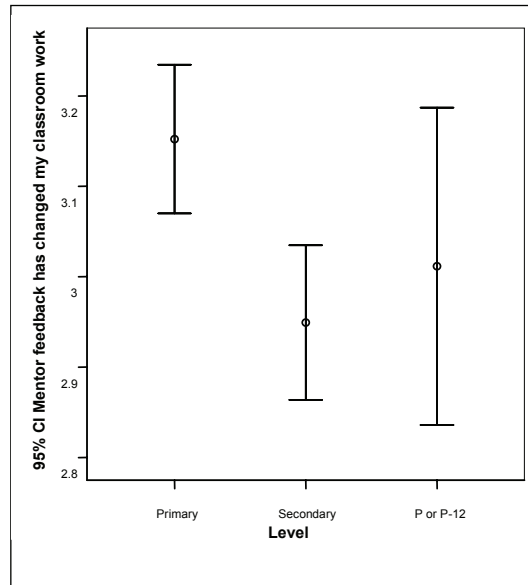


Figure 1: Mean level of agreement among PRTs that mentor feedback has changed aspects of their classroom work for the better by level of school

Nine question items relating to PRT perceptions of the mentoring experience were included in the survey. When these question items are grouped together, the difference between primary and secondary PRT respondents is quite striking (See Figure 2). Primary teachers rate the quality of mentoring they received more highly than secondary teachers.

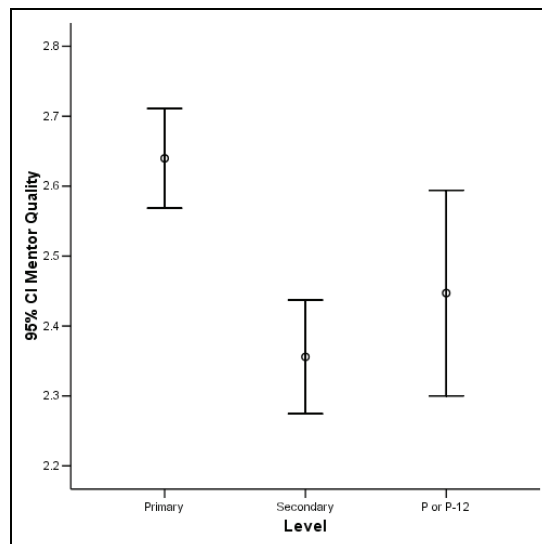


Figure 2 Mean mentor quality by school level (Primary, Secondary and combined).

SECTION THREE: INDUCTION EXPERIENCES

The VIT has encouraged schools to provide provisionally registered teachers with extended and strategic induction processes over the first twelve months of provisional registration.

While there have been many excellent induction practices in Victorian schools, the ‘new requirement’ of this process for schools to provide support over a longer period of time and in focussed areas is likely to have resulted in a change in practice for a number of schools.

The general level of satisfaction with the induction process reported by PRTs is very high (See Table B) with a large majority indicating that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with school support for orientation to the school (Question 23a 90%), orientation to their role as a teacher (Question 23b 87%), consolidating their professional practice (Question 23c 90%), increasing their professional knowledge and skills (Question 23d 92%), and preparing a portfolio of evidence to apply for full registration (Question 23e 83%). Mentor and principal responses were slightly higher, with a larger discrepancy for the portfolio item, where 95% of mentors and 98% of principals believed a “satisfactory” or “very satisfactory” level of support had been provided.

Table B

Q 23 How dissatisfied or satisfied were you with the support provided to by the school from which your recommendation report has been provided ...

		Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
a. for orientation to the school	T	2	9	50	40
	M	1	5	46	49
	P	1	1	51	47
b. for orientation to your role as a teacher	T	2	11	55	32
	M	1	4	49	46
	P	1	1	55	44
c. for consolidating your professional practice	T	2	9	56	34
	M	1	3	53	43
	P	1	1	55	43
d. for increasing your professional knowledge and skills	T	2	7	48	44
	M	1	2	46	52
	P	1	1	52	47
e. for preparing a portfolio of evidence required to apply for full registration	T	4	13	49	34
	M	2	3	43	52
	P	1	2	42	56

The majority of PRTs participated in induction meetings, team work and professional development (See Table C), with fewer meetings being reported during Terms 2 to 4.

About 60% of PRTs reported meeting “sometimes” or “often” with mentors, principals and/or specialist staff during the year, with more meetings during Term 1 (Question 21a). Mentors and principals reported a greater frequency of meetings – for instance, 82% of mentors and 92% of principals indicate “sometimes” or “often” for meetings in Term 1. This

may indicate that the understanding of an “induction meeting” is different for the PRTs; they may not be including unscheduled informal or ad hoc meetings.

Eighty percent of PRTs participated “sometimes” or “often” in team planning and evaluation of curriculum programs and lessons (Question 21f), 89% in professional development organised in the school (Question 21g) and 82% in professional development outside the school (Question 21h). Again, mentors and principals indicate somewhat higher PRT participation. In the case of the “team planning” item, mentors and principals indicate respectively 95% and 97% PRT participation (Question 21f). This difference is highlighted in the PRT responses to the frequency of discussions with colleagues other than mentors about their progress as teachers, where 84% of PRTs indicate “sometimes” or “often”, while mentors and principals indicate 96% and 95% respectively (Question 21i). Perhaps the term “discussion” is being interpreted differently.

Table C

Q 21 How often did you participate in the following at the school from which your recommendation report has been provided?

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
a. Induction meetings with mentor(s) and the Principal or Principal Class teachers in <i>Term 1</i>	T	15	21	37	28
	M	4	14	41	41
	P	1	7	52	40
b. Induction meetings with mentor(s) and senior or specialist school staff, eg. co-ordinators, team leaders, school nurse in <i>Term 1</i>	T	19	22	36	24
	M	4	9	38	50
	P	2	5	43	50
c. Induction meetings with mentor(s) and the Principal or Principal Class teachers in <i>Term 2, 3, and 4</i>	T	12	28	40	21
	M	3	11	42	44
	P	2	18	59	22
d. Induction meetings with mentor(s) and senior or specialist school staff, eg. co-ordinators, team leaders, school nurse in <i>Terms 2, 3, and 4</i>	T	18	26	39	18
	M	5	22	48	24
	P	2	13	49	37
e. Team teaching with other staff	T	9	28	34	28
	M	3	12	41	44
	P	1	12	47	41
f. Team planning and evaluation of curriculum programs and lessons (including planning and discussion of the Analysis of Teaching and Learning)	T	4	17	39	41
	M	1	4	27	68
	P	1	2	26	72
g. Professional development programs organised in the school	T	2	9	35	54
	M	1	1	22	77
	P	-	1	17	82
h. Professional development programs organised outside the school	T	4	14	48	34
	M	1	5	49	46
	P	-	4	53	43
i. Discussions with your colleagues (other than your mentor) about your progress as a teacher (including portfolio development)	T	4	12	35	49
	M	1	3	31	65
	P	1	5	46	49

Eighty-two percent of PRTs were provided with comprehensive induction information. (Mentors and Principal percentages were 95% and 97% respectively).

PRTs who felt they had been given comprehensive induction information (82%) indicated much higher levels of satisfaction with the support provided by their school (See Figure 3).

Ninety-five percent of mentors and 97% of principals said that the PRTs had been given comprehensive induction information.

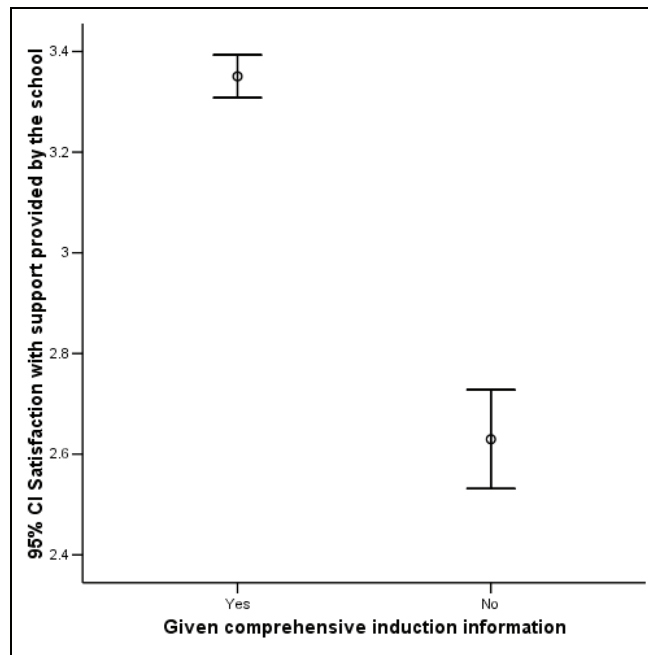


Figure 3 Satisfaction with support provided by the school by whether induction information provided

Responses from PRTs in the different school sectors were broadly similar. Government school teachers were more likely to indicate “sometimes” or “often” for meeting frequency and for professional development within the school. PRTs at government schools were more likely to indicate participation in professional development outside the school than PRTs at independent schools. PRTs at Catholic schools clearly indicated less participation in professional development outside the school than those at government schools.

