



Australian National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field

Synthesis and Recommendations for
Policy, Practice and Research

Part A Report

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Table of Contents

Executive summary	5
Introduction	8
Why was a National Summit needed?	8
Teaching out-of-field	9
What is the issue?	9
Why policy?	10
Why is it so complex?	11
The National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field	13
The OOFAS Collective ¹⁴	
Theme summaries, actions and recommendations	15
Theme 1: Data needed to inform policy	17
Theme 2: School management & leadership	21
Theme 3: Initial teacher education	26
Theme 4: Teacher registration/accreditation	31
Theme 5: Teacher professional learning	35
Conclusion	41
Actions and Recommendations	43
References	52

Executive summary

Despite many years of reports and recommendations, teaching out-of-field, that is, assigning teachers to teach subjects they are not qualified to teach, remains an increasingly critical issue in Australian schools. While teaching out-of-field is used by school administrators as a solution to the teacher shortage crisis, it is not an adequate solution. It “inadvertently masks the extent of teacher shortages” (Hobbs & Törner, 2019a, p. 313), shortages caused by a lack of teachers in particular subject areas, unequal distribution of teachers, or recruitment practices that preference qualities other than teacher specialisations (Hobbs & Törner, 2019a). However, assigning a teacher to teach a subject they are unfamiliar with is like expecting dentists to meet the shortfall in country doctors. While Australian teachers are highly qualified, knowing the subject and how to teach it is a standard held high in our preparation of teachers, yet this standard is challenged when teachers are assigned or employed to teach out-of-field.

This issue has been raised in inquiries for some years. For example, in 2017, the Parliamentary [Inquiry into Innovation and Creativity: Workforce for the New Economy](#) called for an end to teaching out-of-field:

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, through COAG, require jurisdictions to develop and submit strategies which phase out the teaching of STEM subjects by non-STEM trained teachers over a five year period. (Recommendation 6)

They also recommended creating pathways for re-specialisation through “credentialing and incentives for teachers to enhance and update STEM knowledge” (Recommendation 7), and a system-side approach to generating workforce data as “workforce estimates for STEM teaching needs and report them publicly” (Recommendation 8). These recommendations highlight the need for highly qualified and appropriately specialised teachers, and the importance of transparency and public scrutiny of the crisis facing our schools.

Similarly, the 2022 report [NEXT STEPS: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review \(QITE\)](#) adds further support to the value of explicit discipline knowledge and in-field teaching, emphasising the need to attract high-calibre mid-career change applicants to initial teacher education with skills in areas of high demand (STEM is an explicit focus), and then provide the necessary support to retain new teachers to ensure a sustainable pipeline of teachers with the right subject qualifications in the right locations.

These recommendations from earlier inquiries are relevant for attending to the issues and challenges imposed by having a relatively high proportion of teachers teaching out-of-field (Weldon, 2016). Attracting the teachers we need and having appropriate pathways for re-specialisation are both pivotal to maintaining a teacher workforce that can offer deep disciplinary and pedagogical expertise across the full range of subjects in our curriculum.

This report summarises the outcomes of a National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field held on October 21-23, 2022. The Summit was initiated by a consortium of researchers, teacher educators and organisations interested in raising the profile and attending to this issue plaguing our schools. The impetus for the Summit arose from the momentum that has been building in Australia fuelled by research (e.g., Caldis & Kleeman, 2019; Hobbs, 2013; Hobbs & Porsch, 2022; Du Plessis, 2017, 2021; Weldon, 2016), school need, and government initiatives (Department of Education & Training, 2019) in response to national data (e.g., Weldon, 2016) relating to the extent of out-of-field teaching. Also pressure and interest from subject associations, unions, and other government organisations call for serious recognition and action in relation to the issues associated with out-of-field teaching.

The Summit drew on the expertise and experiences of a wide range of stakeholders in education, such as teachers, researchers, teacher educators, professional learning providers, teacher registration/accreditation boards, education-related associations and unions, and departments of education to put a spotlight on the multi-layered structures that create the need for, and the implications of, teaching out-of-field.

Analysis of the outcomes in relation to the five themes of the Summit has led to the development of 22 actions and 46 recommendations to inform policy, practice, and research. These are outlined below.

Theme 1: Data needed to inform policy

Policy design needs reliable data and evidence to ensure improved outcomes for teachers, students, and schools (Lingard, 2015). Currently, Australia has limited systematic and system-wide data collected nationally and at the state/territory levels. The [Australian Teacher Workforce Data](#) initiative will hopefully provide useful data, but a range of data is needed. The actions and recommendations address three areas: an agreed definition of out-of-field teaching to ensure legitimate comparison of statistics across educational jurisdictions; longitudinal data obtained through strategic partnerships between relevant stakeholders to develop deep understanding of the long-term experiences and effects of out-of-field teaching; and systematic workforce data collection for monitoring the teaching workforce profile and targeted policy development.

Theme 2: School management & leadership

School leaders are at the coal face of dealing with teacher shortages and allocation. How principals and middle leaders (such as heads of department) support and mentor out-of-field teachers can determine the nature of the 'lived experience' of teachers, and teachers' capacity to learn to teach out-of-field. Early career teachers, and teachers in rural and regional teachers, are at greatest risk of experiencing the negative effects of out-of-field teaching. The actions and recommendations address five areas: School leader awareness of the issues; the need for school leaders to build relationships with staff; system-level support for leaders; developing middle leaders; and teacher support in schools.

Theme 3: Initial teacher education

The reality of out-of-field teaching is an identifiable feature of transition into the teaching profession. Teachers often teach subjects out-of-field on their placement during initial teacher education, and as early career teachers while gathering evidence of their ability to meet the Australian Professional Teacher Standards and gain full registration/accreditation and 'Proficient' teacher status. The actions and recommendations address four areas: a need for further research into pre-service teacher and early career teachers' lived experiences of out-of-field; exposure to initial teacher education programs to prepare teachers for the reality of out-of-field teaching; sustained and purposeful collaboration between educational stakeholders for networking and resource creation; and teacher accreditation and registration practices.

Theme 4: Teacher registration/accreditation

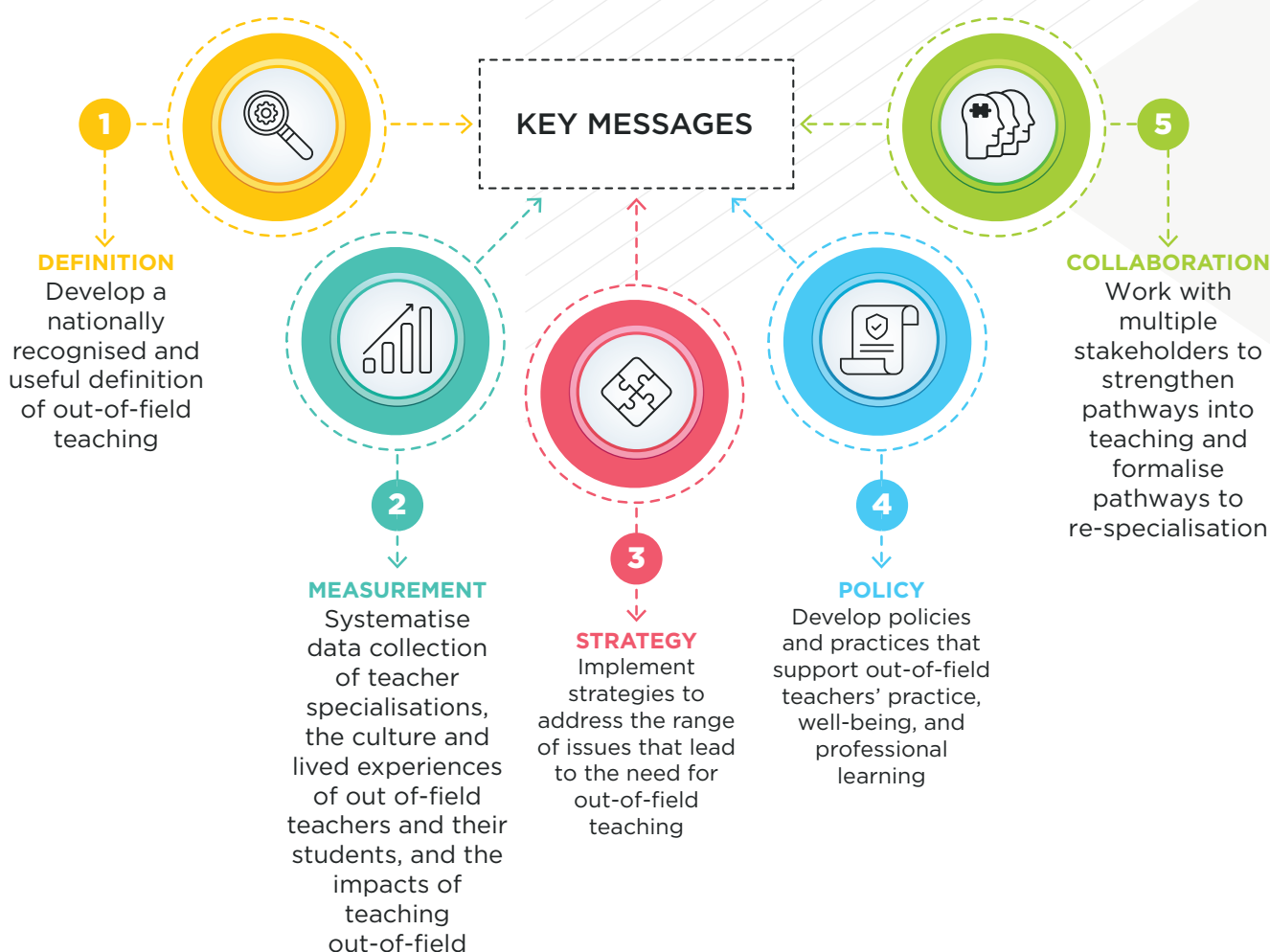
Teacher registration and accreditation are state responsibilities and important for ensuring teachers are suitably qualified as teachers before entering the profession. These policies also lay the foundation for cultural expectations for and documenting of teacher subject specialisations, with only New South Wales having policies that ensure that teachers have approval to teach their

specialisations. The actions and recommendations address four areas: teacher registration and pathways to becoming in-field; research into the effects of accreditation and registration policies on teacher professional learning uptake and pathways; the legislative function of relevant bodies; and systemic data collection associated with teacher registration.

Theme 5: Teacher professional learning

Maintaining the quality of teaching while teachers learn to teach out-of-field requires ensuring the system settings give teachers the time, support, and access to subject-specific expertise that can assist with teacher learning. Teacher professional learning includes both formal and informal opportunities that lead to changes in teacher knowledge, attitudes, and practice. The actions and recommendations address six areas: a need to understand the professional learning needs of out-of-field teachers through research; a national priority for mentoring and support for teachers; jurisdiction support for a coordinated approach to tending to the issue; school focused support for teacher professional learning; an increased role of professional associations in providing professional learning in collaboration with other stakeholders; and offering a range of professional learning opportunities that cater for the varied needs and career goals of out-of-field teachers.

In summary, these actions and recommendations call for changes in research and data collection, cultural practices in schools and education governance, structures and policies, and professional learning for teachers and educational leaders. In summary to these actions and recommendations, the key messages from this report are to:



Introduction

Teaching out-of-field refers to a phenomenon where teachers are allocated classes that are different to their training background, qualifications, and expertise. The implications of the out-of-field teaching phenomenon are integral aspects of our education communities and systems; however, high levels of out-of-field teaching poses a threat to the quality of education offered by Australian schools. Research by various researchers in this field (e.g., Caldis & Kleeman, 2019; Du Plessis, 2014; Porsch & Whannell, 2019; Van Overschelde, 2022) highlights that students' learning experiences are affected by the out-of-field phenomenon. The 2021 workforce data report (AITSL, 2021) suggests mathematics is taught by out-of-field teachers some 40% of the time, and while lower, the 28% and 29% for English and Science respectively is still significant. Out-of-field teaching is seen as a key contributor to declining enrolments in higher mathematics courses, with student Year 12 numbers dropping below 10% nationally for the first time in 2020 (Wienk, 2022).

The 2021 National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field was held online (via Zoom) on October 21-23 to provide a forum for the various stakeholders with an interest in education to come together, hear different perspectives on the out-of-field teaching phenomenon, and brainstorm solutions. Although this Summit was nationally-focused, researchers engaged in international research and initiatives were part of the Summit presentations and discussions.

