

Bonus pay for teachers not enough, warns expert

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Bonus pay for high performing teachers will fail if implemented in isolation, leading educator Professor Stephen Dinham OAM from the University of Melbourne's Graduate School of Education has warned.

Speaking at a public lecture last night (Tuesday 27 September), Professor Dinham said a new approach to teachers' salaries must be linked to the introduction of national teaching standards.

“Previous attempts to drive improvement in teacher quality and to attract, retain, recognise and reward accomplished teachers have largely failed,” Professor Dinham said. “One of the key reasons is that such schemes have never been mainstreamed to form an effective salary and career structure.”

According to Professor Dinham, current salary-career structures are in urgent need of attention. Up to 25 per cent of teachers beginning their career resign in the first three years and another resignation spike occurs when teachers reach the top of their pay scales after approximately 10-12 years.

“The current system not only fails to attract and retain teachers, but it also fails to drive teacher quality. It is loosely connected, outdated and increasingly unattractive. If it doesn't change, we can expect to slide down the ranks on international measures such as the Program for International Assessment (PISA),” he warned.

Professor Dinham called for the two current agendas of performance pay and national standards to be linked to form a new salary-career structure for teachers.

“Australia’s new set of national teaching standards provides a vehicle to move to a nationally consistent model of learning, recognition and reward fit,” he said. “After many years of false starts the key pieces of the quality teaching and learning puzzle are quickly coming together.

“To drive improvement quality of teaching and standards must be linked to a new salary structure providing recognition and reward for teachers.”

Professor Dinham said there would be challenges implementing a new career structure for [teachers](#), but recognized the importance in addressing educational disadvantages.

“The biggest equity issue in Australian education today isn’t computers, new buildings or equipment. It’s each student having a quality teacher,” he said.

“Life isn’t fair, but good teaching and good schools are the best means we have of overcoming disadvantage and opening the doors of opportunity for young people.”

Professor Dinham was speaking at the first public event in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education’s new building, at 234 Queensberry Street.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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