Clear differences emerge between primary and secondary respondents, with primary PRTs reporting a higher level of satisfaction with the induction processes and general support at the school than secondary PRTs. They also reported greater participation in team planning and evaluation of curriculum programs and lessons (See Figure 4 to Figure 7).

Teachers are more likely to be positively disposed toward teaching when their induction experiences are positive.

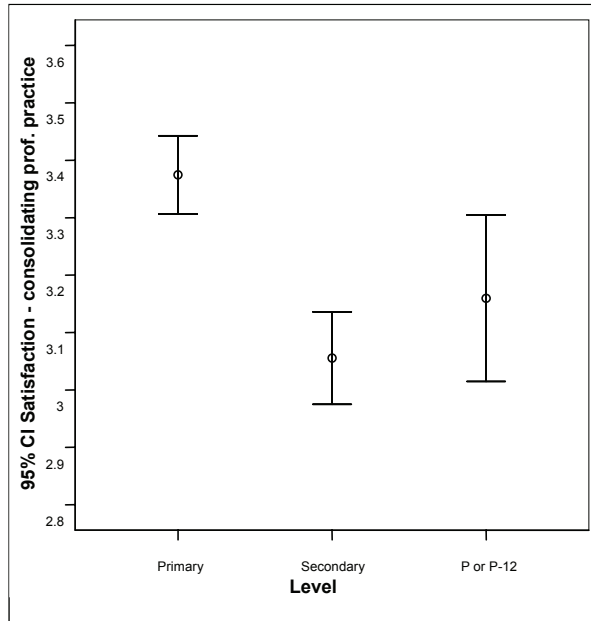


Figure 4 Mean level of satisfaction with consolidation of professional practice among PRTs for each level of schools (Question 23c)

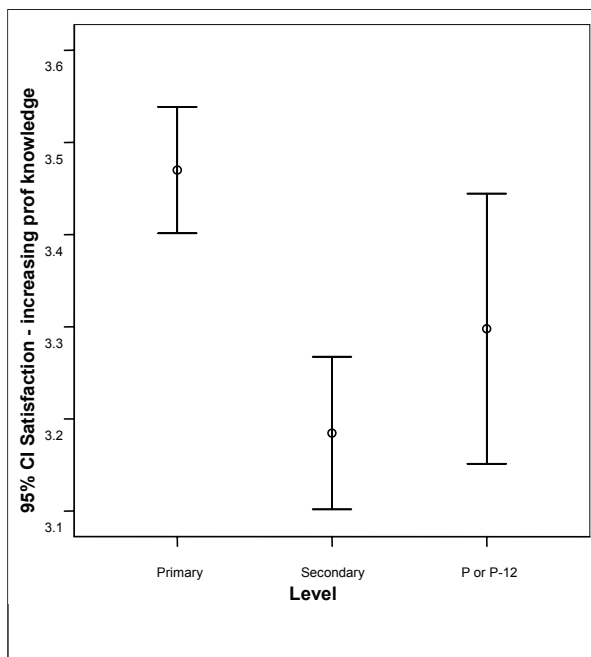


Figure 5 Mean level of satisfaction with increasing amount of professional knowledge among PRTs for each level of schools (Question 23d)

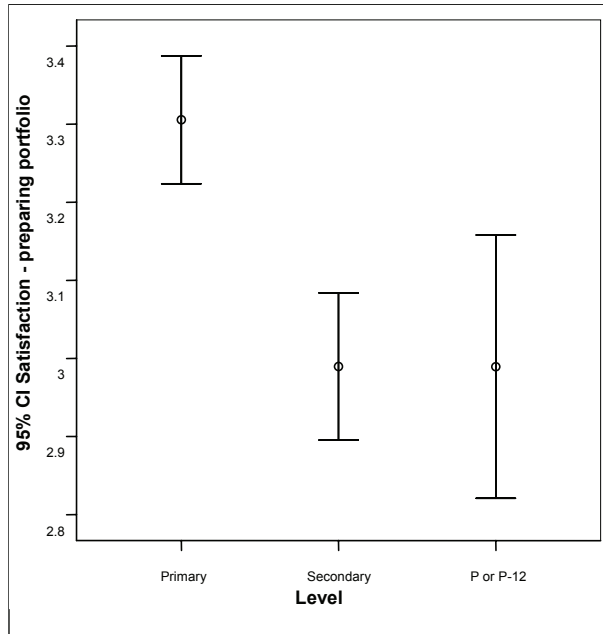


Figure 6 Mean level of satisfaction with folio preparation among PRTs for each level of schools (Question 23e)

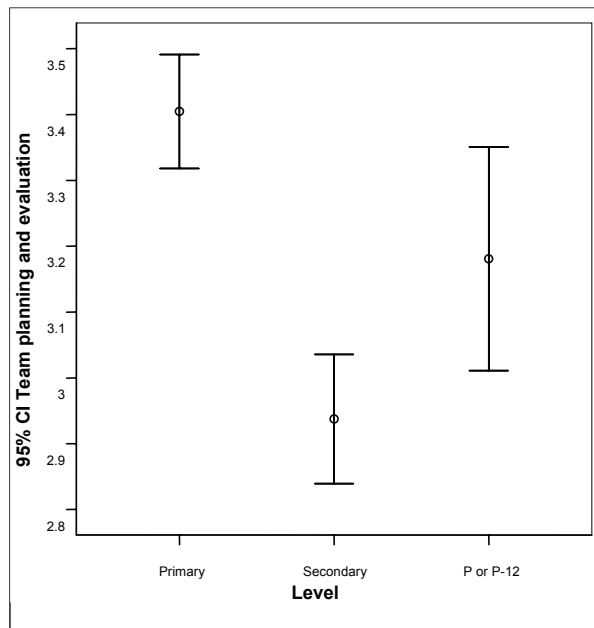


Figure 7 Mean level of team planning and evaluation of curriculum programs and lessons among PRTs for each level of school (Question 21f)

SECTION FOUR: ANALYSIS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (ATL) – THE FIRST OF THE PORTFOLIO TASKS

Two sets of questions were asked of the participants for this section. The first set sought to provide data about teachers’ attitudes to the task and its capacity to fulfil its main functions: for example, to deepen understanding of and demonstrate evidence of the standards, to benefit teaching, to be a valid and rigorous measure.

The second set of questions sought to explore the professional development benefits of completing the ATL task. While the primary purpose of the task was to provide evidence of meeting standards, researchers were also interested in whether the task had promoted professional learning. It is important not to ascribe too much importance to these ‘side effects’ of completing the task, but the professional learning benefits are important to note.

For this task, the provisionally registered teacher is required to describe and reflect on a sequence of learning from their normal teaching practice, with particular attention to two representative students. The portfolio should include about five pages of planning and reflection and a selection of student work samples.

A majority of PRTs gave positive responses to questions about the ATL task (See Table D) This varied from 54% (Question 25e) indicating that the task had benefited their teaching to 86% (Question 25c) feeling that their mentor had the necessary knowledge and experience to review their entry and to provide positive feedback and 73% (Question 25h) indicating that the task reflected authentic aspects of their work as a teacher. There are striking differences in this section between PRT and mentor/principal responses, with the latter two categories having a much higher percentage of positive responses. Eighty-five percent of mentors and 90% of principals felt the task had benefited the PRT’s teaching (Question 25e). On all items there are significant differences in responses between PRTs and mentors/principals.

Table D

Q 25 To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about the Analysis of Teaching & Learning component?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Completing the Analysis of Teaching and Learning component of the portfolio has deepened my understanding of the relevant Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T	9	23	58	11
	M	1	8	71	20
	P	1	8	75	16
b. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning task gave me a good chance to show how I meet standards 1 to 4 of the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T	7	16	64	14
	M	1	4	71	24
	P	1	4	70	26
c. My mentor had the necessary professional knowledge and experience to review my Analysis of Teaching and Learning entry and to provide valuable feedback.	T	4	10	47	39
	M	1	4	57	40
	P	0	5	55	40
d. The feedback given to me by my mentor about my Analysis of Teaching and Learning entry has helped improve my teaching.	T	7	24	47	23
	M	1	7	72	21
	P	1	7	59	35

e. Completing the Analysis of Teaching and Learning task has benefited my teaching.	T	16	30	45	9
	M	2	13	66	19
	P	1	9	62	28
f. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning task was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the VIT standards.	T	16	26	53	8
	M	4	12	68	16
	P	1	11	69	19
g. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning task was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the VIT standards.	T	10	26	47	17
	M	4	22	59	15
	P	3	17	62	19
h. The Analysis of Teaching and Learning task reflected authentic aspects of my own work as a teacher.	T	10	17	60	13
	M	3	8	65	24
	P	2	8	66	24

A majority of PRTs indicated that the ATL component had increased their understanding of teaching and learning (See Table E) with around 80% agreeing in almost all instances that this had occurred to a “minor”, “moderate” or “major” extent. The differences between PRT responses and mentor/principal responses were again quite marked. In general, positive responses for the latter groups were higher and the “not at all” indicator much lower. About 20% of PRT respondents gave a “not at all” response, while mentor and principal responses in this category ranged between 1% and 7%. The question with the fewest positive responses was the one asking if PRTs had gained a deeper understanding of differences in student backgrounds (Question 26e), with 29% of PRTs, 9% of mentors and 7% of principals responding “not at all.”