Why was a National Summit needed?

The results of the multilayered implications of the out-of-field teaching phenomenon on the *whole school progress, education systems' improvement strategies and students' encounters* with learning in terms of achievements and outcomes are often overlooked. An engaged approach of partnerships between policy developers, educational leadership, teachers, and researchers can construct sustainable strategies to effectively manage the out-of-field teaching experiences and implications while valuing the achievement of quality education.

The out-of-field phenomenon is a common teaching practice in schooling systems with major influences on quality education. This means that:

Everybody is affected by teaching out-of-field. An education system that relies on teachers without suitable expertise in a subject means there are students who are potentially missing out on subject-related knowledge and attitudes that might make the difference in how they achieve in and experience the subject.

It is an international phenomenon and a national problem. This phenomenon is seen in many countries, especially where schools have some autonomy, where there are teaching shortages, and where distribution of teachers is unequal. It is also a national problem, but locally created due to the local regulations, culture of schooling, and expectations on teachers and schools.

We need everybody at the table. We need different people and organisations with different capacities to respond; to share their experiences, goals, and needs; to listen to each other; to come up with multiple solutions to this complex problem. Also multiple stakeholders will be needed to act to reduce the need for out-of-field teaching, to manage and fund schools appropriately in order to support out-of-field teachers when it is unavoidable, and to instil a culture of support and re-specialisation training to make sure we have the teachers we need in the Australian education system.

This report summarises the key messages from the 2021 National Summit and proposes actions and recommendations for policy, practice, and research. The report represents the perspectives

of people from schools, governments, universities, associations, organisations, and unions. The report is intended to:

- Raise awareness to the pervasiveness and effects of assigning teachers to out-of-field teaching contexts; and
- Inform policy makers at all levels as to how they might practically acknowledge and respond to teaching out-of-field.

Teaching out-of-field

The 2021 National Summit stimulated a critical reflection on the implications of the out-of-field phenomenon, for example, questions about what the specific issue is, and why do we need policies that reflect a context awareness.

What is the issue?

Most commonly, teaching out-of-field refers to misalignment between teachers' training and the subject taught by a teacher (Ingersoll, 2019), but it can also refer to the year level (such as senior classes) (Du Plessis, 2015), school level (such as primary or secondary) (Sharplin, 2014), or specialist area (such as catering for students with special needs) they are expected to teach. The alignment of content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge influence high impact teaching (Shulman, 1987).

Teachers can find themselves in out-of-field teaching contexts because of insufficient teacher supply in the system, unequal distribution of teachers to hard to staff schools (such as schools in rural and remote settings or low socio-economic areas), or because timetabling constraints within a school make it difficult to allocate teachers to their specialist areas.

Teaching out-of-field results in teachers teaching content they are unfamiliar with, and often relying on teaching strategies that are not informed by best practice for that subject. Research shows that teacher well-being, identity, and self-efficacy can be compromised as teachers struggle to adapt to the new teaching context (Hobbs, 2013), especially if support does not adequately provide the additional time, resources, and emotional support needed as teachers 'learn on-the-job' (Hobbs 2020; Hobbs & Quinn, 2021) a process which may take three years or more of teaching the out-of-field subject (Du Plessis, 2014). Further, research has shown that beginning teachers, teachers on short-term contracts, and casual teachers are more often placed in out-of-field teaching contexts than their more experienced and permanently employed colleagues. This trend comes from a long-standing tradition based on teachers 'doing their time' as a beginning teacher filling gaps in the timetable, covering the less attractive classes, and constantly transitioning from class to class and subject to subject.

It is also important to recognise the varied responses by teachers to teaching out-of-field (Hobbs, 2020; Sharplin, 2014). Some teachers choose to teach out-of-field because they want a challenge or are interested in the new subject, while some accept that they will always teach a subject out-of-field so take it on as a part of their normal load (e.g., a science teacher teaching mathematics, or a history teacher teaching geography). Other teachers, however, temporarily teach in out-of-field positions, and these teachers are at greater risk of struggling to maintain teaching quality, confidence, and work-life balance. For all teachers, however, additional demands are placed on teachers teaching out-of-field that are not always acknowledged (through additional time and support) and that are often accepted as part of 'what teachers do' and 'how schools operate'.

For students, there is mounting evidence that teaching out-of-field can contribute to lower student performance and student dissatisfaction (Du Plessis, 2014), although further research is needed to show direct links between instruction taught by an out-of-field teacher and various student related factors (Porsch & Whannell, 2019). In Australia, while we are privileged to have high quality and competent teachers, quality education is potentially compromised when students are taught by teachers who, for whatever reason, are required to teach out-of-field.

Why policy?

Anna Du Plessis [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)

A well-placed teacher opens a child's vision to the future. — A. E. Du Plessis

The reality in our schools is that as school leaders, principals have the authority to decide how to apply/assign/use their teaching workforce within their specific context. Research demonstrates that out-of-field teachers' effectiveness to manage their out-of-field positions aligns to the professional targeted support they receive (Du Plessis, 2014; Du Plessis, Hoang, Wang et al., 2018). This means applying a context-consciousness embedded in the support approach and support development. Du Plessis (2020) suggested,

Policies need to enable the alignment of pedagogy and culture in a specific school and classroom context. I argue that the success and effectiveness of a policy discourse is in its alignment with context as a supportive resource instrument.

There is a need for strategy frameworks (policies) that acknowledge the needs of out-of-field teachers and their school leaders as demonstrated through empirical research. The emphasis needs to be on context-aligned strategies, which brings us to the question, *'Who is best placed to decide on applicable and fit-for-purpose frameworks to effectively manage the out-of-field teaching phenomenon in specific school contexts?'* Context-specific policies (strategies) offer a structured, integrated and consistent framework for the need within specific schools, for example, professional support, assignments of teachers to specific positions or assigning workloads to specific teachers, and acknowledgement of the three-year timeframe out-of-field teachers need to develop expertise in out-of-field positions. It further involves context-aligned policies which give teachers opportunities to engage in well-designed professional learning and development programs that focus on context specific retraining and upskilling that will have the potential to develop out-of-field teachers into specialists in curriculum fields with a focus on how to make the curriculum accessible for students in a specific region, district, or cultural background.

Micro-education policy (Du Plessis, 2021) frameworks and an action-commitment to implement these policies in a sustainable manner can have a significant impact on how out-of-field teachers cope with the challenges of out-of-field teaching in classrooms. Well-thought through school specific policies can support out-of-field teachers to confidently take ownership and effectively manage their classroom situations. The purpose of micro-education policy frameworks is to ensure that teachers and their students are valued in the teaching and learning community that develops students as citizens of the future (Du Plessis, 2021).

The challenge to review existing policies and develop additional policies that recognise and acknowledge the out-of-field phenomenon and prioritise support for effective management of the phenomenon should be ongoing discussions around the education improvement table. Well-designed policy frameworks to effectively manage the phenomenon will not only improve the quality of teaching in these classrooms but will address concerns about the stability of the teaching workforce and the threat of significant teacher attrition and turnover. The careful and deliberate transformation of out-of-field teachers' outlooks is apparent in environments that value these teachers' experiences, understanding, awareness and communication needs, and display supportive strategies and structures that sustain their dispositions.

A critical reflection is urgently required in the absence of policies that acknowledge or are connected to the specific implications of the out-of-field teaching phenomenon for teaching and learning. The out-of-field experience impacts the effectiveness of schools as comprehensive learning environments. Yet, denial of the realities of the phenomenon means that the effects it has on education for those in classrooms, across the scope of teaching and learning, and for systemic issues of social justice and fair labour practices for teachers in out-of-field positions, are being ignored. Misunderstandings and misconceptions about the lived experiences of out-of-field teachers mean that there is currently no agreement in policies and structures to place out-of-field teachers in equitable comparison with their suitably qualified colleagues. In addition, the wellbeing of teachers and students needs policy support, from their health and safety in certain classroom contexts to the stress-related issues research has identified that develop in out-of-field classrooms—particularly when it is clear that a link can be drawn between these complex teaching situations and teacher stress, absenteeism, turnover, and attrition (Du Plessis, 2014; Du Plessis, et al., 2018).

Teacher skills and competence influence student enthusiasm and engagement. Effective learning and teaching happen in a space where education role-players demonstrate alignment with each other's needs. Concerns about the influence of the out-of-field teaching phenomenon on teacher and student performance and behaviour uncover an urgent need for further research about the significant influence of out-of-field teachers on students' responses to learning and the development of behaviour challenges, particularly when at-risk students' lived experiences in out-of-field teachers' classrooms can have crushing outcomes for these vulnerable learners.

Governments and education departments make provision for extensive physical and financial resources to support at-risk students and those with specific learning needs. However, it often appears that there is a disconnect between understanding the implications out-of-field teaching might have for these efforts if the phenomenon is not effectively managed. Additionally, these efforts to support at-risk students seem to be overlooked in school improvement policies that do not reflect awareness to protect these students from teaching and learning environments that exacerbate their difficulties and challenges, and situations that might have the potential to make the additional efforts to support these students come undone.

The skills and styles of school leadership and management of the implications and lived experiences of out-of-field teaching situations can have a significant effect on the success of these complex classrooms, stimulating critical reflection on how suitable policy frameworks can be created to equip leaders with both awareness and support. If education systems and educational leaders want to develop a stable, satisfied, and quality teaching workforce and improve teacher retention, attention is due to the development of tailored micro-education policies for schools to effectively manage the out-of-field teaching phenomenon.

Why is it so complex?

Linda Hobbs [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)

As is typical of many things in education, teaching out-of-field is a complex phenomenon because of why it arises, who it affects, and consequently, the responses needed to deal with it. Internationally and nationally, there is no single definition of out-of-field teaching, mainly because who is counted as teaching out-of-field depends on the governing policies (such as the specialist area guidelines) that specify what counts as adequate preparation for teaching, and for teaching a subject. There are different regulatory requirements across Australia, and this variation has been highlighted at this Summit.

Teaching out-of-field as a phenomenon is long-standing, observable, and widespread. Often the commentary and research around out-of-field teaching focuses on the effects and variables

involving teachers and students, but greater attention needs to be given to the broader system and policies that encourage or constrain system level responses. As shown in Table 1, the problem is represented differently by policy, media, subject associations, unions, research, and schools depending on how they are affected (Hobbs, Vale, Speldewinde, Parvanehnezhadshirazian & Doig, 2015; Hobbs, Delaney, Campbell, Speldewinde & Lai, 2021; Vale, Hobbs & Speldewinde, 2022). For each representation, the locus of change needed shifts as does who is responsible for the change. When the problem is represented as an issue of teacher/teaching quality, the locus of change lies with teachers, but this does not negate system provision of teacher professional learning (such as the introduction of professional learning requirements to maintain teacher registration), requalifying programs (such as Graduate Certificates) or access to subject-specific and targeted induction and mentoring. When seen as a problem of teacher supply/demand and distribution (Weldon, 2016), school management and funding models (Du Plessis, 2017), then system and school-level changes are critical as part of a multi-level strategy for dealing with out-of-field teaching.

Table 1. Different representations of the out-of-field phenomenon and the locus of change

Representation of the Out-of-field issue	Locus of change
As an issue of supply and demand	Current profile of teachers in the system
As a problem of teacher distribution	Distribution of the teacher workforce
As an issue of teacher/teaching quality	Teachers and teaching practice
As a problem of inadequate leadership practices	Leadership practices
As a problem of how funding is used	System approach to allocating resources

In this context, we need a language about out-of-field teaching that is more than a statement of whether a teacher is IN or OUT-of-field. Through review of the current literature and input by experts in the field, a report prepared by Hobbs et al. (2020) for the Victorian Department of Education and Training proposed a multi-faceted definition of teaching out-of-field based on criteria relating to qualifications, alignment between teacher’s specialism and the subjects they teach, manageability of workload, and teacher capability.

Defining out-of-field teaching requires multi-layered language to understand, measure, and respond to out-of-field teaching. Such language would enable a shift in emphasis from teachers towards a broader management of risk (Hobbs et al., 2020) and need (Du Plessis, 2017), and extend responsibility to others in the education system for managing out-of-field teaching.

