

## THE AUSTRALIAN

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### Rigour, practice and mentoring get the best into every classroom

LISA RODGERS THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM August 31, 2017

There was once a time when Australia had an education system that was the envy of most, but Australia's results have stood still and we are now playing catch-up.

Australia is blessed with a wealth of quality teachers and highly effective schools led by skilled principals, but too much is left to chance.

When you send your kids to an Australian school, effective teaching should be a certainty, not a lottery.

Teaching is a demanding and rewarding profession.

An effective teacher understands where every child in a classroom is up to, where they need to go next, and how to get them there. Deeply understanding the content being taught is important, but is not enough.

If Australia's goal is to have all students experience effective teaching in every class, there are clear key points where we must intervene.

Not everyone is cut out to teach, which means the selection process needs to be more rigorous.

Thirty-thousand people a year enter teacher education.

It's not good enough to assume that everyone can teach.

We must make sure that all graduates have the potential to go on to be great teachers.

This is not only about high university entrance ranks, although you need to be academically capable.

We need better ways to identify the personal qualities that make great teachers.

We must ensure that all new graduates are properly prepared for the classroom.

Australian governments have agreed to lift the bar for teacher education courses.

They will need to provide quality practical experience, through strong partnerships with schools. They will need to ensure that graduates pass a rigorous assessment of their capacity to improve student learning, that they have the required levels of literacy and numeracy, and that even primary teachers have deep knowledge in one or more subject areas.

And we know that, in order for graduates to be given the best chance of being great teachers, they must work in schools that support them to teach well.

To be effective, all teachers need access to accurate assessments to pinpoint what students need, and to know whether their teaching approaches are working.

Teachers need time to observe, learn from and get feedback from other teachers.

Schools must promote consistent, evidence-based teaching approaches that mean students and parents know what to expect, regardless of who is teaching.

They also need access to the expertise of other teachers proven to have had a positive effect on students, such as teachers who are certified "highly accomplished" or "lead".

This way our best teachers can be rewarded with improved status, and we build strong, clear career paths that support our best teachers to have the greatest impact on teaching and learning in schools.

We must better match teacher supply and demand. There's no point graduating more primary teachers when shortages exist in secondary schools in maths and science. However, Australia is only just beginning to develop a

national picture of teaching supply and demand. We need a better basis to plan.

None of this is easy, but it is not beyond Australia to come together to improve the quality of teaching in our schools.

At a time when record funding is going into education, it is important to make sure it is spent where it matters — to put an effective teacher in every classroom, every day.

*Lisa Rodgers is chief executive of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.*

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