Table E

Q26 To what extent has the Analysis of Teaching and Learning component and your reflection on it, contributed to a deeper understanding of:

		Not at all	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a major extent
a. the content you teach, and the curriculum frameworks you use	T	20	41	32	8
	M	2	25	55	18
	P	1	21	55	23
b. how to analyse and build on students’ existing knowledge and experience	T	16	31	40	14
	M	2	21	54	23
	P	1	18	50	32
c. how to establish appropriate learning goals for students	T	17	33	36	14
	M	3	20	53	24
	P	1	18	50	31
d. how to design teaching and learning units/programs which help students achieve their learning goals	T	20	31	36	13
	M	4	19	51	26
	P	2	19	48	31
e. the effects of the social, cultural and religious and ethnic backgrounds of students on their learning	T	29	40	24	7
	M	9	38	45	8
	P	7	35	45	13
f. how to select and use resources to support students’ learning	T	23	37	32	8
	M	5	20	57	18
	P	2	23	53	23
g. how to develop assessment tasks that promote learning	T	20	33	37	10

	M	3	22	54	21
	P	2	21	50	27
h. how to assess and monitor the learning progress of your students	T	18	32	37	13
	M	4	18	56	22
	P	2	18	51	29

PRTs from primary and secondary schools responded differently to the ATL task. Primary teachers were clearly more positive in their attitude (See Figure 8) and were more likely to report a positive impact in their practice.

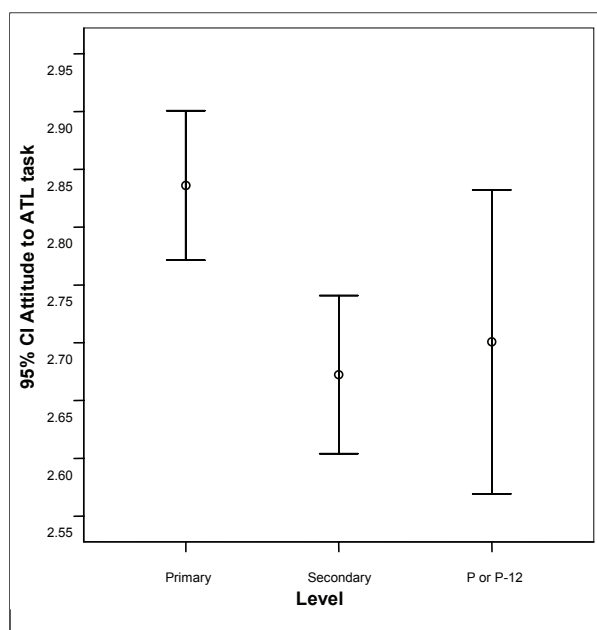


Figure 8 Mean level of attitude to ATL task among PRTs for each level of schools

SECTION FIVE: COLLEGIATE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES – THE SECOND PORTFOLIO TASK

As mentioned in the previous section, two sets of questions were asked of the participants for this section. The first set sought to provide data about teachers' attitudes to the task and its capacity to fulfil its main functions: for example, to deepen understanding of and demonstrate evidence of the standards, to benefit teaching, to be a valid and rigorous measure.

The second set of questions sought to explore the professional development benefits of completing the second portfolio task. While the primary purpose of the task was to provide evidence of meeting standards, researchers were also interested in whether the task had promoted professional learning. It is important not to ascribe too much importance to these 'side effects' of completing the task, but the professional learning benefits are important to note.

For this task, PRTs had to undertake a series of collaborative classroom activities (at least three, including classroom observations) and describe and reflect on those activities. The activities could occur at any time during the year, and the reflection sheet should be

completed at the time of the activity. They required mentors to provide feedback to PRTs about their teaching in relations to the standards.

A majority of PRTs responded positively to questions about their attitude to the Collegiate Classroom Activities (CCA) task (See Table F) ranging from 61% who found the process rigorous (Question 27f) to 89% who found their mentor to have the necessary professional knowledge and experience to assist them.(Question 27c). Seventy-three percent of PRTs felt that they had made beneficial changes in their teaching as a result of feedback from mentors and their own reflections (Question 27d).

Again, the level of mentor/principal responses was considerably higher, with most items indicating over 90% “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statements. The exception was the item about rigour (Question 27f) where 70% of mentors and 83% of principals found the process rigorous, as compared to 61% of PRTs. Ninety-one percent of mentors and 94% of principals found that the PRT had made beneficial changes to their teaching as a result of feedback and reflection (Question 27d).

Table F

Q 27 To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about the Collegiate Classroom Activity entries?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Completing the Collegiate Classroom Activities has deepened my understanding of the relevant Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T	9	25	55	11
	M	2	9	70	20
	P	1	5	75	19
b. The Collegiate Classroom Activities gave me a good chance to show how I meet standards 5 and 6 of the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration	T	8	13	64	16
	M	1	5	70	25
	P	1	3	71	25
c. My mentor had the necessary professional knowledge and experience to engage with me in the Collegiate Classroom Activities and to provide valuable feedback.	T	4	7	52	37
	M	1	1	59	39
	P	1	2	52	46
d. I have made beneficial changes to my teaching as a result of feedback given to me by my mentor and my own reflections on Collegiate Classroom Activities.	T	9	18	54	19
	M	1	9	67	24
	P	1	5	65	29
e. Completing the Collegiate Classroom Activities was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the VIT standards	T	11	19	55	14
	M	3	9	64	24
	P	2	6	71	22
f. Completing the Collegiate Classroom Activities was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the VIT standards	T	11	29	44	17
	M	4	27	52	18
	P	3	15	63	20

A majority of PRTs said the CCA had helped their classroom practice to some degree (See Table G). Again, there was a higher percentage of mentors and principals who thought this had been the case. Eighty-seven percent of PRTs, 98% of mentors and 99% of principals indicated that as a result of the CCA, PRTs had developed or refined their capacity to communicate ideas clearly to their students, at least to a minor extent (Question 28a). Eighty-

five percent of PRTs indicated that the CCA had developed or refined their capacity to encourage appropriate student behaviour (Question 28e), with 97% of mentors and 98% of principals finding this to be the case. Nevertheless a significant minority of between 13% and 21% indicated the CCA had made no difference at all to their classroom practice, although, once more, the number of mentor/principals who took this position was very low (between 1% and 4%).

Table G

Q 28 To what extent have the Collegiate Classroom Activity entries and your reflection on them helped you to develop or refine your capacity to ...

		Not at all	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a major extent
a. communicate ideas and information clearly to your students	T	13	32	42	13
	M	2	17	56	26
	P	1	18	56	25
b. develop questions to challenge students and promote learning	T	14	32	40	14
	M	1	19	54	25
	P	2	19	53	27
c. encourage your students to use a variety of strategies for learning	T	14	31	39	17
	M	2	18	50	30
	P	1	15	50	34
d. establish a safe and positive learning environment	T	17	29	36	19
	M	3	19	46	32
	P	2	17	49	33
e. encourage appropriate student behaviour	T	16	28	40	17
	M	3	18	50	29
	P	2	18	49	31
f. give useful and timely feedback to students about their learning	T	18	32	37	13
	M	2	20	53	24
	P	1	19	53	27
g. locate and use suitable curriculum materials and teaching resources	T	19	35	34	12
	M	4	21	49	27
	P	1	20	50	28
h. manage materials and activities in the classroom	T	16	32	37	15
	M	4	18	52	27
	P	1	19	51	29
i. build rapport and positive interactions with your students	T	21	28	33	19
	M	4	19	48	29
	P	2	18	46	34

Primary PRTs had significantly more positive attitudes to the CCA than secondary PRTs (See Figure 9) and were more likely to indicate change in teaching practice.