Out-of-field was defined in four ways by Hobbs et al. (2020):

- **Out-of-field according to Qualification:** Refers to degree of alignment between teaching allocation and a teacher’s teaching and discipline qualifications. A teacher might be out-of-field if teaching at a year level or schooling phase that differs to their teaching qualification, or if teaching a subject different to their discipline qualification.
- **Out-of-field according to Specialism:** Refers to how closely related the teaching allocation is to their specialisation, and recognises that technically in-field teachers can feel out-of-field, for example, a geography teacher qualified to teach the Humanities curriculum can feel out-of-field teaching history.
- **Out-of-field according to Workload:** Refers to the amount and stability of an out-of-field load. This recognises that a teacher will teach multiple subjects at any one time and that a proportion of their teaching allocation can be out-of-field. This definition introduces levels

of risk and manageability—how manageable is the workload and what risks are introduced because of it. Out-of-field according to workload recognises that a small proportion and stable amount of out-of-field teaching will have less risk and be more manageable for a teacher than a high proportion and unstable out-of-field load. Managing risk means ensuring that the proportion, stability, and type of load does not exceed a teacher’s capacity to adapt.

- **Out-of-field according to Capability:** Refers to how capable a teacher feels in terms of their expertise, confidence and identity, commitment to the subject and role expansion. Cumulative risk is determined by the school support and context, teacher’s career stage, and the workload of the teacher. Managing risk means ensuring that teachers are supported so that they have the opportunities and support needed to develop the capacity expected for their career stage.

The National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field

The Australian National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field was organised by a committee of 12 people from 8 universities and 3 organisations. Amongst the committee most subject disciplines are represented and there are different interests in the phenomenon. The event was designed to spotlight the multilayered implications of the out-of-field teaching phenomenon for education. The intended outcome of the Summit was to produce clear recommendations for policy, practice, and research in relation to five key themes:



A total of 120 people were registered, including teachers and principals, Departmental representatives at the state and federal level, academics and subject associations, accreditation, registration and curriculum bodies, and other interested organisations.

There were seven sessions, with 20 presentations and two panel discussions. Presenters and their affiliations are listed in Table 1. On the Saturday, a smaller group attended an action planning half day to begin synthesising key themes emerging from the notes taken.

Table 1. Presenters to the 2021 National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field

Dr Anna Du Plessis (Griffith University)
Associate Professor Linda Hobbs (Deakin University)
Dr Paul Weldon (Australian Council for Education Research)
Professor Helen Watt (USyd) and Paul Richardson (Monash)
Professor Jim van Overschelde (Texas State University)
Professor Paul Richardson (Monash) & Helen Watt (USyd)
Dr Susan Caldis (Macquarie University)
Dr Lewes Pedell (Southern Cross University)
Ms Tracey Clarke (Discipline Leader, Knox Grammar, NSW)
Ms Lin Esders (Queensland Teachers' Union)
Dr Amanda Heffernan (Australian Secondary Principals Association)
Mr Roy Anderson (Catholic Education Office, NT)
Professor Damian Blake (Deakin University)
Professor Jenny Gore (University of Newcastle)
Professor Merrilyn Goos (University of Sunshine Coast)
Mr John Healey and Ms Karen Ingram (NSW Education Standards Authority)
Professor Bob Lingard (Australian Catholic University)
Ms Penny Addison (Victorian Department of Education and Training)
Dr Janine Wyatt (Western Australia Department of Education and Training)
Professor Judy Anderson (UniSyd)
Ms Sue Colman (Councillor, Science Teachers' Association of NSW)
Ms Monique Dalli (President, Design and Technology Teachers' Association of Australia)
Mr Allan Dougan (CEO, Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc.)
Dr Kate Gillespie (EO, Victorian Association for the Teaching of English)
Ms Trish Douglas (Immediate Past Chair, Australian Geography Teachers' Association)
Dr Deb Hull (President, CPTAV; EO, History Teachers' Association of Victoria)
Dr Renee Desmarchelier (University of Southern Queensland)
Prof Russell Tytler (Deakin University) (Submitted)
Ms Toni Falusi (Computer Science Education Research)

The OOFTAS Collective

The impetus for the Summit arose out of a recognised need from the Out-of-field Teaching Across Specialisations (OOFTAS) Collective to have broadscale discussions and change that suit the Australian context. This Summit is a prototype of how other countries might also bring to the table the range of voices that are needed to firstly demonstrate the need for change, and secondly collaboratively ideate multi-level solutions.

This international collective of researchers and practitioners share research through annual symposium, edited books (Hobbs & Törner, 2019; Hobbs & Porsch, 2022) and journal special issues on teaching out-of-field in different countries.

Beginning in 2013, a website collates the work of the collective (see <https://ooftas-collective.org/events-and-projects-1>). The members of the Summit organising committee, some presenters, and many delegates are members of the collective from Australia but also some from abroad.

Theme summaries, actions and recommendations

The findings from the Summit are summarised according to the themes. The themes consist of the guiding questions for the Summit, a context and background to situate the theme according to what is already known, and links to the presentations and summaries (where provided by presenters). Actions and recommendations are proposed for each theme, and are proposed to inform policy, research, and practice. There are 22 actions and 46 recommendations.

A compilation of the Actions and Recommendations is accessible [HERE](#).

THEME 1:

Data needed to inform policy

Questions:

- a) What data and evidence are needed to inform policy?*
- b) What data do we need to collect, using what data collection strategies by whom?*
- c) How can data be used to inform attitudes and responses to out-of-field teaching?*

Context and background

Data reveal the reality of lived-experiences linked to the out-of-field teaching phenomenon as well as issues that need to be addressed through policy development. In turn, policy influences what is reported, acknowledged, and then addressed in the field. As with understanding the attrition of teachers from the system (Weldon, 2018), understanding the qualifications of teachers in the system is complicated given the different employment circumstances of teachers (full-time, part-time, casual) and the fact that teachers move in and out of employment in the education sector. There are a number of points at which data can be collected: on registration and yearly re-registration or re-accreditation (to show upgrades or professional development concentration); yearly census reporting by schools; and ad hoc or systematic surveys of teachers by the Departments of Education, associations, and researchers. Governmental commitment to improving student achievement is clearly demonstrated in the global arena. The attention that published outcomes of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2014, 2018) or the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) receive is illustrative of the high priority placed on achievements, outcomes, and quality education.

Hedegaard-Soerensen and Grumloese (2020) underline the impact of certain policy discourses on teachers' approaches to their students' learning. Popular neoliberal school policies can create an extreme focus on outcomes, performance, achievements and results, with the potential to fuel practices of elimination without acknowledgement of the collateral costs, including those to teachers and students.

Several authors (Earl, 2005; Lingard, 2014; Lingard, Sellar, & Savage, 2014) have highlighted that the current turn of governance for systemic education workforce management is underpinned by the evidence of numbers or statistical data. However, a deeper understanding of the out-of-field phenomenon develops through quantitative and qualitative data in this field.

The wide range of data emphasises the value data add to an in-depth understanding of the multilayered phenomenon. Earl (2005) describes performance and achievement information such as PISA data as a "policy lever," and elaborates that both accountability and data are at the "heart of contemporary reform efforts worldwide" (p. 6). Lingard (2014), too, have emphasised that the OECD and PISA have a "significant influence on education revolution" (p. 716). They also highlight concerns that the conceptualisation of equity has shifted away from equality owing to its perception through a predominantly economic lens.

The Summit included speakers who explicitly addressed the shortcomings of data availability and accessibility in Australia (Paul Weldon), what we can learn from existing national and international data to understand the antecedents and consequences of out-of-field teaching (Helen Watt and Paul Richardson), and an illustration of system-wide data collected in Texas

subjected to researcher analysis that provided startling insights into the inequities associated with out-of-field teaching and poor student performance (Jim Van Overschelde).

Speakers included:

- Paul Weldon (Australian Council for Education Research): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)
- Helen Watt (USyd) and Paul Richardson (Monash): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)
- Jim van Overschelde (Texas State University): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#) | [Summary](#)
- Janine Wyatt (WA Department of Education): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#) | [Summary](#)
- Bob Lingard (University of Queensland): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)
- Penny Addison (Vic Department of Education and Training): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)

Key messages

1. While knowing the prevalence of out-of-field teaching provides some insight into the profile of teachers in the system, where the supply/demand issues are, and who is being asked to teach out-of-field, it is only part of the picture. There is also a need for school level longitudinal out-of-field data, for example, how much of teachers' loads is out-of-field, what are the school-level drivers, how the culture within schools and the education system more broadly determines acceptance or prompts action, what is best practice, and the varied levels of out-of-field teaching across schools.
2. Quality Data and evidence are needed to inform policy and should focus on:
 - o A wide range of data from well developed research projects, including broad-scale data as well as longitudinal or case study deep dive data to capture the experiences and practices in schools.
 - o Well developed research demonstrating validity of research design, clear conceptualisation of methodology and well suited theoretical framing
 - o An alignment of data and governments' education goals
 - o Examining existing policies and alignment to system laws and state regulations
 - o Acknowledging the value of large scale data collection projects
 - o A concerted effort by States and Territories to cooperate in a national agenda in order to optimise awareness and policy uptake of findings.
3. In relation to research, there is a need to acknowledge that the complexities of school access, openness of schools and the education departments have an influence on what data collection strategies can be used and who can conduct the research. Open discussions are needed about the use of data to inform attitudes and responses to out-of-field teaching.
4. Existing data and evidence can be used to support decisions on what future data is needed to inform policy, for example, by reflecting on the power of current evidence and what data is missing. There is a need to appreciate how the lack of data has led to assumptions being made for which there is no evidence. The reality is that without real evidence, there is no clear understanding about the success of policies aimed at lowering attrition rates.
5. The data involved in policy-development need to demonstrate:
 - o Clear goals
 - o High quality data gathered from clearly conceptualised and framed research projects
 - o High-actionable data offered through quality research process will inform practice and policy development

- o A full understanding of the context and implications for the education field/future research/data needs
 - o Awareness of the implications for policy
 - o Acknowledgement of the implications for education practice
6. Data collection should align directly with the government's educational goals. Education goals might involve multilayered aspects such as:
- o ensuring schools comply with existing policies regarding staffing of schools
 - o providing schools with needed financial support
 - o focusing on the quality of students' learning
 - o equality within classrooms, ensuring all students receive quality education,
 - o ensuring teachers are qualified to teach the diversity of student cohorts in classrooms

Actions and Recommendations

Action 1.1. Defining out-of-field Teaching

Currently, relevant policy and action at state and national levels are complicated by the lack of definitions of out-of-field teaching that acknowledge the complexity of the issues. A definition of out-of-field teaching needs to be aligned with current policies relating to teacher specialisation guidelines, either for entry to teacher education or for accreditation/registration when entering the profession. The definition should recognise pathways available for teachers to re-specialise and become in-field. States and territories need to use definitions of out-of-field teaching that recognise this complexity when generating data relating to incidence and effects of out-of-field teaching and when determining the requirements for re-specialisation. A definition across all states and territories is needed and should be agreed upon by all jurisdictions (states, territories, school sectors) and key stakeholders (universities, accreditation and registration bodies, curriculum authorities, AITSL, subject/teacher/principal associations, teacher unions and PL providers) that can be translated across different contexts.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1.1

Develop a national definition of out-of-field teaching that can be adapted to state specialisation requirements, and which facilitates teacher engagement with professional learning.

Action 1.2 Longitudinal data through strategic partnerships

Longitudinal data generates an awareness of the factors that influence teacher enactment of curriculum in the context of teaching out-of-field, its impact on the quality of teaching and student learning, and the effects of incidence and concentration of teaching out-of-field for individual teachers, their colleagues and their school communities generally. This data should be generated, shared, and utilised by policy makers and government departments of education in association with researchers and other stakeholders to inform policies and practices that meet the needs of schools and teachers. For example, funding for professional learning aligned with the needs of teachers and efforts of schools to manage the out-of-field phenomenon. Empirical data and evidence will support partnerships toward social democratic school reform strategies, educational leaders' accountability, open forum discussions and the awareness of needs within specific subject and school contexts.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2.1

Education departments, researchers and other stakeholders develop and implement a program of research that generates deep dive data on school and school system management, teachers' lived experiences, the students' learning experiences, and ongoing factors and effects relating to out-of-field teaching.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2.2

Use longitudinal data to inform policies that target support and guidance for schools and teachers assigned to out-of-field teaching positions.

