

Profession offers suggestions to shift workload focus to teaching and learning

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Immediate action is needed to address the “very substantial, potentially debilitating and growing” demands upon teachers, “particularly in relation to administrative work”, a new report by Sydney and Curtin university academics says.

“Negative impacts on students are likely to ensue if the current trends continue unabated,” the researchers warn.

Findings of the research project – commissioned by Federation with participation in a survey by more than 18,000 members – were presented to Delegates at the union’s Annual Conference.

Associate Professor Susan McGrath-Champ from the University of Sydney’s Business School said increased administrative tasks threaten to overwhelm teachers’ professional focus on teaching and learning.



Dr Rachel Wilson from the University of Sydney’s School of Education and Social Work said 89 per cent of survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed high workload hindered teaching and learning. And 86 per cent agreed/strongly agreed that the extent and processes of providing evidence of compliance with policy requirements hindered teaching and learning.

[Understanding Work in Schools: The Foundation for Teaching and Learning](#) states: “The weight of evidence in this report makes it abundantly clear that teachers as a whole are subject to new and overwhelming demands imposed by the current policy landscape.”

“[Teachers] are struggling to satisfactorily balance the demands of these administrative requirements with the professional and frequently reported personal commitment to preserving their focus on teaching and student learning. Many report that the changes in workload over the last five years are challenging their capacity to sustain their quality of teaching and learning in schools.”

The teaching profession’s top-ranked suggestions for strategies that would help them with their work are:

- reducing face-to-face teaching time for increased collaboration on planning, programming, assessing and reporting
- acknowledging professional judgement and eliminating processes that are unnecessary, cumbersome, extremely time consuming, or focused only on administrative demands associated with compliance
- providing more specialist teacher support.

The report notes: “The call for increased within-school-hours’ time for collaboration in core, teaching-related activities is consistent with teachers’ strong avowal that they regard their professional purpose as the

education of students over and above furnishing unduly, copious amounts of data and completing onerous and highly time-consuming administrative tasks.”

“Teachers explicitly nominate more effective system-level planning as essential to preventing the imposition of competing workload demands and unrealistic timeframes on schools,” the report states.

Teachers need to be properly resourced in order to meet the diverse needs of students and “additional teacher consultancy support is needed to assist teachers to develop and implement the significant curriculum changes for which teachers are finding there is insufficient time, given existing teaching work and increasing administrative duties”, the report finds.

The report is authored by Susan McGrath-Champ (University of Sydney, Business School), Rachel Wilson and Meghan Stacey (University of Sydney, School of Education and Social Work), and Scott Fitzgerald (Curtin University, Graduate School of Business).

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