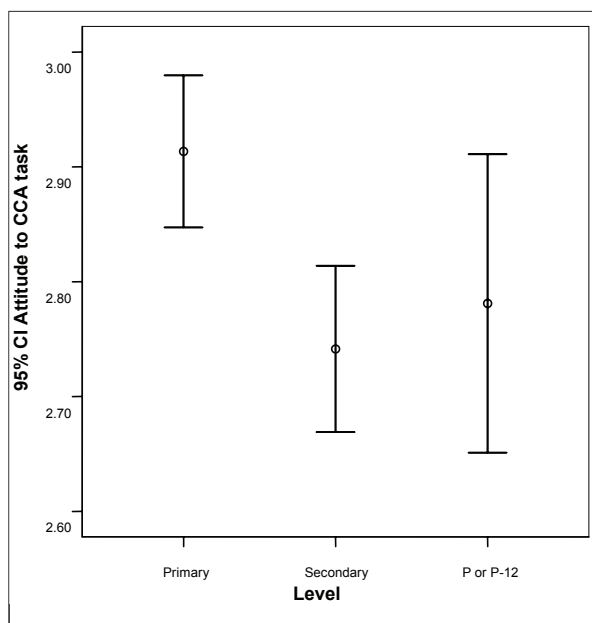


Figure 9 Mean level of attitude to CCA task among PRTs for each level of schools

SECTION SIX: PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (PA) – THE THIRD PORTFOLIO TASK

As mentioned in the previous two sections, two sets of questions were asked of the participants for this section. The first set sought to provide data about teachers' attitudes to the task and its capacity to fulfil its main functions: for example, to deepen understanding of and demonstrate evidence of the standards, to benefit teaching, to be a valid and rigorous measure.

The second set of questions sought to explore the professional development benefits of completing the third portfolio task. While the primary purpose of the task was to provide evidence of meeting standards, researchers were also interested in whether the task had promoted professional learning. It is important not to ascribe too much importance to these 'side effects' of completing the task, but the professional learning benefits are important to note.

For this task, provisionally registered teachers are required to include in their portfolio a list of professional development activities that contribute to their school team, their school and the profession, and to include a commentary on how at least three of these activities have helped their professional learning.

A majority of PRTs indicated a positive response to the statements about professional activities (See Table H). although this varied from 57% who found their professional activities had a beneficial effect on the extent to which they collaborated with their colleagues and engaged with the profession (Question 29e) to 86% who found the task of providing a list and a commentary gave them a good chance to show they had met VIT standards (Question 29b). Mentor/principal positive responses were again higher for most items, with 86/89% of mentor/principals indicating the activities had been of benefit for the PRT's professional collaboration

Table H

Q 29 To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about Professional Activities?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. the task of providing a list and commentary of my professional activities has deepened my understanding of the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T	15	28	47	10
	M	1	13	67	19
	P	2	9	75	14
b. The task of providing a list and commentary of my professional activities gave me a good chance to show that I had met standards 7 and 8 of the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration.	T	6	9	65	21
	M	1	5	64	30
	P	1	4	74	20
c. The task of providing a list and commentary of my professional activities was a valid way of assessing whether I had met the VIT standards for ‘Professional Engagement’.	T	8	14	60	18
	M	1	11	64	23
	P	2	9	72	18
d. The task of providing a list and commentary of my professional activities was a rigorous way of assessing whether I had met the VIT standards for ‘Professional Engagement’	T	10	29	48	14
	M	4	28	53	16
	P	2	21	63	14
e. The task of providing a list of my professional activities had a beneficial effect on the extent to which I collaborated with colleagues and engaged with the profession.	T	15	27	41	16
	M	2	16	57	25
	P	2	9	67	22

A majority of the PRTs responded positively to the questions about whether the PA had helped them to a minor, moderate or major extent (See Table I) to develop or refine their capacity to, for example, work collaboratively with other teachers (Question 30c 85%), to identify their own professional learning needs (Question 30h 90%) and to contribute to the development of a professional learning culture in the school (Question 30i 83%)

Mentor/principal responses were very high for this entire section.

Table I

Q 30 To what extent have the Professional Activities and your reflection on them helped you to develop or refine your capacity to ...

		Not at all	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a major extent
a. work with parents or guardians	T	31	32	29	8
	M	10	34	42	14
	P	8	39	44	9
b. work with non-teaching professionals (e.g. speech pathologists, integration aides)	T	34	33	25	9
	M	16	36	39	9
	P	13	40	41	6
c. work collaboratively with other teachers	T	15	28	40	17
	M	2	17	47	34
	P	2	15	44	39
d. use student data to develop an action plan for future improvement of your teaching practices	T	21	32	35	12
	M	4	26	49	21
	P	3	24	47	27
e. use assessment to give effective feedback to parents or guardians	T	21	30	36	12
	M	5	22	47	27
	P	3	24	50	24
f. reflect upon the effectiveness of your teaching	T	14	26	40	20
	M	1	14	48	37
	P	2	12	47	40
g. reflect upon your professional knowledge	T	11	24	44	21
	M	1	13	51	35
	P	1	12	49	37
h. identify your own professional learning needs	T	10	22	44	24
	M	2	12	53	33
	P	2	13	49	37
i. contribute to the development of a professional learning culture in the school	T	17	29	42	13
	M	3	24	49	24
	P	2	24	50	24
j. set up activities that cater for the learning needs of students with diverse social, cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds	T	21	31	35	13
	M	6	29	48	18
	P	5	27	51	18

Once more, there was a significant difference between primary and secondary PRT responses, with primary PRTs indicating more positive attitudes to the PA task and more positive impact on classroom practice.

Note that this task had a limited nature and purpose. If PRTs indicated that they had not derived a particular benefit, such as developing their capacity to work with non-teaching professionals, it is not a comment on the quality of their listed professional development.

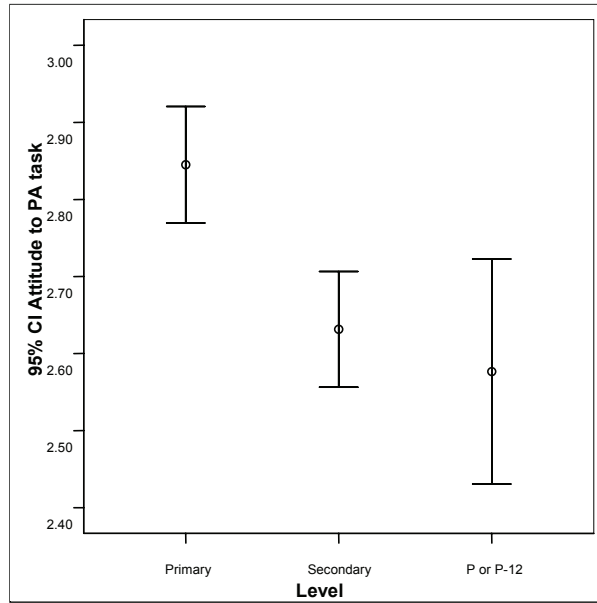


Figure 10 Mean level of attitude to PA task among PRTs for each level of schools

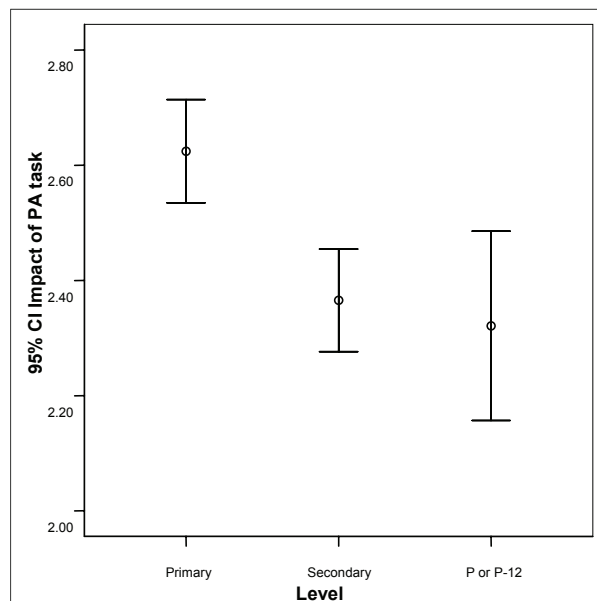


Figure 11 Mean level of perceived impact of PA task among PRTs for each level of schools

Similar trends appear when the responses to the portfolio tasks from PRTs with different types of teacher preparation courses are grouped. An example is the PA task, where PRTs who had completed a “straight” teacher education degree responded more positively than those with postgraduate (e.g. BA Dip. Ed) or a double degree.