Action 1.3 Systematic workforce data

Informed policy decisions relating to out-of-field teaching over the short and longer-term requires comprehensive information about the teacher workforce. There is a lack of systematic and system-wide data collection that monitors the profile of teachers in the system, such as teacher specialisations and career trajectories. Also, data relating to broader structural issues, for example, casualisation, short contracts and part-time positions can be used to review existing policies at the system and local levels to ensure a close alignment between policy settings, workforce needs and the out-of-field phenomenon. Evidence-informed policy discussions at the system level will benefit from engaging with school and learning settings from various sectors, regions and contexts and from researchers actively engaged in the realities of the out-of-field phenomenon. Systematic workforce data that is made available for analysis by researchers and for public distribution ensures accountability and collaborative decision making in managing ongoing workforce needs.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3.1

Departments of education and accreditation/registration authorities generate systematic and system-wide data that monitors the profile of teachers in the system.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3.2

Policymakers engage with existing data, evidence and research and enter into in-depth discussions with researchers and other stakeholders to develop fit-for-purpose policies.

THEME 2:

School management & leadership

2

Questions

- a) *What are the pressures that school leaders face when staffing schools and classrooms, with what implications for the whole school community?*
- b) *How can school improvement policy coordinate approaches to identifying needs, barriers, teacher capacity building, and managing risks associated with out-of-field teaching?*
- c) *How can system-level leadership facilitate the enhancement and enrichment of out-of-field teaching at a school level?*

Context and background

Out-of-field teaching creates complex leadership and management situations within education systems and schools. There is a need to understand the perceptions and experiences of teachers and school leaders relating to the out-of-field phenomenon (Du Plessis, 2017; Vale & Drake, 2019; Vale, Hobbs & Speldewinde, 2022). The current expectations for school leadership to effectively manage teacher shortages and the out-of-field teaching phenomenon is substantial and has multilayered implications for quality education. In the face of current expectations on school leadership, new generation leaders and less experienced leaders can tend to focus on school image, results, and popularity while building survival alliances and mechanisms to cope with pressures (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Sturrock, 2020). Assigning teachers to out-of-field teaching positions is one of these survival mechanisms. The Summit unveiled information about school leaders' understanding in relation to the out-of-field phenomenon according to educational leaders, school leaders, members from subject associations, specialist teachers, and out-of-field teachers. School leaders influence a culture of growth and teachers' openness to explore teaching approaches and willingness to improve practices (Mulford, 2008).

Understanding teachers' survival mechanisms, strategies, and the impact the out-of-field phenomenon has on the characteristics of teaching such as specific beliefs, values, experiences, attitudes, and knowledge are significant aspects for effective management of the phenomenon. The Summit revealed and discussed the 'real-life experiences' of teachers in out-of-field positions in relation to educational leadership agencies.

The Summit unveiled information about school leaders' understanding in relation to the out-of-field phenomenon through the lenses of educational leaders, school leaders, members from subject associations, specialist teachers, and out-of-field teachers.

Speakers included:

- Lin Esders (Queensland Teachers' union): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)
- Amanda Heffernan and Andrew Pierpont (ASPAs): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#) | [Summary](#)
- Roy Anderson (Catholic Education Office, NT): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)
- Tracey Clarke (Maths coordinator, Know Grammar School) [Notes](#) | [Video](#)
- Susan Caldis (Geography, Macquarie University) [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)
- Lewes Peddell (Maths/Music, Southern Cross University) [Video](#)

Key messages

1. Different leadership actions, experiences, and practices have the capacity to intensify the lived experiences of out-of-field teachers or transform the challenges of out-of-field teaching practices into professional learning opportunities.
2. Stakeholders in education expect school leaders to make decisions that would benefit students' development and the optimal use of teachers as their most valuable resource.
3. Teachers in out-of-field positions tend to be constantly aware of their own detrimental situation and often feel guilty about the development of their students. They do not feel confident to discuss the content limitation as a natural instinct to maintain an image that they have ownership of the subject and information.
4. Some teachers in these positions who already experience a gap in their content knowledge also experience difficulties in getting their curricula established or organising the necessary resources to support effective teaching.
5. Teachers in out-of-field positions have the tendency to be more disconnected or to disengage, with less confidence to share their challenges during workshops, additional training, and to discuss the difficulties they experience with their school leaders. This means that the out-of-field phenomenon and related implications for student performance and outcomes are not fully understood by school leaders. This affects the most important resource in education, which is well established and appropriately qualified teachers.
6. The complicated supply and demand issues that are part of teaching workforce management often place school leaders in positions where they have no choice other than to take the risk of assigning teachers to positions for which they are not suitably qualified.
7. Valuing and celebrating the efforts and contribution of out-of-field teachers while trying to maintain effective teaching in spite of the out-of-field phenomenon should be the priority of educational leaders. Demonstrating attributes of 'Knowing and noticing' educational leaders show awareness of the need for policies to support out-of-field teachers in their specific classroom context. The value of policy in the target context means that the relation between context, policy, and people will be acknowledged and respected.

Actions and Recommendations

Action 2.1 School leader awareness

When school leaders are connected to teachers' needs and aware of 'incidences' of out-of-field teaching, they are more likely to successfully manage risks to students, staff, and the school community. Incidence can refer to the number of teachers, the proportion of classes, and the proportion of teachers' loads taught out-of-field.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.1

School leaders need to include incidences of out-of-field teaching in their school improvement planning and reporting documents to plan for school improvement, manage the incidences of out-of-field teaching in their schools, and to plan to support their out-of-field teachers' through mentoring and professional learning.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.2

School leaders need to recognise and consider the implications of allocating staff to teach out-of-field so that these allocations are in the best interests of students and the out-of-field teacher.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.3

Education systems need to provide additional funding to schools to provide out-of-field teachers with more time for teaching preparation and professional learning, specifically out-of-field subjects.

Action 2.2 Building relationships

Building relationships between school leadership and staff is important for ensuring teachers can express their needs and career aspirations. Discipline leaders are not always given the roles and status needed to properly manage the teaching and learning conditions for their subjects. Therefore, discipline leaders need to be supported and enabled to be aware of who is teaching out-of-field in their discipline and provide opportunities for mentoring, team planning, and other activities that develop collegial relationships that will invite participation and contribution to disciplinary conversations and innovation.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2.1

School leaders need to get to know their out-of-field teachers, including their professional development needs, career planning and well-being, and to acknowledge and celebrate the skills and connections that out-of-field teachers bring to their teaching.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2.2

Out-of-field teachers need to be well supported by in-field teachers, including middle leaders, to develop their experience, confidence, and expertise in an ongoing basis through collaborative planning, mentoring, co-reflection, and other such approaches.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2.3

Education systems need to provide targeted professional development for school leaders and discipline leaders about caring for, and supporting, out-of-field teachers and managing the risks to the school community.

Action 2.3 System-level support for school leaders

School leaders need system-level support, especially in schools with high staff turnover rates to effectively manage the out-of-field teaching phenomenon. Such support might be made available from principal associations, professional teachers associations, state departments of education, and providers of professional learning or further study (such as Graduate Certificates of Educational Leadership and research through higher degrees).

RECOMMENDATION 2.3.1

Education systems need to provide programs to attract, support and retain teachers, especially for teachers assigned to out-of-field teaching positions or in schools with high teacher turnover.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3.2

Education systems need to ensure scaffolded, evidence-informed support for school leaders by experts in the field of out-of-field teaching, including examples of best practice for supporting and fostering the learning of out-of-field teachers

Action 2.4 Developing middle leaders

Middle leaders' (discipline leaders) proficiencies play an important role in mentoring and supporting the professional learning of out-of-field teachers, although this can be time-consuming in some situations. Middle leaders need to be upskilled to effectively implement a range of support mechanisms known to be effective, including, for example: co-planning/co-teaching/co-reflection; providing demonstration lessons and observing expert teachers; and collaborative planning.

RECOMMENDATION 2.4.1

Education systems need to provide targeted professional learning on effective school-based mentoring and professional learning for discipline leaders and other middle leaders responsible for supporting out-of-field teachers

RECOMMENDATION 2.4.2

Systems need to provide additional funding to schools with high incidences of out-of-field teaching to provide a time allocation for discipline leaders to mentor out-of-field teachers.

Action 2.5 Teacher support in schools

Teachers of all levels of experience are asked to teach out-of-field. Early career teachers and often those in regional and rural settings face the greatest risk when required to teach out-of-field. We need to challenge the idea that a good teacher can teach anything and recognise that even experienced teachers can experience a re-novicing, especially when their expertise is misunderstood and support is based on assumed capability. Teacher well-being and role fulfilment are part of risk management and career planning when determining teacher load, support needs, and leadership opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 2.5.1

Graduate and early career teachers should not be required to teach out-of-field. If they are, then additional time for preparation and subject-specific mentoring or other similar support should be provided.

RECOMMENDATION 2.5.2

Risk assessment and a needs analysis should be conducted for all teachers when teaching out-of-field, which allows for a career trajectory of teacher learning.

RECOMMENDATION 2.5.3

Additional support may be required for rural and regional teachers who experience greater professional isolation and to provide access to mentors, professional learning, and other activities that support their development and professional connection.

3

THEME 3: Initial teacher education

Questions:

- a) What opportunities are there in initial teacher education to prepare teachers for the reality of out-of-field teaching in schools?*
- b) How can we manage the interface between university and school better to better prepare teachers for out-of-field teaching?*

Context & background

Teaching out-of-field is often encountered by pre-service teachers and early-career teachers as they transition into the teaching profession. Such a phenomenon is related to precarious employment upon entry to the profession and also contributes to high rates of attrition within the first five to seven years of teaching which exacerbates the effects of an overall teacher shortage. Recent Australian reports from Shah, Richardson and Watt (2020) and Weldon (2016) indicate out-of-field teaching occurs in response to a range of factors including: (i) teacher shortage in particular sectors, subjects, stages of schooling, and locations such as lower socio-economic areas including regional and remote communities; and (ii) policy around school autonomy and funding decisions which affect school-based structures, organisational practices, and decision making processes around employment, timetabling, and teacher utilisation.

Out-of-field teaching during a time of transition into the profession and early-career years is often self-reported by practitioners and is evident in Australian and international contexts (Beck, 2022; Caldis, 2022; Campbell, Porsch & Hobbs, 2019; Donitsa-Schmidt, Zuzovsky & Arviv Elyashiv, 2022; Du Plessis & Sunde, 2017; Nixon, Luft & Ross, 2017). Out-of-field teaching is also noted by pre-service teachers and early career teachers as being an experience which they have not been explicitly prepared for in their initial teacher education, and an experience which affects their wellbeing and exacerbates problems with classroom management (Caldis, 2022; Du Plessis, 2020). Discussion within this theme highlighted that universities and other initial teacher education providers should be aware of the frequency and challenges associated with out-of-field teaching for pre-service teachers and early career teachers, and take steps to include opportunities for such preparation in their degree structures. To do so, will demonstrate that initial teacher education providers understand the role of resilience, confidence, and efficacy in the design and development of quality teaching and learning experiences.

Preparation for the reality of out-of-field teaching and support for those who experience it during a time of transition into the teaching profession is an area of blurred responsibility between schools, professional associations, and Initial Teacher Education providers. Recommendations from research emphasise the need for these educational stakeholders to purposefully work in partnership to develop pre-service teachers who are confident about and well prepared for the realities of teaching, of which out-of-field teaching is an important component (Campbell, Porsch & Hobbs, 2019; Du Plessis & Sunde, 2017). As indicated earlier in this report, what constitutes out-of-field teaching needs to be clearly defined and consistently applied. The roles and responsibilities of educational stakeholders (such as initial teacher education providers), in preparing pre-service teachers and early career teachers to teach out of field is often called into question. Mason and Poyatos Matas (2015) identify three themes which affect the way in which pre-service teachers and early career teachers experience transition:

the quality and nature of initial teacher education; the collegiality and quality of relationships in a given school setting; and the overall presence of support structures. Each of these themes address an important problem raised in the national Summit: ‘How do pre-service teachers and early career teachers respond to the challenge of out-of-field teaching?’.

The Summit explored questions about teacher preparation, including reflections on effects of the pandemic and how to work across boundaries to transform practice, with a focus on addressing the causes and effects of out-of-field teaching (Damian Blake), and the role of pedagogical knowledge as a mechanism to provide pre-service teachers with confidence in their teaching, and address the notion of quality teaching through an out-of-field lens (Jenny Gore). Susan Caldis reported on findings from her recent doctoral research about transition into the teaching profession and how the incidence of teaching out-of-field raised implications for the pedagogical practices of five early career teachers in a secondary geography education context and for those who mentored them.

