

HIGHER EDUCATION WORKFORCE ISSUES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

The Australian government is committed to delivering an Education Revolution, its National Innovation System and Social Inclusion. Education academics are critical to advancing the complex agendas around innovation, productivity and inclusion. Firstly, and obviously, they educate the teachers and leaders who will educate the coming generations of Australians. Secondly, they provide the world class¹ research expertise, new knowledge and evidence-base that policy-makers and practitioners will need to draw upon. There are, however, emerging problems with the sustainability of the academic (research and teaching) workforce in Education that could have long-ranging ramifications for Australia's capacity to achieve its economic and social aspirations.

1 An ageing workforce

Graeme Hugo², in his recent analysis of the demographics of Australian University Higher Education staff, provided the following data:

[Education] is clearly one of the oldest major subject areas in Australian universities.

<i>Teacher education</i>	<i>62.8% are over 50 years</i>
<i>General education</i>	<i>60.4%</i>
<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>60.0%</i>
<i>Curriculum and education studies</i>	<i>58.6%</i>
<i>Human welfare studies</i>	<i>57.6% ...</i>
<i>Nursing</i>	<i>51.3% ...</i>
<i>Dental</i>	<i>42.3% ...</i>
<i>AVERAGE HIGHER EDUC</i>	<i>40.0% ...</i>
<i>Pharmacy</i>	<i>25.3%</i>

[I]t is readily evident that few academics in [Teacher Education] are aged less than 40. Over the next 15 years more than a half of them will have left because of retirement, even if a significant number stay on beyond the age of 65.

2 An expanding need

Hugo went on to remark that

This is of particular significance given the fact that there will be a significant demand for school teachers in many areas over the next 15 years. This is because the school teacher age profile in Australia also has a disproportionate number of people in the baby boom ages who will retire during this period.

Other social agendas such as the commitment to increased access to high quality early childhood education and increasing participation in post secondary education will also require more research and more teachers of people of all ages. Each in turn requires increased capacity in the form of highly qualified, innovative and motivated Education academics. Consider, for example, early childhood education.

Budget 2008	500 new commencing places each year for three years.	
	Accumulates to around 4000 eftsI over the length of the four year B Ed	
Extra academics needed	At sector SSR (19:1)	210
	At teacher ed SSR (25:1)	160

There are not the number of early childhood higher degree students in the pipeline to service the new students in the system and the need for high quality and leading research.

3 The need to renew and expand

If we are maintain and enhance our teaching and research capacity and productivity, we need well prepared and talented people entering the academic workforce at a sufficiently early age to be able make sustained and substantial contributions over their lifetime.

¹ Australia produces 5.4% of all the educational research publications created around the world — almost double the proportion of research publications produced by Australia generally (around 2.9%). This places Education first in all Fields of Research in Australia followed by Plant and Animal Sciences (5.30%) and Geosciences (5.02%) (ARC 2007, p 56).

² Hugo, G. 2008, The Demographic Outlook For Australian Universities' Academic Staff Occasional Paper for Council of the Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS)

THE JOURNEY TO THE ACADEMIC WORKFORCE

A year 12 school leaver entering a Science course or a Science/Education course, direct from school.

The choice	SCIENCE	SCIENCE/EDUCATION
The journey	BSc hons (4 yrs)	BSc/BEd or BScGradDip (4 yrs) Teach 4+ years pre further study Masters with research thesis component (1.5 yrs full time but most likely 3-4 yrs part time) PhD (3-4 yrs FT but likely 7-8 yrs part time)
	PhD (3-4 yrs)	
Time FTE	7-8 yrs	8.5-9.5 yrs
Time span	7-8 yrs	14-16 yrs plus period of teaching, no study
Cost	4 x HECS HDR fee free Scholarship	4 x HECS + 1.5 x (mostly) full fees HDR fee free No scholarship because part time
Entry to HEd workforce	26 yrs of age	40+ yrs of age and often older

HOWEVER, ‘immediately after school’ is no longer the obvious or only entry point to teacher education. Almost half of students commence Initial Teacher Education courses at 25+ years and over a quarter at 30+³ So for many teachers we can add several years to the above timeline. *The typical doctoral graduate in Education is in his or her fifties.*

As a professional field ...

- The majority of Education research students need professional experience prior to or alongside further study and would find it difficult to gain employment in Schools and Faculties of Education without the credibility of professional experience.
- Research in education is typically applied research that requires the research student to be familiar with a broad range of professional issues, and to grasp the complex interface between theory and contexts of policy formation and professional practice.
- As a result few take the honours route to post graduate research study immediately after their initial qualification. 11.7% of all domestic students enrolled in Australian Universities are in the field of Education, but they comprise only 1.6% of honours students. In 2005, there were only 175 honours students in Education across Australia. This means that most take the longer route via Masters degrees.
- Education postgraduate students are likely to be older, mid career and have significant family and financial commitments around which they fit the timing and financing of their study.
 - Few are in high income brackets
 - There are few incentives to upgrade qualifications
 - The costs are considerable.
 - Few scholarships are available for postgraduate coursework qualifications and those that are, generally are not available for part time students.
 - They cannot meet their commitments on the stipends that come with full time scholarships.
- 70% of commencing doctoral students in Education in 2005 were over 40 years of age (cf with 31% for the whole sector) and 27% were over 50 years (cf 12%). Given that 77% of doctoral students in Education are part time **the typical doctoral graduate in Education is in his or her fifties.**

³ Source: DEST Statistical Collection data element number 312