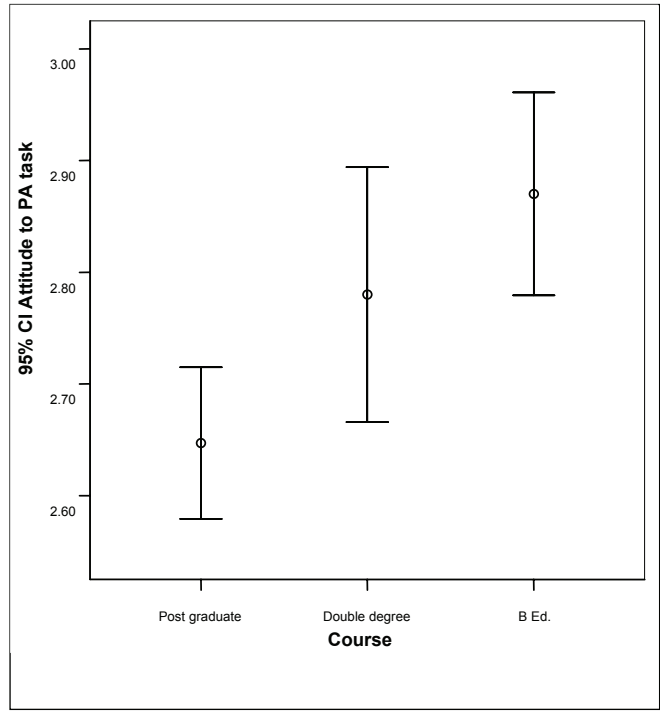


Figure 12 Mean attitude of PRTs to Professional Activities for each course type showing 95% confidence intervals

A similar trend is apparent in the indicated impact of this task (See Figure 13)

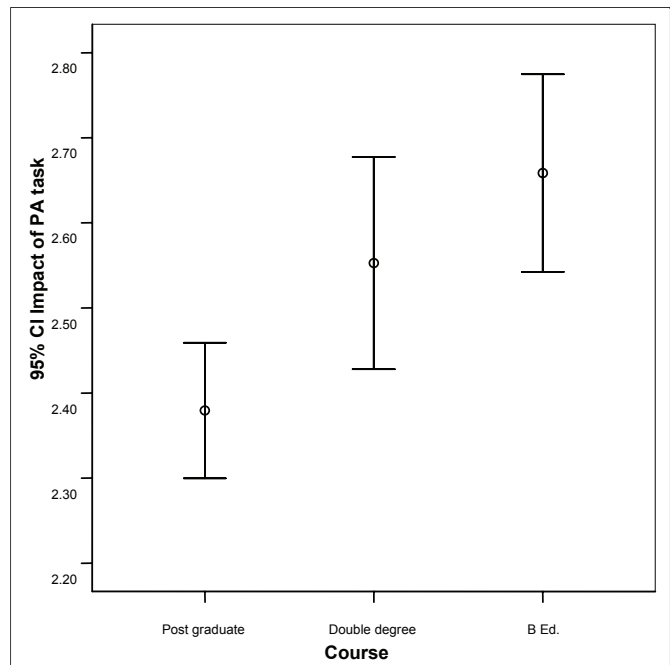


Figure 13 Mean perceived impact of Professional Activities on PRTs for each course type showing 95% confidence intervals

SECTION SEVEN: EVALUATION PROCESSES

The focus on this group of items is on the nature and quality of procedures used in the school to evaluate portfolios submitted by PRTs. An overwhelming majority of PRTs mentors and principals responses agreed that evaluation processes were fair (Question 31e 97%, 98% and 99%) (See Table J). Seventy-five percent of PRTs agreed that they were rigorous, with the corresponding figures for mentors and principals being 85% and 95% (Question 31f). Ninety-one percent of PRTs agreed that their portfolio entries provided their panel with sufficient evidence to judge whether they met registration standards (Question 31a); 85% agreed that their principal and panel members drew upon their knowledge and understanding of the VIT standards to make their judgments (Question 31b); 83% agreed that the principal and panel gave them feedback grounded in VIT standards (Question 31c). Seventy-nine percent of PRTs indicated that sufficient time and resources were allocated for all aspects of the final evaluation processes (Question 31d).

Table J

Q 31 To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. My portfolio entries provided the principal and panel with sufficient evidence to judge whether I met the standards for full registration	T	3	7	43	48
	M	1	3	36	61
	P	2	6	54	39
b. The principal and panel members drew strongly upon their knowledge and understanding of the VIT standards of professional practice to make their judgement about my eligibility to gain full teacher registration	T	3	12	51	34
	M	1	6	49	44
	P	1	4	62	33
c. The principal and panel gave me feedback that was grounded in the VIT standards of professional practice	T	4	14	50	33
	M	1	5	48	47
	P	1	1	57	41
d. Sufficient time and resources were allocated for all aspects of the final evaluation processes for full teacher registration at my school	T	7	15	47	32
	M	2	11	44	44
	P	1	6	54	39
e. The evaluation processes used in my school to assess my portfolio were fair	T	1	2	45	52
	M	1	2	34	64
	P	-	1	47	53
f. The evaluation processes used in my school to assess my portfolio were rigorous	T	5	21	48	27
	M	1	13	44	41
	P	1	4	52	43

PRTs at exclusively primary schools responded more positively to the evaluation section in general than the PRTs from other sectors (See **Figure 14**)

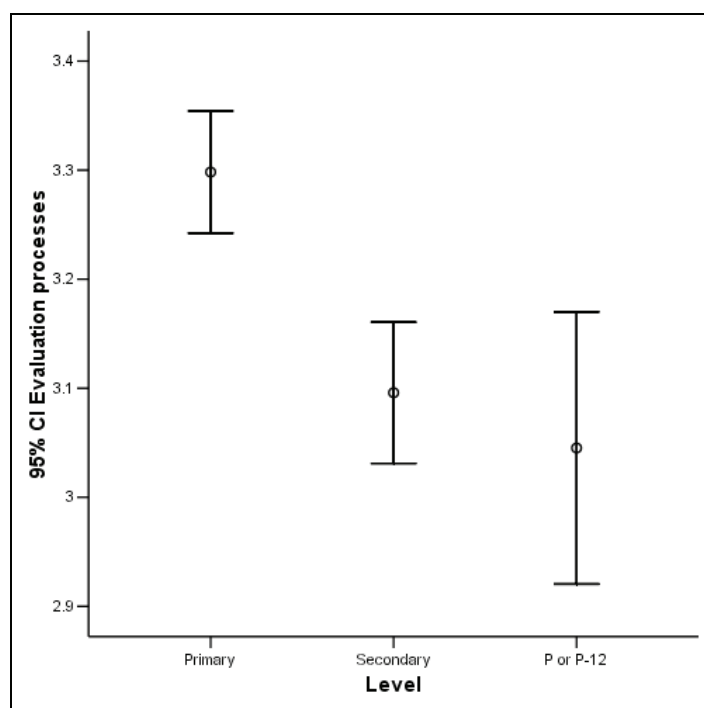


Figure 14 Mean of perception of evaluation processes for each level of school

SECTION EIGHT: GENERAL RESPONSES

The items in this question probed attitudes about the overall value of the procedures for provisional registration. General responses to questions about the overall program varied, but were on the whole positive (See Table K). An overwhelming majority of responses PRTs (92%) and mentor/principals (98% and 99%) indicated that the PRTs' work with mentors and other teachers has shown the PRTs the value of collaboration and teamwork among teachers in their schools (Question 32a). This is an outstanding result and clearly indicates that a culture of professionalism and learning is likely to be part of new teachers' expectations as they proceed through the VIT program and gain full admission to the profession.

A minority of PRTs (35%) thought that the VIT procedures had increased collaboration and teamwork among other teachers in their school (Question 32b), although mentor/principals had higher positive responses (51% and 63%). Forty-eight percent of teachers felt they could not have completed their portfolios as well as they did without the help and support gained from attending meetings organised by the VIT while 64% of mentors and 73% of principals believed the meetings had assisted the PRTs in this respect (Question 32c). Twenty-eight percent of PRTs indicated that they would be more likely to stay in teaching as a result of completing the standards, with 52% of mentors and 62% of principals thinking they would be more likely to do so (Question 32d).

Table K**Q 32 To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements?**

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Working with my mentor and other teachers this year has shown me the value of collaboration and teamwork among teachers in my school	T	3	5	46	46
	M	1	2	42	56
	P	1	2	51	48
b. As a result of the model of collaboration provided by my mentor and myself, collaboration and teamwork among other teachers has increased in my school	T	15	50	25	10
	M	7	42	39	12
	P	3	34	45	18
c. I could not have completed my portfolio as well as I did without the help and support gained from attending meetings organised by the VIT	T	25	27	36	12
	M	6	29	51	13
	P	3	23	58	15
d. As a result of completing the VIT standards and professional learning program I am more likely to stay in teaching.	T	32	40	22	6
	M	12	36	41	11
	P	4	35	49	13

The last questions on the survey ask if the completion of the VIT standards and professional learning program has helped the PRT to discuss professional practice with others, to improve their professional knowledge and skills and to become a better teacher (See Table L). Clear majorities of PRTs indicated that these three changes took place, at least to a minor extent (83%, 84%, 81%). Overwhelming majorities of mentors and principals agreed (between 96% and 99% for all items). Between 17% and 19% of PRT respondents and between 2% and 4% of mentor/principals indicated “not at all” to questions about the degree of change.