Speakers included:

- Damian Blake (Deakin University): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)
- Jenny Gore (University of Newcastle): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#) | [Summary](#)
- Susan Caldis (Macquarie University): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#) | [Summary](#)

Key messages

Opportunities in initial teacher education to prepare teachers for the reality of out-of-field teaching?

Opportunities to prepare pre-service teachers for teaching out-of-field are limited. This has led to pre-service teachers and early career teachers reporting that they feel ‘overwhelmed’ and ‘underprepared’ for responding to and managing the out-of-field teaching experience. The following strategies are known to assist in the preparation of per-service teachers for the reality of teaching out-of-field:

1. Teachers can work across the boundaries and silos of initial teacher education, schools, and subjects to share resources, build networks, and support those working in at-risk school communities, for example in regional and remote areas.
2. Teachers can learn from the lived experiences of those who encounter the phenomenon in professional experience, upon entry into the profession, throughout early career years, and from those in more established career phases. For example:
 - o Invite such practitioners into the ITEP as an important voice of experience, to lead lectures and workshops, and/or engage in a mentoring program as part of the school-university partnership
 - o Provide opportunities for PSTs and ECTs to shadow a teacher who is teaching out-of-field in subjects most likely to be taught during professional experience or during transition into the profession. Such opportunities will allow the practitioner to observe and reflect on the reality of teaching in schools and develop understanding about ways to approach, manage and respond to teaching out-of-field
3. Initial teacher education-led formal mentoring structures that can be developed during initial teacher education and endure through early-career years when employment is most precarious can provide support and consistency during a complex time of transition into the profession. Such mentoring structures should incorporate a specific theory-practice reflection approach about managing and responding to out-of-field teaching. The focus of theory-practice reflection activities should encompass values and beliefs, structures, and

cultures of place to assist pre-service teachers and early career teachers with developing agential strategies to navigate and respond to out-of-field teaching. Theory-practice reflection can focus on standards such as the Quality Teaching Model, or subject-specific standards such as the Professional Standards for Accomplished Teaching of Geography to provide sustained purpose, relevance, and structure to discussion. There is a need to incorporate explicit use of educationally broad and/or subject-specific standards in initial teacher education and during professional experience, for example through application of the Quality Teaching Rounds process in initial teacher education, to: build capacity amongst pre-service teachers for ongoing refinement of their practice; to provide support for going beyond content delivery; to assist with their articulation of practice and goal-setting activities; and to increase their confidence in asking for assistance and in valuing collaboration. All of which are helpful attributes for managing and responding to the out-of-field teaching phenomenon.

How can we better manage the interface between university and school to better prepare pre-service teachers for the out-of-field teaching phenomenon?

1. There is limited data from longitudinal research and other research opportunities that focus on out-of-field teaching as part of the transition into the profession. There is a need to promote the sharing of existing data and evidence about out-of-field teaching and teacher supply amongst education stakeholders. Such steps are necessary to improve our understanding of the scope of the phenomenon across subjects, sector and locations, and to therefore understand implications for:
 - o the design of initial teacher education programs;
 - o the extent and impact of out-of-field teaching on pre-service teachers in regional and remote contexts;
 - o the practice of pre-service teachers and early career teachers, and necessary support structures for these career stages;
 - o funding models for schools around employment and timetabling;
 - o the nature of professional learning offered by professional associations and opportunities for collaboration; and
 - o accreditation and registration requirements.

Some empirical evidence exists that can support our understanding about out-of-field teaching in Mathematics and Science. However, this needs to be extended, and we need to know more about other teaching areas such as the Humanities and Languages.

2. Providing and investing in opportunities to communities of practice or professional learning communities for those who are teaching beyond their areas of expertise in stage or subject could occur through:
 - o the establishment of school-university-professional association partnerships to develop discipline knowledge;
 - o the transferral or application of in-school initiatives, such as Quality Teaching Rounds, into an initial teacher education context would be beneficial due to the known effect of such initiatives in having a transformative impact of the quality of teaching and instruction, teacher efficacy and confidence, and a growth in student learning outcomes; and
 - o the establishment of mentoring structures, or Teaching Fellow initiatives to build communities of practice and connect with expert others to work across boundaries and use theory-practice reflection to interpret context, beliefs, and responses to the out of field teaching phenomenon.

3. Pre-service teachers can be better prepared by concentrating on teacher values and beliefs, cultures of place, and structures and policy affecting people and place. Further research can help to understand what it means to be a teacher, to be a teacher of a specific subject (teacher subject identity), and how this plays out in responding to and managing an out-of-field teaching context.

Actions and Recommendations

Action 3.1 Research about pre-service teachers and early career teachers lived experiences of out-of-field

Further research is needed to capture the lived experiences of pre-service and early-career teachers who are teaching out-of-field. This research focus should address subject and stage of schooling, context, justification, and strategies for managing and responding to the risks associated with the out-of-field teaching phenomenon. A depth and breadth of understanding about pre-service teacher experience of out-of-field teaching during placement and as they transition into the profession in casual, temporary, or permanent roles will enable an improved framing of initial teacher education programs to occur. Research should also attend to the experience of early-career teachers. Universities and initial teacher education providers have an obligation to prepare pre-service teachers for the profession, which includes the realities of teaching out-of-field.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1.1

Generate data about the transition from professional experience in initial teacher education to the early-career years of teaching, and the incidence and impact of out-of-field teaching on early-career teachers and their students.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1.2

Generate data about strategies that can be integrated into initial teacher education programs that build teacher awareness about teaching out-of-field and explore the role of teacher identity and capabilities for managing the experience of teaching out-of-field.

Action 3.2 Exposure to the out-of-field phenomenon during initial teacher education

Early career teachers are likely to be asked or required to teach out-of-field. Initial teacher education providers need to ensure they provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop awareness about teaching out-of-field and offer formalised support to assist pre-service teachers in developing strategies for managing, responding, and adapting to this situation. Pre-service teachers can learn from the lived experience of those who are teaching out-of-field. Such learning can occur through placement, mentoring programs, and ongoing interactions with teachers and school communities.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2.1

Provide opportunities during professional experience for pre-service teachers to shadow teachers who are teaching out-of-field or experience teaching out-of-field subjects they are likely to teach.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2.2

Embed opportunities within initial teacher education program coursework units for pre-service teachers to become aware of the realities of teaching out-of-field and to develop strategies for adapting to this situation.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2.3

Adopt explicit theory-practice reflection models within initial teacher education programs to be conducted prior to, during and after professional experience to capture transformational understanding and growth about the realities of teaching, which includes teaching out-of-field.

Action 3.3 Formalised support structures for networking and resource creation

Explicitly working across boundaries of initial teacher education, schools, and professional associations is important for building teacher capacity in high-risk educational settings, including regional and remote communities. A formalised cross-boundary mentoring structure that focuses on developing networks and resources will help build resilience and actively support pre-service teachers and early career teachers who are teaching out-of-field, especially when targeted to particular subjects in a secondary education context. Such mentoring programs may also include the introduction of Teaching Fellows who can coach the early career teachers within a school context and provide advice to the relevant university about the realities of preparing pre-service teachers for teaching out-of-field.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3.1

Form alliances between schools, professional associations, and universities to develop an integrated and coordinated program of support and mentoring for teachers as they transition into teaching.

Action 3.4 Achieving 'Proficient' status of early career teachers

Graduate teachers are expected to gain 'Proficient' status within their first three to five years of employment regardless of their in-field or out-of-field teaching load. However, early career teachers are more likely to be asked and required to teach out-of-field. Early career teachers should be able to master their craft and demonstrate their capacity within their specialist teaching domain as a priority. The implications for teacher practice associated with teaching out-of-field adds difficulty to an already challenging and complex accreditation process, and likely increases teacher loss from the sector in the early career stages. Allowing graduate teachers to gain Proficient teacher status within their specialist area provides the fairest and most effective opportunity for them to show how they are meeting the standards and offers them a stronger base from which to consider teaching out-of-field and remain in the profession.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4.1

Remove the expectation that early career teachers teach out-of-field, or that it is at least a minimal part of a teaching load, whilst an early-career teacher is transitioning into the profession and completing accreditation/registration requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4.2

Make accreditation or registration as 'proficient' status for early career teachers conditional upon meeting professional standards from a largely in-field teaching load (no less than 80% in-field).

THEME 4:

Teacher registration/accreditation

4

Questions:

- a) *What are the implications of state/territory teacher registration/ accreditation policies, practices and requirements for out-of-field teaching?*
- b) *How can a culture of developing, endorsing and credentialing programs for upgrading teacher qualifications in new specialisations be fostered?*

Context & background

In Australia, teachers are registered with the state or territory registration or accreditation authority. Registration and accreditation practices determine how teacher specialisations are systematically acknowledged, documented, and reported. They play an essential role in monitoring the teacher workforce and teacher quality as teachers provide evidence against the Australian Teacher Professional Standards (AITSL, 2017) as teachers enter the teaching profession and as they move through their careers. Yearly re-registration and re-accreditation processes offer the best method for collecting workforce data that can be used to inform policy and intervention initiatives as it has the potential for indicating the profile of the available teacher workforce. If teacher registration and re-registration do not include teachers' specialisations, then this data is not available. In most education jurisdictions around the world, teachers are certified to teach particular subjects based on disciplinary and education related studies. Only New South Wales teacher accreditation provides this type of information. Clear certification or accreditation guidelines provide teachers, universities, and registration authorities with clear guidance as to the pathways available for teachers to gain additional certification/ accreditation, and clarity around how teachers and schools can manage the upskilling of teachers when insufficient in-field teachers are available. Defining what makes a teacher technically in-field is fundamental to these processes. Often silent in commentary on this issue is the role that these state-based teacher registration and accreditation policies in Australia play in creating the conditions for needing out-of-field teaching.

The speakers at the Summit provided context around the policy settings for teacher accreditation in New South Wales as an illustration of how teaching areas can be recognised; also, the challenges associated with alternative pathways and experiences other than formal disciplinary qualification (John Healey and Katen Ingram). Merrilyn Goos drew on experiences in Australia and Ireland to distinguish teacher registration and initial teacher education program accreditation, and their implications for the culture of upgrading qualifications in schools.

Speakers included:

- John Healey and Karen Ingram (NESA): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)
- Merrilyn Goos (University of Sunshine Coast): [Presentation](#) | [Video](#) | [Summary](#)

Key messages

1. Registration and accreditation of teachers is a state responsibility, with the different state-based bodies having different mandates/processes and policies. All states and territories (except for New South Wales) provide teacher registration based on evidence of successful completion of a teaching qualification. Discipline study is determined on entry to a teaching degree based on majors and minors in the discipline. Teachers in New South Wales gain approval to teach particular subjects on the basis of completion of the required tertiary discipline study and discipline teaching methods subjects.
2. The New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) is the only state authority that provides teachers with approval to teach particular secondary subjects and maintains a database on this as part of the accreditation process (according to the Accreditation Act). In other states, teachers are registered as teachers with no accreditation or certification for particular secondary subjects or school sectors, so there is no data available on the profile of registered teacher specialisations.
3. NSW (through NESA) and the ACT (ACT Teacher Quality Institute) are the only two states/territories that provide accreditation to in-service teachers for additional subjects in response to additional study. Other state authorities do not collect or record information from in-service teachers concerning professional learning, study, and teaching experience in out-of-field subjects except through the registration process. NESA has ceased recording professional development and is currently reviewing this process as the procedures for updating accreditation in additional subjects have become too onerous.
4. NESA is the only authority that provides data to school leaders about teachers' codes (approved subjects for teaching) so that they can make informed decisions about employment and staffing allocation.
5. How teachers are recognised as teachers by the profession (as teachers or subject specialists) has implications for the motivation for teachers to upgrade their qualifications, the processes relating to and availability of quality and endorsed or accredited pathways to becoming in-field, and the degree of attention and accountability that schools have in ensuring teachers have the necessary background to teach.
6. Teachers who are registered in a state outside NSW are not able to transfer their registration automatically if they are seeking to teach in secondary schools in NSW.
7. All Australian initial teacher education programs are accredited by state and territory teacher regulatory authorities using the nationally agreed Standards and Procedures laid down by AITSL. With NSW's accreditation process, NESA is the gatekeeper of teacher specialisations based on evidence which is recorded and passed on to principals in government schools as a database. Other states and territories rely on the program accreditation process making universities the gatekeepers where subject specialisation guidelines determine which specialisation methods pre-service teachers can undertake as part of the course.
8. The reason to not certify/provide approval to teach particular subjects has in the past been based on the tension between trusting and respecting teachers to meet the teaching standards, and imposing regulation, which takes resources and time.
9. The definition of when a teacher is considered out-of-field remains loose and undefined because there is no direction from registration bodies, except NESA which says that without the 'Code' they are considered out-of-field.
10. Gaining approval to teach subjects in NSW provides a clear label and sets an expectation for what teachers will be teaching, so it can be a shock for pre-service teachers and graduate

teachers when they are asked to teach out-of-field. In comparison, because a teacher is registered as a teacher rather than a subject specialist in Victoria, perhaps making teachers more accepting of having to teach out-of-field, although not always. It does mean, however, that the meaning of postgraduate qualifications/upskilling in a subject is not linked to registration as a teacher.

11. An implication of stringent registration requirements for all states and territories is that only registered teachers are allowed to teach. Gaining 'permission to teach' (available in some states) can be difficult to obtain and can be a barrier to using non-teacher experts to alleviate teacher shortages, e.g., using engineers to meet workforce demand for maths teachers. On the one hand it helps to maintain teacher and teaching quality, but it can also be difficult in high need areas to continue to offer subjects that require specialist content knowledge.
12. There appears to be a different culture of uptake of professional development across the states, partly because of the way professional development and upgrading qualifications or study are recognised and regulated through re-registration and re-accreditation. Further research is needed to understand the impact of different models of registration accreditation/approval to teach on: (a) teacher uptake of professional development in out-of-field teaching areas; (b) availability of pathways to becoming in-field teachers; and (c) the incidence and distribution of out-of-field teaching across geographical regions and school sectors and other factors.
13. Becoming and being a teacher involves both initial teacher education (preparation) and ongoing professional learning (maintenance). Initial teacher education quality needs to be appropriate for entering teaching, and then upgrading and continued learning needs to meet teachers' current needs and contexts. In order for this to occur, there needs to be state-mandated pathways and recognition for in-service teachers to re-specialise. It is important to understand what are the drivers for teachers to do intensive professional development (e.g., additional study) and what are the rewards for teachers if they do so.

Actions and Recommendations

Action 4.1 Teacher registration and pathways

There is a need for a cultural and systemic change in how qualifications are regarded as determining the suitability of teachers to teach a subject or year level. A system that recognises teacher qualifications and provides pathways and mechanisms for recognising effort to upgrade and improve can act as an incentive to formalise teacher development, that is, seek formal professional learning or upgrade when funded opportunities are available. Such recognition will require a cultural shift that balances maintaining the flexibility of teaching as it currently stands and having mechanisms that formalise teacher expertise. Such a system would enable better targeting of funding and initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1.1

Develop and promote pathways, and associated guidelines, for in-service teachers to become 'qualified' in out-of-field subjects through both formal qualifications and concentration of professional development.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1.2

State teacher registration or curriculum authorities develop a culture and process for endorsing postgraduate courses for upgrading teacher qualifications in teaching specialisations.

Action 4.2 Research effects of accreditation and registration

Research is needed to inform policies relating to teacher accreditation/registration for graduate and in-service teachers (including recognition and documentation), and their relationship to the pattern of uptake in professional learning programs and additional qualifications. This is important to ensure that reform initiatives, such as funded professional learning or university courses, respond to teacher demand and willingness to upskill.

RECOMMENDATION 4.2.1

Conduct research into the effects of different approaches to teacher accreditation/registration and professional development accreditation in terms of teachers choosing to undertake additional study or intensive professional learning in new out-of-field subjects.

Action 4.3 Legislative function of relevant bodies

Review and expand the legislative function of relevant bodies to include actions that lead to a greater understanding of the extent of out-of-field teaching, and provide recognised and accredited teacher education/endorsed pathways for teachers to expand their specialisations, for example through university programs (e.g., Graduate certificates and Masters), professional learning programs that articulate into credits for prior learning in university programs, micro-credentialling etc.

RECOMMENDATION 4.3.1

Expand the legislative function of teacher registration/accreditation bodies to endorse continuing education programs, including micro-credentials, professional learning programs, and university programs.

Action 4.4 Systemic data collection and teacher registration

Policies and initiatives should be informed by teacher workforce data that reflects the current profile of qualified teachers and their specifications. To do this, there needs to be systemic processes in documenting specialisation of teachers entering the system, as well as re-specialisation of in-service teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 4.4.1

States and territories record and generate databases of teacher subject specialisations during the registration and accreditation processes.

RECOMMENDATION 4.4.2

Ensure re-registration processes include evidence of additional specialist qualifications to update teacher specialisation details.

5

THEME 5: Teacher professional learning

Questions:

- a) *How can the professional learning needs of out-of-field teachers at various stages in their careers be recognised and accommodated?*
- b) *What is needed to promote a culture of teacher professional learning and re-specialisation?*
- c) *How can a variety of stakeholders be involved in supporting the professional learning of out-of-field teachers?*
- d) *How can the balance between professional learning and qualifications be managed, e.g., professional learning, university micro-credentialing, and other university offerings?*

Context & background

Teaching is a learning profession. On entering the teaching profession, teachers continue to learn on-the-job and through professional learning and development and further study. Professional learning' and 'professional development' are often used interchangeably. For this report, and following the lead of Faulkner, Kenny, Campbell and Crisan (2019), teacher professional learning will be defined as more general "changes in the thinking, knowledge, skills, and approaches to instruction" (Knapp, 2003, p. 112) that leads to changes in a teachers' capacity for practice and changes in practice itself (Mayer & Lloyd, 2011). Such learning can take place as a teacher learns on the job (Doecke et al., 2008) or as a result of their involvement in professional development. Research has shown that learning on the job for out-of-field teachers can fall into five broad categories: learning content, teaching strategies, students and their learning, school landscape, and the professional self (Hobbs, 2020).

Teacher professional development refers to 'activities' that lead to changes as referred to for professional learning. Knapp (2003) refers to professional development as "the full range of activities, formal or informal, that engage teachers or administrators in new learning about their professional practice" (p. 112). For out-of-field teachers, they may learn through reflection on their own teaching practice, additional study or professional development programs, personal research, feedback from students and teaching peers, and observing others (Hobbs, 2020). Professional development activities can be formal programs external to the school undertaken by individual teachers or teaching teams, and these can be generic or subject related. They can also be school-based activities such as whole school activities that tend to focus on general themes such as student well-being or curriculum design. The focus of the professional development that teachers undertake is determined by teacher preference, principal approval, availability, and teacher awareness. The latest TIMSS data shows that teachers who are teaching mathematics or science out-of-field tend to undertake more professional development in their preferred subject areas or generic education topics, rather than in their out-of-field subject (Hobbs et al., 2020).

Teachers are expected to undertake professional learning and development, with most states and territories providing teachers paid professional development leave, with some documentation expected. For example, in Victoria fully-registered teachers are expected to undertake, document, and report professional learning outcomes for teacher knowledge and/or practice for 20 hours of professional learning per year-this is expected for re-registration.

New South Wales is the only state where professional development activities are accredited against the teacher professional standards, though there are expectations that professional learning activities in other states are at least aligned with the standards.

A common response is to recommend that out-of-field teachers upskill through professional development or additional qualifications. Research has suggested that such professional development opportunities should offer relevant content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge; and that course content should align with local policies or expectations on what in-field teachers need to know and do, and include opportunities to 'try out' their learnings in their classrooms (Faulkner, Kenny, Campbell & Crisan, 2019). Faulkner et al. (2019) also proposed that, during a program attention should be given to school-based support, teacher buy-out, in-school mentors, blended learning possibilities, and that there should be certification or recognition for teacher completion. Cultural aspects also need consideration, such as voluntary teacher enrolment in such programs, and how the new pedagogical approaches might interact with and be incorporated into existing school practices (Faulkner et al., 2019).

The Summit included two panels exploring issues relating to teacher professional learning. The first panel consisted of representatives from subject associations who shared subject-specific responses to questions about teacher professional learning needs, cultures, and stakeholder involvement. A second panel explored formats for professional development that included micro-credentialing or stackable courses, formal qualifications such as graduate certificates, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS).

Speakers included:

- Moderator: Judy Anderson (University of Sydney): Panel Synthesis: [Video](#) | [Summary](#)
- Sue Colman (Councillor, Science Teachers' Association of NSW) [Summary](#)
- Monique Dalli (President, Design and Technology Teachers' Association of Australia)
- Allan Dougan (CEO, Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc.)
- Deb Hull (President, CPTAV; EO, History Teachers' Association of Victoria)
- Kate Gillespie (EO, Victorian Association for the Teaching of English)
- Trish Douglas (Immediate Past Chair, Australian Geography Teachers' Association) [Summary](#)
- Renee Desmarchelier (University of Southern Queensland) – Micro credentialing
- Russell Tytler (Deakin University) – Requalification courses, Graduate Certificate [Summary](#)
- Toni Falusi (Computer Science Education Research) – MOOCS

Panel recordings:

Question 1. How can the professional learning needs of out-of-field teachers at various stages in their careers be recognised and accommodated? [Video](#) | [Mentimeter](#)

Question 2. What is needed to promote a culture of teacher professional learning and re-specialisation? [Video](#) | [Mentimeter](#)

Question 3. How can a variety of stakeholders be involved in supporting the professional learning of out-of-field teachers? [Video](#) | [Mentimeter](#)

Question 4. How can the balance between professional learning and qualifications be managed, e.g. professional learning, university micro-credentialing and other University offerings? [Video](#) | [Mentimeter](#)

Key messages

1. Professional learning needs to be understood as a social endeavour, where learnings are to be shared in communities of practice and considered a precious resource, and not (solely) for individual betterment. This sharing of professional learning is linked to school cultures.
2. Professional learning needs to incorporate colleagues, Heads of Department, industry, experts, academic experts, and professional associations, in a broader ecology of professional learning throughout a career.
3. Professional learning needs to be teacher-led, enacting teacher agency and providing avenues for teacher voices to be heard.
4. The multiple dimensions of professional learning need to be recognised and understood, along with out-of-field teachers' access (or lack of access) to avenues for support. These dimensions include teacher identity, teacher agency, the role of micro and macro communities, the role of professional associations, the roles of in and out of school professional learning, the roles of not-for-profit and for-profit professional learning, and the role of recognition through accreditation/registration and remuneration.
5. The national, state and local professional learning policy environment needs to be better connected, with all policies linked and their impact on schools understood, like a puzzle in which all the pieces fit together.
6. There needs to be a coordinated approach between the policy environment, universities, accreditation, and other dimensions. The lack of dialogue between systems needs to be addressed. Schools, universities, and subject associations need a harmonised approach.
7. Professional associations do the vital work of professional learning, especially subject specific professional learning. They need to be recognised for this and funded appropriately. It is important that teacher associations that provide large amounts of professional learning, at minimum profit, are not cut out of being able to provide professional learning due to mandates around being an accredited provider, or registered educational institution.
8. The time and money required for professional learning are vital aspects of improving teaching for out-of-field teachers, including allocating these resources for sustained professional relationships to be supported.
9. Mentoring needs to be adequately resourced and supported by its own professional learning. Mentoring needs to be an official part of teachers' roles, with a time and money allocation.
10. What is already happening in schools needs to be recognised and built upon, especially in relation to teacher expertise and proven supports. While general pedagogy and teacher expertise is important, subject-focused professional learning opportunities are important for understanding the disciplinary knowledges, practices, and attitudes that are translated into school curriculum and teaching practice.
11. The pattern of professional learning uptake in out-of-field subjects is poorly understood. More research is needed to examine the value attached by teachers and school leaders to different types of professional learning opportunities (short- or long-term professional learning, formal study through micro-credentials, and graduate qualifications) and the influence that different policy settings in different jurisdictions have on these attitudes. These policy settings relate to: accrediting or endorsing professional learning to influence advance teacher AITSL level in all states and territories, additional approval or willing to teach in NSW.
12. Time is a challenge for teachers engaging in professional development, as is the financial burden. Incentives are needed to enable participation especially in long term professional development that require a high degree of teacher commitment (e.g., Graduate Certificates), such as fully funded postgraduate qualifications, funding for schools to release teachers to complete course requirements and participate, reimbursements for teachers in rural regional and remote schools, and structured support to enable translation of teacher learning into practice.