Table L**Q 33 To what extent did completion of the VIT standards and professional learning program help you to:**

		Not at all	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a major extent
a. discuss professional practice with others?	T	17	32	37	14
	M	3	24	47	27
	P	1	13	49	37
b. improve your professional knowledge and skills?	T	16	32	38	13
	M	2	21	50	28
	P	2	14	53	31
c. become a better teacher?	T	19	33	36	12
	M	4	24	50	22
	P	3	19	49	29

Primary PRTs were more likely to say that completing the program had an impact than PRTs in secondary schools (See Figure 15)

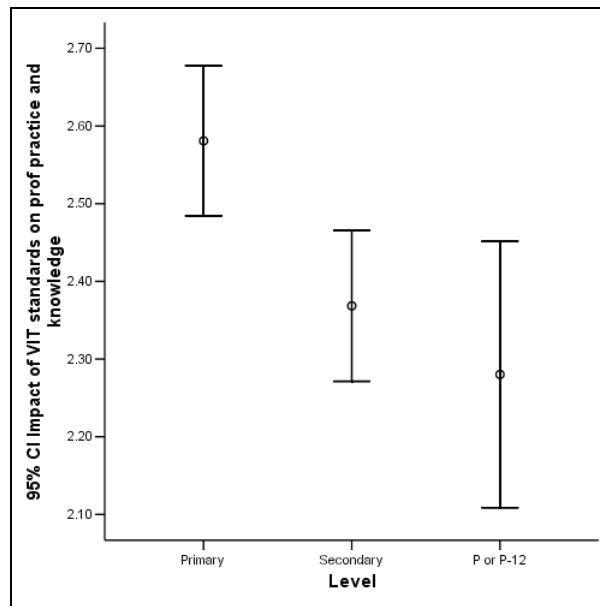


Figure 15 Mean level of perceived impact of VIT standards on professional practice and knowledge among PRTs for each level of schools

The principal and mentor surveys included a number of additional questions directed specifically to them as school leaders. Their responses to these questions indicated that the VIT process was increasing the level of professional community in schools.

Principal surveys included three questions directed specifically at principals (See Figure 16 to Figure 18) (Please note for each figure, columns 1, 2, 3 & 4 represented 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'agree' and 'strongly agree', respectively):

To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements:

- a. As a result of my experiences as a panel member, my knowledge of the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration grew substantially.
- b. The written information and advice from the VIT provided valuable support for the process in this school
- c. My experiences of this process have had a beneficial effect on my own professional practice.

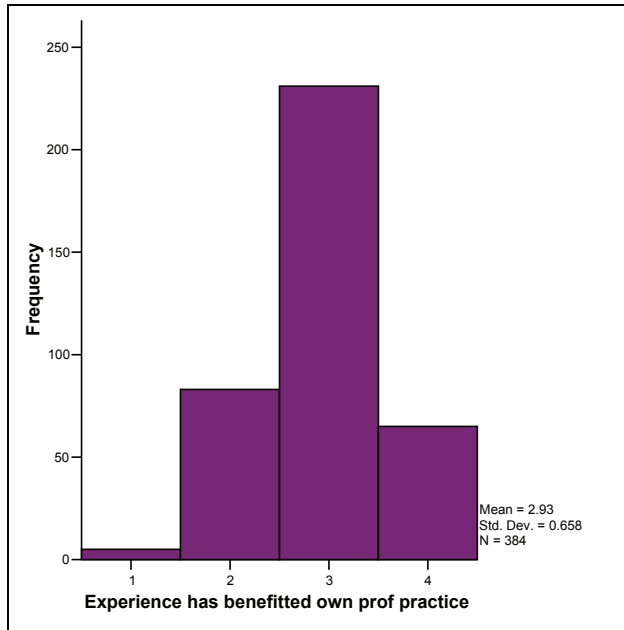


Figure 166 Proportion of principals reporting the experience of the VIT standards process had benefited their own practice

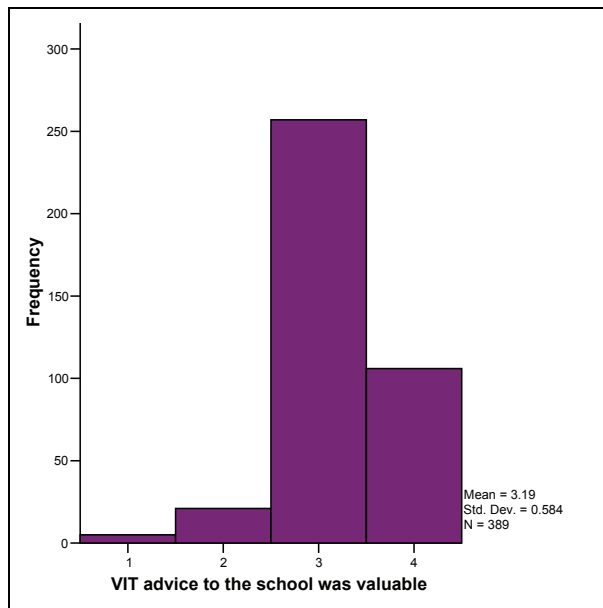


Figure 17 Proportion of principals reporting the VIT advice to school was valuable

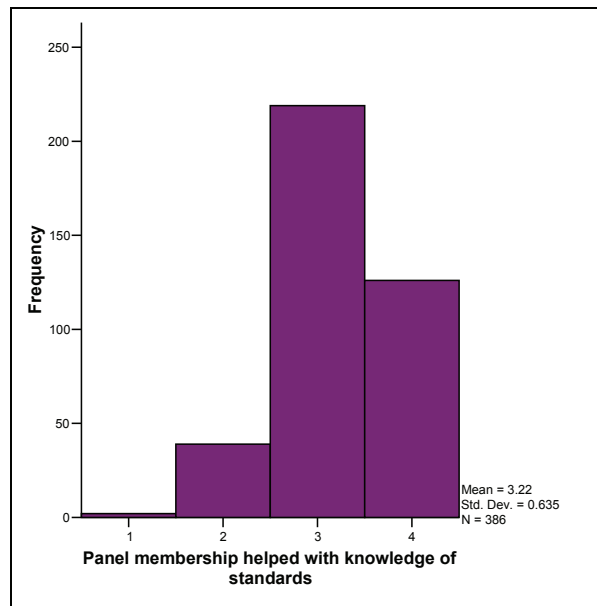


Figure 18 Proportion of principals reporting that panel membership helped with knowledge of the VIT standards

Mentor surveys included four questions directed specifically at mentors (See Figure 19 to 22) (*Please note for each figure, columns 1, 2, 3 & 4 represented 'not at all', 'to a minor extent', 'to a moderate extent' and 'to a major extent', respectively*):

To what extent did your own experience as a mentor, assisting your mentee to complete VIT standards and professional learning program, help you to:

- a. discuss professional practice with others
- b. improve *your own* professional knowledge and skills
- c. become a better teacher
- d. make it more likely that you will stay in teaching