Actions and Recommendations

Action 5.1 Understand the professional learning needs of out-of-field teachers through research

While it is tempting to introduce initiatives designed to build the expertise of teachers teaching out-of-field, there is a danger that such initiatives will not attract teachers due to a lack of incentives, cost, and pressure on schools to maximise the use of the teachers they have. Teachers also tend to prefer undertaking professional learning in subjects where they are specialists and motivated, especially when budgets are limited, and choices must be made. In these cases, out-of-field professional learning becomes a lower priority. It is important to determine teacher motivations, challenges and cultural attitudes towards professional learning and further studies that 'upskill' teachers to no longer be 'out-of-field'. Uptake is potentially linked to state-based policy settings relating to how qualifications and teacher professional learning is recognised and accredited as these set the expectation around alignment between teacher qualifications and allocation in schools.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.1

Generate data from out-of-field teachers (and their students) about their professional learning needs.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.2

Generate data on the cultural attitudes and specialisation-related preferences within schools towards professional learning for out-of-field teachers, including uptake patterns, teacher motivations and blockers, and the effects of the policy context.

Action 5.2 National priority for mentoring and support

Mentoring that is subject-specific and provided based on the changing professional learning needs of teachers over time is most effective for out-of-field teachers. Raising the bar for well trained and subject-specific mentors of out-of-field places additional demands on mentors, and therefore requires appropriate time release and can therefore be costly for schools. For mentoring to be effective and cost-effective, research-informed models are needed that deal specifically with the needs of out-of-field teachers. Other professions that utilise supervisor/mentor training (e.g., medicine and nursing), and school-based teacher professional learning models based on communities of practice can be investigated to inform out-of-field teacher mentoring models.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.1

Professional associations and universities research and develop models for exemplary out-of-field professional learning, mentoring and support, including ongoing relationships between universities and alumni teachers in schools.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.2

Universities and subject associations provide government-funded research-informed training for mentors through middle leader training.

Action 5.3 Jurisdiction support for a coordinated approach

A co-ordinated approach to professional learning of teachers is needed for quality assurance, collation and distribution of accredited PL opportunities and resources suitable for in-field and out-of-field teachers, and promotion of a series of interconnected communities of practice through the dissemination of research (e.g., journal publication) relating to professional learning.

RECOMMENDATION 5.3.1

Establish a national body to support professional learning for all teachers, with the remit to also support out-of-field teachers. For example, the National Association for Teacher Education and Professional Learning (NATEPL).

RECOMMENDATION 5.3.2

Develop a national cross-disciplinary bank of out-of-field support strategies located on the internet and accessible to all members of subject associations.

Action 5.4 School focused support for teacher professional learning

School-based proactive approaches to attending to out-of-field teaching can include school-based professional learning opportunities for teachers. For example, mentoring, professional learning communities, whole-of-school professional development days, and more informal collegial sharing of resources. Education systems should provision schools with the resources to enable teachers teaching out-of-field to have a reduced teaching load with extra weekly periods in the timetable for planning, mentoring (especially for graduate or regional/rural teachers), and a higher budget for professional learning for out-of-field teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 5.4.1

Mandate school leaders to provide out-of-field teachers with professional learning calibrated to the needs of the teacher so that they can effectively teach the out-of-field subject, especially if they are likely to be teaching the subject long-term.

RECOMMENDATION 5.4.2

Provision schools with the resources needed to support graduate teachers with the time and support (including peer support) needed to plan and reflect on their out-of-field teaching and undertake professional learning.

RECOMMENDATION 5.4.3

School leaders prioritise subject-specific professional learning opportunities targeted at the individual teacher needs in addition to whole of school generic professional learning.

Action 5.5 The role of professional associations

Professional associations need to be adequately and sustainably funded to support not only in-field teachers but also those who are teaching out-of-field, as part of their core business. Diverse sources of funding need to be identified to ensure this can take place, including self-funding through professional learning programs run by associations, but also government funding, given the extent of the out-of-field phenomenon and the importance of funding professional associations to support out-of-field teachers. This work also needs to be unified and coordinated, for example through subject association representation on a body dedicated to out-of-field teaching, or an organisation like the [Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria](#) (CPTAV).

RECOMMENDATION 5.5.1

State and/or national associations liaise and run a joint conference to share how they are addressing out-of-field teaching and what might be done in the future to better address it.

RECOMMENDATION 5.5.2

Professional Associations seek greater recognition of their work and status and be provided funding to provide for appropriate delivery of support to out-of-field teachers in their subject areas at the state and federal levels.

RECOMMENDATION 5.5.3

Professional associations should consider working in partnership with each other, government, authorities, and universities to maximise impact at state and national levels.

Action 5.6 Range of professional learning opportunities

A range of evidence-based professional learning opportunities are required that cater for the needs and career choices of all teachers, including catering for the following learning intentions: development of content and pedagogical content knowledge; deep reflection and change in practice; and expanded teaching repertoires. Different providers will be needed to cater for these varied needs. Also considered should be funding arrangements for teachers and schools to ensure equitable and appropriate levels of access to resources and professional learning based on teacher and school needs and context. Clear guidelines should be provided for how teacher professional learning or additional qualifications lead to an out-of-field teacher becoming 'in-field'.

RECOMMENDATION 5.6.1

Short courses and other learning opportunities (such as micro-credentialling and short professional learning programs) should be offered by curriculum authorities, professional associations, universities, and other professional learning providers specifically tailored to the needs of out-of-field teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 5.6.2

Deep learning through graduate certificates should be tailored to the needs of out-of-field teachers, and funded according to system and school needs, and be endorsed by the relevant curriculum authority.

Conclusion

The Summit and this report have signalled urgent actions and recommendations for responding to the teaching out of field phenomenon. The actions and recommendations call for a cultural shift in the way teaching out-of-field is acknowledged and responded to.

The report raises for critical reflection and action a cultural shift in defining, understanding, and responding to the lived experiences of teachers out-of-field in schools, including attitudes and approaches to allocating and supporting the wellbeing of out-of-field teachers.

The report also highlights the urgent need for developing a culture of collecting and valuing both systematic and longitudinal data and evidence to inform policy. Establishing cultures around this requires stakeholders working together to access, generate, analyse, report on, and apply research when making decisions around out-of-field teaching.

Also needed is a cultural shift in developing, implementing, and monitoring structures and policies that are honest about the out-of-field issues and which inform decisions and funding needed for managing the phenomenon.

A further cultural shift is needed in relation to educational leaders, schools, and out-of-field teachers' attitudes towards re-specialising through formal qualifications and professional learning and scholarship in other subjects. Teacher professional learning and scholarship is required at all stages of a teacher's career and is fundamental to this cultural shift through deliberate attention to the out-of-field issue in initial teacher education, the development and appropriate funding of pathways leading to re-specialisation, and broader professional learning opportunities (e.g., provided through subject associations), and the accreditation and/or endorsement of these various pathways for teachers to become 'more' in-field.

The Actions and Recommendations from this report can be summarised as five key messages:



Actions and Recommendations

Australian National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field: Synthesis and Recommendations for Policy, Practice and Research

Actions and Recommendations

Hobbs, L., Du Plessis, A.E., Oates, G., Caldis, S., McKnight, L., Vale, C., O'Connor, M., Rochette, E., Watt, H., Weldon, R., Richardson, P. & Bateup, C. (2022). National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field: Synthesis and Recommendations for Policy, Practice and Research. <https://oofas-collective.squarespace.com/s/TOOF-National-Summit-Report.doc>

THEME 1 – Data needed to inform policy

Action 1.1 Defining out-of-field Teaching	Action 1.2. Longitudinal data through strategic partnerships	Action 1.3. Systematic workforce data
Currently, relevant policy and action at state and national levels are complicated by the lack of definitions of out-of-field teaching that acknowledge the complexity of the issues. A definition of out-of-field teaching needs to be aligned with current policies relating to teacher specialisation guidelines, either for entry to teacher education or for accreditation/ registration when entering the profession. The definition should recognise pathways available for teachers to re-specialise and become in-field. States and territories need to use definitions of out-of-field teaching that recognise this complexity when generating data relating to incidence and effects of out-of-field teaching and when determining the requirements for re-specialisation. A definition across all states and territories is needed and should be agreed upon by all jurisdictions (states, territories, school sectors) and key stakeholders (universities, accreditation and registration bodies, curriculum authorities, AITSL, subject/teacher/principal associations, teacher unions and PL providers) that can be translated across different contexts.	Longitudinal data generates an awareness of the factors that influence teacher enactment of curriculum in the context of teaching out-of-field, its impact on the quality of teaching and student learning, and the effects of incidence and concentration of teaching out-of-field for individual teachers, their colleagues and their school communities generally. This data should be generated, shared, and utilised by policy makers and government departments of education in association with researchers and other stakeholders to inform policies and practices that meet the needs of schools and teachers. For example, funding for professional learning aligned with the needs of teachers and efforts of schools to manage the out-of-field phenomenon. Empirical data and evidence will support partnerships toward social democratic school reform strategies, educational leaders' accountability, open forum discussions and the awareness of needs within specific subject and school contexts.	Informed policy decisions relating to out-of-field teaching over the short and longer-term requires comprehensive information about the teacher workforce. There is a lack of systematic and system-wide data collection that monitors the profile of teachers in the system, such as teacher specialisations and career trajectories. Also, data relating to broader structural issues, for example, casualisation, short contracts and part-time positions can be used to review existing policies at the system and local levels to ensure a close alignment between policy settings, workforce needs and the out-of-field phenomenon. Evidence-informed policy discussions at the system level will benefit from engaging with school and learning settings from various sectors, regions and contexts and from researchers actively engaged in the realities of the out-of-field phenomenon. Systematic workforce data that is made available for analysis by researchers and for public distribution ensures accountability and collaborative decision making in managing ongoing workforce needs.
RECOMMENDATION 1.1.1	RECOMMENDATION 1.2.1	RECOMMENDATION 1.3.1
Develop a national definition of out-of-field teaching that can be adapted to state specialisation requirements, and which facilitates teacher engagement with professional learning.	Education departments, researchers and other stakeholders develop and implement a program of research that generates deep dive data on school and school system management, teachers' lived experiences, the students' learning experiences, and ongoing factors and effects relating to out-of-field teaching.	Departments of education and accreditation/registration authorities generate systematic and system-wide data that monitors the profile of teachers in the system.
	RECOMMENDATION 1.2.2	RECOMMENDATION 1.3.2
	Use longitudinal data to inform policies that target support and guidance for schools and teachers assigned to out-of-field teaching positions.	Policymakers engage with existing data, evidence and research and enter into in-depth discussions with researchers and other stakeholders to develop fit-for-purpose policies.