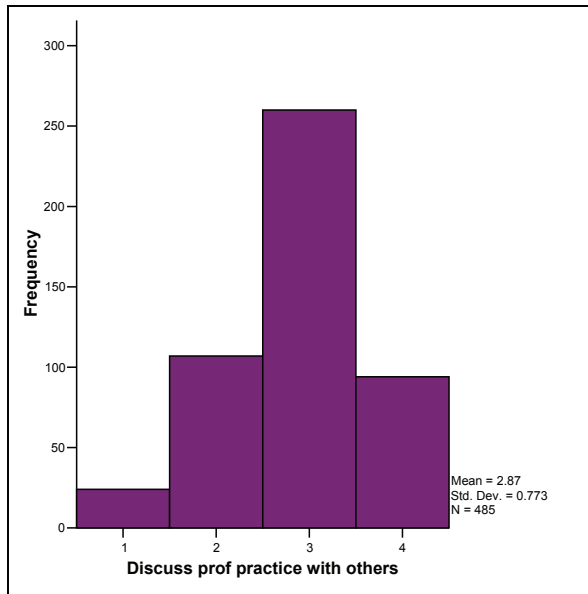


Figure 19 Discuss professional practice with others

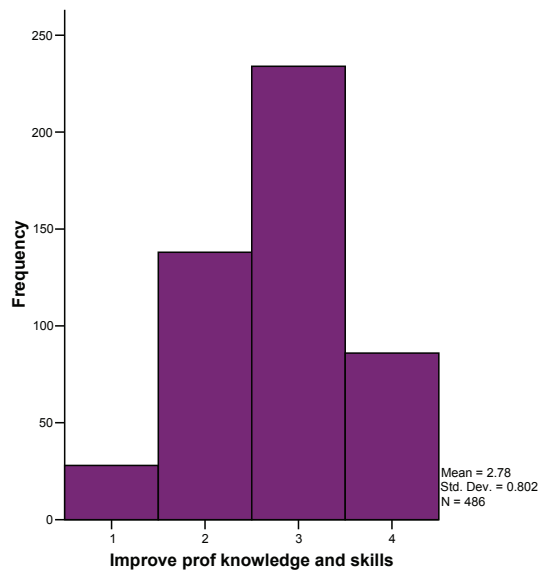


Figure 20 Improve professional knowledge and skills

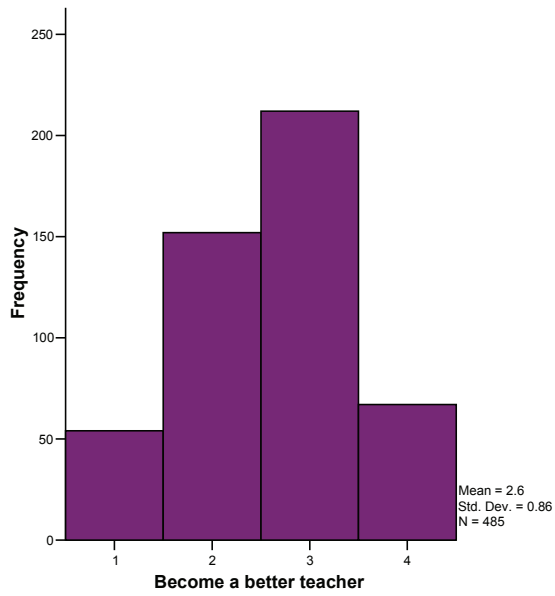


Figure 21 Become a better teacher

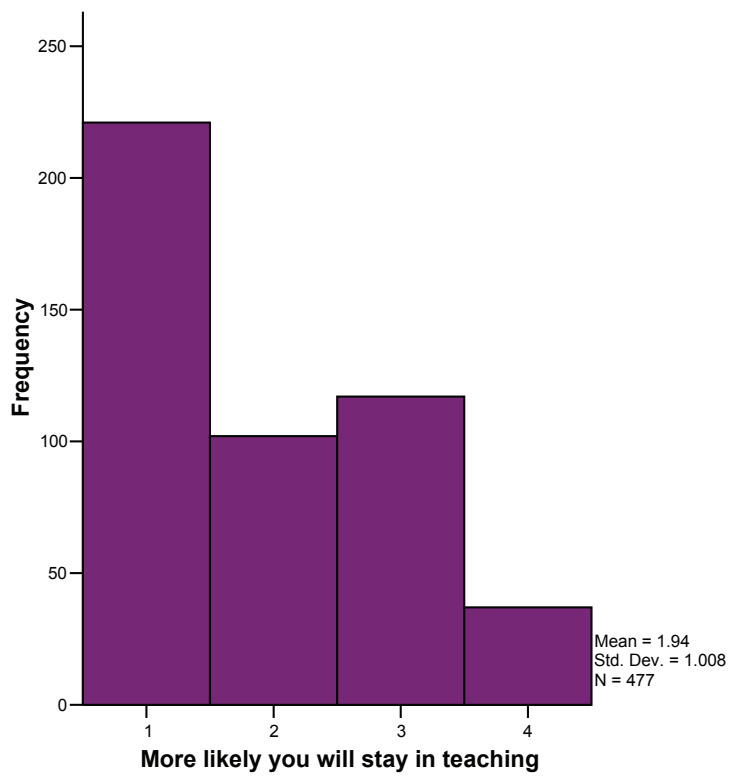


Figure 22 Make it more likely that you will stay in teaching

Comments from respondents

Respondents were given the opportunity to add comments at the end of the survey, which provided useful additional information. While the VIT process was clearly supported by a majority of PRTs, mentors and principals, they saw areas of the process that needed to be addressed and further developed and refined. Many respondents expressed support and confidence in the process, with, for example, 25% of PRT respondents outlining how it had helped them personally, but there were also a number of comments that expressed concern about various aspects, and/or suggestions for improvement. It would be helpful to consider and reflect on the concerns expressed.

Comments from PRTs

The comments from PRTs covered a range of issues and can be roughly grouped as follows:

- An increase in stress during an already stressful year (39%)
- Lack of support in schools (21%)
- VIT communication issues (12%)
- Duplication of effort (10%)

Four percent commented that they felt school based processes such as selection and appraisal procedures would be more appropriate than the VIT processes, 3% expressed concerns about validity and 3% felt that improvement had come about as a result of personal efficacy rather than the process. The remainder of the comments (between 1% and 3%) made suggestions or expressed concerns in a variety of areas, including validity concerns that it was “not fair” for “older teachers” to be conducting the process. or that the process was not relevant to their subject area.

The following two comments give an idea of the range of PRT responses in the “comments” section of the survey:

The whole process is insulting to us, as it seems to imply we have no independent desire or motivation to reflect on our teaching.

I felt that the completion of the portfolio really made me reflect on my teaching in a deeper way and challenged me to correct any areas that needed improvement.

Suggestions for changing the process were also made by a small number of respondents. Five percent of respondents commented that the task could be more appropriately completed in the second or third year of teaching, thereby lessening the workload for first year teachers. Other suggestions (by a small number of respondents) were for the VIT to send out teams of inspectors, or for teachers to videotape a number of lessons and send them in to the VIT for assessment.

As with the survey responses, mentors and principals were generally more positive in their comments. Many stated that there were real and multiple benefits for their PRTs in the VIT processes and that the processes had facilitated professional learning and collaboration, both for the PRTs and across the staff. There were concerns that the processes added to workload

and stress for first year teachers, and suggestions that some aspects of the processes be streamlined. Time and funding for the process were also areas of concern. Some mentors/principals felt that existing performance review processes were more appropriate or that the processes were duplication of university work. On the other hand, some felt that the universities were not adequately preparing their students.

Mentor comments covered a range of issues and can be roughly grouped as follows:

- Considerable gains for PRTs undertaking the VIT process (28%)
- Increase of PRT stress/workload (23%)
- More funding needed (22%)
- Valuable professional collaboration and pedagogical experience for mentors, other staff, satisfying collegiate support (27%)
- Personal efficacy of PRT rather than process (12%)
- School-based implementation issues, timeline (10%)
- Modifying and streamlining of process (9%)
- Preference for school based processes (9%)
- Duplication of teacher preparation courses (9%)
- VIT communication and publication issues (6%)

Principal comments can be roughly grouped as follows:

- Considerable gains for PRTs from undertaking process (28%)
- Means of developing pedagogical discussion and focussing on classroom practice (19%)
- More funding and time needed (17%)
- Increase in PRT workload/stress (16%)
- Preference for school based processes (14%)
- Time and streamlining issues (13%)
- Mentoring and collegiate support very useful part of process (8%)
- School-based implementation issues, timeline (7%)
- VIT communication and publication issues (7%)

Other comments (between 3% and 7%) related to issues of consistency across schools (both positive and negative comments); that the process was “contrived” (3%); that teacher preparation courses “should do their job better” (6%); that PRT personal efficacy and school procedures were more important than the process; and that there were difficulties for small schools (3%).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The surveys yielded convincing evidence that the registration process had led to significant professional learning. Some concerns were expressed in comments about some aspects of the process, in particular by a number of PRTs who found the process too stressful and/or too time-consuming. Nevertheless, a clear majority of PRTs and a larger majority of mentors and principals supported the process and perceive it to be fair, valid and rigorous.

There were no significant differences in attitudes to the PRT procedures according to gender, location of school, qualifications for teaching allotment or employment arrangements. There

were occasional differences in responses according to teacher preparation course, school sector. There were marked differences in attitudes between PRTs and mentors/principals and between primary and secondary PRTs.

A number of factors appeared to be contributing to higher or lower engagement with, and acceptance and identification of benefit from the process. The main areas of interest in this respect were the difference in responses between primary and secondary PRT respondents, and the difference in responses between PRTs and mentor/principals. Other general factors to be considered included the time factor (commented on by a number of respondents), the role of the school leadership and the existing level of professional community in a school.

Perceptions of Fairness, Validity and Rigour

Some concerns were expressed in the previous evaluation (2003 trial process) about the fairness, rigour and validity of the registration processes. The respondents in the survey for the 2004 process were asked a variety of questions in relation to fairness, validity and rigour. As in the previous survey, a large majority of respondents found the portfolio evaluation processes to be fair. In the previous survey, the percentage of respondents who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the processes were fair was about 90%. For the full implementation, the percentages are 97% (PRTs), and between 97 to 99% of the mentor/principal group (Question 31e). In a group of this size, it would appear to be unlikely that *all* PRTs would find the process fair, although this would clearly be a desirable outcome. This is a high stakes situation for PRTs, and an unfavourable assessment might clearly impact on PRT attitude. It is nevertheless of concern that even such a small minority found the process to be unfair.

The survey for the full implementation asked each group of respondents questions about rigour and validity in relation to each portfolio task. Majorities in all groups agreed or strongly agreed that the processes were rigorous and valid, with mentors and principals recording higher levels of agreement. About 3% of comments at the end of the surveys expressed concerns about fairness, rigour or validity.

A much higher percentage than in the previous survey or agreed or strongly agreed that sufficient time and resources had been allocated for the final evaluation processes with 79% of PRTs, 88% of mentors and 93% of principals agreeing that this was the case (Question 31d). In the previous survey, 49% of PRTs and 50% of mentors and principals agreed or strongly agreed. This suggests that as schools become more familiar with and experienced in the processes, the processes themselves may be, and may be seen as, less demanding. This has proved to be the case with other major innovations and program implementations, such as the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE).

Difference in results between teachers and mentors/principals

The first differences between these two groups appear in question items about frequency of meetings. These differences may be due to different interpretations of “discussion” etc, with PRTs being more likely to see formal meetings as being significant and with mentors and principals seeing informal discussions and support as being part of professional learning and collaboration.

However, the difference in responses between PRTs and mentor/principals continues throughout the survey and is very marked in some of the more qualitative responses. The

consistent differences between PRTs and mentor/principal responses are an area worthy of further investigation. These differences are particularly striking in the attitudes to the three tasks. Principal and mentors consistently and significantly see the PRTs as having gained more from the process than do the PRTs themselves. A number of possible explanations could be offered.

Did the PRTs benefit much more professionally than they believe? Were the responses skewed in some cases by irritation and resentment at having to complete the work? Did some respondents improve teaching effectiveness almost in spite of themselves? There were more positive responses from mentors and principals, and a low level of “not at all” responses to, for instance, improvements in classroom practice. It is possible that some part of the “not at all” responses from the 20% or so of PRTs who responded in this way are reflecting general resentment of the process. This is a factor that may need to be addressed, as it is hard to believe that the ATL task, for instance, made absolutely no difference to understanding.

What general factors could account for the higher proportion of positive results from mentors and principals? They weren't having to do the bulk of the work? They remember the “sink or swim” atmosphere of schools, and particularly of secondary schools in the past, and realise it was not beneficial to either teachers or students? Perhaps mentors and principals are able to see the benefits of this kind of exercise more clearly, and are also more aware of the importance of close and structured monitoring and advice. They are more likely to be aware that ongoing learning and adaptation is part of the teaching profession. They are also aware of “burn-out” and how it impacts on teachers individually and the profession as a whole. Establishing solid and effective practice early in a teacher's career may be one way of avoiding this. Some new teachers may manage, at least on a basic level, with no mentoring, some will not. Some may feel they don't need to be taught anything because they are qualified professionals. But as one respondent commented in 2004, “I learn what I didn't know I didn't know.” For those who could manage with no mentoring, the crunch may come later, with new challenges or simple weariness. Establishing these procedures and structures for a teacher in the first year of teaching means they will see seeking help and advice and working collaboratively as “givens” rather than as an admission of weakness or an intrusion. If this keeps effective new teachers in the profession, it is vitally important.

Some mentors and principals commented on the inherent quality and efficacy of the PRT as an issue. Among PRTs there will be, in addition to outstanding graduates, a small number who are unsuited for the teaching profession. There can, of course, be problems caused by inexperience or inadequate training. These problems can be addressed. However, there may still be that small number who are not going to “make the grade” whatever happens in the form of mentoring or support. It is surely better for all stakeholders, including the first year teacher, to clarify this situation early, to extend the registration process, if necessary, as currently occurs, but ultimately to ensure that only those who are suited for the profession become fully registered teachers. Again, the role of the VIT is vitally important.

Difference in responses between primary and secondary PRTs

There are clear and frequent differences between primary and secondary respondents. The survey responses indicate that primary PRTs are more satisfied than secondary PRTs with induction processes and general mentoring. They are also more positive about the portfolio tasks. This difference in attitudes is an aspect of the program that needs further

investigation, although there are possible general explanations that relate to the difference in workplace culture between primary and secondary schools.

Primary teachers in general have a more established culture of professional collaboration and a stronger focus on the entire and sequential learning of the child. Primary PRTs would for the most part be joining schools with such a culture. This culture and focus result in part from the nature of primary schools, and often in part from the teacher training that precedes entry to the profession.

Professional collaboration and deprivatisation of practice, as a means of improving teaching effectiveness, is not usually a prominent part of secondary school life. In secondary schools, teachers are focussed more clearly on the particular subject based learning of the child. The unit of professional community and discussion in many secondary schools is often only the subject department and may often be confined to a year level as well. Nevertheless, deprivatisation of practice and professional collaboration *across the entire school community* have been shown to be very effective in improving student outcomes. If the VIT standards program acts as another means of bringing schools, and particularly secondary schools, further into a pedagogical position where this collaboration is seen as a given, it will be of benefit to Victorian students. Teachers who work collaboratively and collegially produce better outcomes for students.

Aspects of the VIT processes may need development and refinement, and the higher level of dissatisfaction among secondary PRTs may need to be addressed. However, if the standards program engenders an increase in professional collaboration where it is lowest –and research indicates this is generally among secondary teachers - it can only add to secondary teacher effectiveness. A culture of professional isolation and privacy of practice may be an obstacle to overcome in some instances, and in this respect, the VIT Standards Program should assist.

The time factor

A considerable number of respondents, in particular PRTs, commented on the amount of time the process was taking and the additional stress it was causing. This appeared to be a major area of concern. Time demands and stress levels need to be balanced against the overall needs of the school and the educational outcomes for its students. However, the effect of the program should not be to duplicate systems already in place, or to add unnecessarily to stress levels for PRTs. Some PRTs may be placing extra demands on themselves – for example, by ignoring word limits or by leaving assembly of the portfolio until late in the year– or may need more encouragement to avoid becoming overanxious about this process and imposing further stress on themselves. This is also related to the issue of duplication of effort.

Duplication of effort was raised by a number of respondents. It is clear that many schools, and in particular many primary schools, have already developed firm cultures of professional learning and collaboration, and some respondents expressed irritation that they were having to “jump through VIT hoops.” However, if a strong statewide culture of professional learning and collaboration is to be developed, it is necessary to have an authentic statewide method of assessing against professional standards. While VIT requirements may in some cases be “preaching to the converted”, this is definitely not the case for all schools, and any standards program that focuses on effective teaching and learning across all levels and sectors can only benefit Victorian students. If appropriate procedures and processes are already in place at a school, it may be of benefit for the school to further streamline the methods of demonstrating

this. It remains essential, however, that full admission to the profession is based on a valid assessment against professional expectations and standards and that there is statewide comparability across schools, levels and sectors. There may need to be a clearer understanding that assessments against standards prior to full registration is a separate process from ongoing appraisal and review. One way of reducing workload for teachers seeking registration would be for school performance reviews to be delayed until full registration is achieved.

The nature of the portfolio tasks was the focus of a number of meetings between the ACER project evaluators and the SPLB team before the pilot program commenced in 2003. Charlotte Danielson, a member of the original SPLB team, contended that the tasks should be 'a natural harvest of teachers' work' rather than an intrusive 'add on.' This contention remains very relevant, in particular in relation to teacher concerns about some of the registration requirements being too time-consuming, too stressful or unnecessary. It may be necessary to look again at the methods used to gather evidence for the assessment of PRTs – to find methods that enhance the rigour of the assessment, but reduce the burden on PRT time and energy.

The role of the school leadership and the level of professional community in a school

Research shows that teachers learn more effectively when they learn together. Where the professional community is strong, teachers may be more ready to adapt to innovations and to plan together as a team. Innovations such as the VIT standards program may also facilitate the growth of professional learning and collaboration.

In this respect it is interesting to note the principal responses to survey questions about the impact of the program on themselves and on their schools. If the leadership of the school is familiar with and understands the standards, the professional benefits for the school will increase. A large majority of principals, across all sectors and from both primary and secondary levels agreed or strongly agreed that the written information and advice from the VIT provided valuable support for the process in their school; a similar majority agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experiences as a panel member, their knowledge of the Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration grew substantially. As noted previously, PRTs were more satisfied with their school's support when mentors and principals attended VIT training sessions.

Perhaps most important, the program appears to have strengthened the connection of the principals to the core business of a school – the quality of teaching and learning - with a large number agreeing that their experiences of the process have had a beneficial effect on their own professional practice. Commitment on the part of the school leadership to a culture of professional learning and collaboration will have marked effect on the attitudes of staff. If the school leadership is not committed to this culture, it is much more difficult for such a culture to be established. It is therefore encouraging that so many principals appear to view the introduction of the standards positively.

Conclusion

The 2004 Standards and Professional Learning Project is leading to improvements in teaching practice across schools and is playing a major role in reinforcing and/or establishing a culture of professional collaboration and professional learning in schools. That is likely to lead to

improved student outcomes. A majority of all respondents responded positively to the various aspects of the program, although there were some differences within groups of respondents. The role of the school leadership is clearly very important in this and in any other major innovation. Principals and mentors were very positive about the program, and consistently reported higher levels of satisfaction with its implementation than did the Provisionally Registered Teachers. Primary teachers were in general more positive than secondary teachers. Given the greater pedagogical experience of school leaders, and the generally broader pedagogical knowledge and experience of primary teachers, this may indicate that the program is going to the heart of what matters most in schools: more effective teaching and learning.

Change is often accompanied by a degree of unease and resentment, and this has been the case with the introduction of the VIT standards, as with other educational changes in Victoria. School leaders play a vital role in leading their schools through these changes. The VIT standards processes in Victoria are in keeping with standards assessment for other professions and with educational practice in comparable countries across the world, but are relatively recent in Australia. As the VIT standards processes continue to develop and are themselves subject to review, they should greatly benefit the educational teaching and learning needs of Victorian teachers and students.