THEME 2 — School management & leadership

Action 2.1: School leader awareness	Action 2.2: Building relationships	Action 2.3: System-level support for school leaders	Action 2.4: Developing middle leaders	Action 2.5: Teacher support in schools
When school leaders are connected to teachers' needs and aware of 'incidences' of out-of-field teaching, they are more likely to successfully manage risks to students, staff and the school community. Incidence can refer to the number of teachers, the proportion of classes, and the proportion of teachers' loads taught out-of-field.	Building relationships between school leadership and staff is important for ensuring teachers can express their needs and career aspirations. Discipline leaders are not always given the roles and status needed to properly manage the teaching and learning conditions for their subjects. Therefore, discipline leaders need to be supported and enabled to be aware of who is teaching out-of-field in their discipline and provide opportunities for mentoring, team planning, and other activities that develop collegial relationships that will invite participation and contribution to disciplinary conversations and innovation.	School leaders need system-level support, especially in schools with high staff turnover rates to effectively manage the out-of-field teaching phenomenon. Such support might be made available from principal associations, professional teachers associations, state departments of education, and providers of professional learning or further study (such as Graduate Certificates of Educational Leadership and research through higher degrees).	Middle leaders' (discipline leaders) proficiencies play an important role in mentoring and supporting the professional learning of out-of-field teachers, although this can be time-consuming in some situations. Middle leaders need to be upskilled to effectively implement a range of support mechanisms known to be effective, including, for example: co-planning/co-teaching/co-reflection; providing demonstration lessons and observing expert teachers; and collaborative planning.	Teachers of all levels of experience are asked to teach out-of-field. Early career teachers and often those in regional and rural settings face the greatest risk when required to teach out-of-field. We need to challenge the idea that a good teacher can teach anything and recognise that even experienced teachers can experience a re-novicing, especially when their expertise is misunderstood and support is based on assumed capability. Teacher well-being and role fulfilment are part of risk management and career planning when determining teacher load, support needs, and leadership opportunities.
RECOMMENDATION 2.1.1	RECOMMENDATION 2.2.1	RECOMMENDATION 2.3.1	RECOMMENDATION 2.4.1	RECOMMENDATION 2.5.1
School leaders need to include incidences of out-of-field teaching in their school improvement planning and reporting documents to plan for school improvement, manage the incidences of out-of-field teaching in their schools, and to plan to support their out-of-field teachers' through mentoring and professional learning.	School leaders need to get to know their out-of-field teachers, including their professional development needs, career planning and well-being, and to acknowledge and celebrate the skills and connections that out-of-field teachers bring to their teaching.	Education systems need to provide programs to attract, support and retain teachers, especially for teachers assigned to out-of-field teaching positions or in schools with high teacher turnover.	Education systems need to provide targeted professional learning on effective school-based mentoring and professional learning for discipline leaders and other middle leaders responsible for supporting out-of-field teachers.	Graduate and early career teachers should not be required to teach out-of-field. If they are, then additional time for preparation and subject-specific mentoring or other similar support should be provided.
RECOMMENDATION 2.1.2	RECOMMENDATION 2.2.2	RECOMMENDATION 2.3.2	RECOMMENDATION 2.4.2	RECOMMENDATION 2.5.2
School leaders need to recognise and consider the implications of allocating staff to teach out-of-field so that these allocations are in the best interests of students and the out-of-field teacher.	Out-of-field teachers need to be well supported by in-field teachers, including middle leaders, to develop their experience, confidence, and expertise in an ongoing basis through collaborative planning, mentoring, co-reflection and other such approaches.	Education systems need to ensure scaffolded, evidence-informed support for school leaders by experts in the field of out-of-field teaching, including examples of best practice for supporting and fostering the learning of out-of-field teachers.	Systems need to provide additional funding to schools with high incidences of out-of-field teaching to provide a time allocation for discipline leaders to mentor out-of-field teachers.	Risk assessment and a needs analysis should be conducted for all teachers when teaching out-of-field, which allows for a career trajectory of teacher learning.
RECOMMENDATION 2.1.3	RECOMMENDATION 2.2.3			RECOMMENDATION 2.5.3
Education systems need to provide additional funding to schools to provide out-of-field teachers with more time for teaching preparation and professional learning, specifically out-of-field subjects.	Education systems need to provide targeted professional development for school leaders and discipline leaders about caring for, and supporting, out-of-field teachers and managing the risks to the school community.			Additional support may be required for rural and regional teachers who experience greater professional isolation and to provide access to mentors, professional learning and other activities that support their development and professional connection.

THEME 3 — Initial teacher education

Action 3.1 Research about pre-service teachers and early career teachers lived experiences of out-of-field	Action 3.2 Exposure to the out-of-field phenomenon during initial teacher education	Action 3.3 Formalised support structures for networking and resource creation	Action 3.4 Achieving ‘Proficient’ status of early career teachers
<p>Further research is needed to capture the lived experiences of pre-service and early-career teachers who are teaching out-of-field. This research focus should address subject and stage of schooling, context, justification, and strategies for managing and responding to the risks associated with the out-of-field teaching phenomenon. A depth and breadth of understanding about pre-service teacher experience of out-of-field teaching during placement and as they transition into the profession in casual, temporary, or permanent roles will enable an improved framing of initial teacher education programs to occur. Research should also attend to the experience of early-career teachers. Universities and initial teacher education providers have an obligation to prepare pre-service teachers for the profession, which includes the realities of teaching out-of-field.</p>	<p>Early career teachers are likely to be asked or required to teach out-of-field. Initial teacher education providers need to ensure they provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop awareness about teaching out-of-field and offer formalised support to assist pre-service teachers in developing strategies for managing, responding, and adapting to this situation. Pre-service teachers can learn from the lived experience of those who are teaching out-of-field. Such learning can occur through placement, mentoring programs and ongoing interactions with teachers and school communities.</p>	<p>Explicitly working across boundaries of initial teacher education, schools, and professional associations is important for building teacher capacity in high-risk educational settings, including regional and remote communities. A formalised cross-boundary mentoring structure that focuses on developing networks and resources will help build resilience and actively support pre-service teachers and early career teachers who are teaching out-of-field, especially when targeted to particular subjects in a secondary education context. Such mentoring programs may also include the introduction of Teaching Fellows who can coach the early career teachers within a school context and provide advice to the relevant university about the realities of preparing pre-service teachers for teaching out-of-field.</p>	<p>Graduate teachers are expected to gain ‘Proficient’ status within their first three to five years of employment regardless of their in-field or out-of-field teaching load. However, early career teachers are more likely to be asked and required to teach out-of-field. Early career teachers should be able to master their craft and demonstrate their capacity within their specialist teaching domain as a priority. The implications for teacher practice associated with teaching out-of-field adds difficulty to an already challenging and complex accreditation process, and likely increase teacher loss from the sector in the early career stages. Allowing graduate teachers to gain Proficient teacher status within their specialist area provides the fairest and most effective opportunity for them to show how they are meeting the standards and offers them a stronger base from which to consider teaching out-of-field and remain in the profession.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 3.1.1.</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION 3.2.1.</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION 3.3.1</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION 3.4.1</p>
<p>Generate data about the transition from professional experience in initial teacher education to the early-career years of teaching, and the incidence and impact of out-of-field teaching on early-career teachers and their students.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities during professional experience for pre-service teachers to shadow teachers who are teaching out-of-field or experience teaching out-of-field subjects they are likely to teach.</p>	<p>Form alliances between schools, professional associations and universities to develop an integrated and coordinated program of support and mentoring for teachers as they transition into teaching.</p>	<p>Remove the expectation that early career teachers teach out-of-field, or that it is at least a minimal part of a teaching load, whilst an early-career teacher is transitioning into the profession and completing accreditation/registration requirements.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 3.1.2.</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION 3.2.2.</p>		<p>RECOMMENDATION 3.4.1</p>
<p>Generate data about strategies that can be integrated into initial teacher education programs that build teacher awareness about teaching out-of-field and explore the role of teacher identity and capabilities for managing the experience of teaching out-of-field.</p>	<p>Embed opportunities within initial teacher education program coursework units for pre-service teachers to become aware of the realities of teaching out-of-field and to develop strategies for adapting to this situation.</p>		<p>Make accreditation or registration as ‘proficient’ status for early career teachers conditional upon meeting professional standards from a largely in-field teaching load (no less than 80% in-field).</p>
	<p>RECOMMENDATION 3.2.3.</p>		
	<p>Adopt explicit theory-practice reflection models within initial teacher education programs to be conducted prior to, during and after professional experience to capture transformational understanding and growth about the realities of teaching, which includes teaching out-of-field.</p>		

THEME 4 — Teacher registration/accreditation

Action 4.1 Teacher registration and pathways	Action 4.2 Research effects of accreditation and registration	Action 4.3 Legislative function of relevant bodies	Action 4.4 Systemic data collection and teacher registration and registration processes
<p>There is a need for a cultural and systemic change in how qualifications are regarded as determining the suitability of teachers to teach a subject or year level. A system that recognises teacher qualifications and provides pathways and mechanisms for recognising effort to upgrade and improve can act as an incentive to formalise teacher development, that is, seek formal professional learning or upgrade when funded opportunities are available. Such recognition will require a cultural shift that balances maintaining the flexibility of teaching as it currently stands and having mechanisms that formalise teacher expertise. Such a system would enable better targeting of funding and initiatives.</p>	<p>Research is needed to inform policies relating to teacher accreditation/registration for graduate and in-service teachers (including recognition and documentation), and their relationship to the pattern of uptake in professional learning programs and additional qualifications. This is important to ensure that reform initiatives, such as funded professional learning or university courses, respond to teacher demand and willingness to upskill.</p>	<p>Review and expand the legislative function of relevant bodies to include actions that lead to a greater understanding of the extent of out-of-field teaching, and provide recognised and accredited teacher education/endorsed pathways for teachers to expand their specialisations, for example through university programs (e.g., Graduate certificates and Masters), professional learning programs that articulate into credits for prior learning in university programs, micro-credentialling etc.</p>	<p>Policies and initiatives should be informed by teacher workforce data that reflects the current profile of qualified teachers and their specifications. To do this, there need to be systemic processes in documenting specialisation of teachers entering the system, as well as re-specialisation of in-service teachers.</p>
RECOMMENDATION 4.1.1	RECOMMENDATION 4.2.1	RECOMMENDATION 4.3.1	RECOMMENDATION 4.4.1
<p>Develop and promote pathways, and associated guidelines, for in-service teachers to become 'qualified' in out-of-field subjects through both formal qualifications and concentration of professional development.</p>	<p>Conduct research into the effects of different approaches to teacher accreditation/registration and professional development accreditation in terms of teachers choosing to undertake additional study or intensive professional learning in new out-of-field subjects.</p>	<p>Expand the legislative function of teacher registration/accreditation bodies to endorse continuing education programs, including micro-credentials, professional learning programmes, and university programs.</p>	<p>States and Territories record and generate databases of teacher subject specialisations during the registration and accreditation processes.</p>
RECOMMENDATION 4.1.2			RECOMMENDATION 4.4.2
<p>State teacher registration or curriculum authorities develop a culture and process for endorsing postgraduate courses for upgrading teacher qualifications in teaching specialisations.</p>			<p>Ensure re-registration processes include evidence of additional specialist qualifications to update teacher specialisation details.</p>

THEME 5 — Teacher professional learning

Action 5.1 Researching the professional learning needs of out-of-field teachers	Action 5.2 National Priority for mentoring and support	Action 5.3 Jurisdiction support for a coordinated approach	Action 5.4 School focused support for teacher professional learning	Action 5.5 The Role of professional associations	Action 5.6 Range of professional learning opportunities
<p>While it is tempting to introduce initiatives designed to build the expertise of teachers teaching out-of-field, there is a danger that such initiatives will not attract teachers due to a lack of incentives, cost and pressure on schools to maximise the use of the teachers they have. Teachers also tend to prefer undertaking professional learning in subjects where they are specialists and motivated, especially when budgets are limited, and choices must be made. In these cases, out-of-field professional learning becomes a lower priority. It is important to determine teacher motivations, challenges and cultural attitudes towards professional learning and further studies that 'upskill' teachers to no be longer 'out-of-field'. Uptake is potentially linked to state-based policy settings relating to how qualifications and teacher professional learning is recognised and accredited as these set the expectation around alignment between teacher qualifications and allocation in schools.</p>	<p>Mentoring that is subject-specific and provided based on the changing professional learning needs of teachers over time is most effective for out-of-field teachers. Raising the bar for well trained and subject-specific mentors of out-of-field places additional demands on mentors, and therefore requires appropriate time release and can therefore be costly for schools. For mentoring to be effective and cost-effective, research-informed models are needed that deal specifically with the needs of out-of-field teachers. Other professions that utilise supervisor/mentor training (e.g., medicine and nursing) and school-based teacher professional learning models based on communities of practice can be investigated to inform out-of-field teacher mentoring models.</p>	<p>A co-ordinated approach to professional learning of teachers is needed for quality assurance, collation and distribution of accredited PL opportunities and resources suitable for in-field and out-of-field teachers, and promotion of a series of interconnected communities of practice through the dissemination of research (e.g., journal publication) relating to professional learning.</p>	<p>School-based proactive approaches to attending to out-of-field teaching can include school-based professional learning opportunities for teachers, for example, mentoring, professional learning communities, whole-of-school professional development days, and more informal collegial sharing of resources. Education systems should provision schools with the resources to enable teachers teaching out-of-field to have a reduced teaching load with extra weekly periods in the timetable for planning, mentoring (especially for graduate or regional/rural teachers), and a higher budget for professional learning for out-of-field teachers.</p>	<p>Professional associations need to be adequately and sustainably funded to support not only in-field teachers but also those who are teaching out-of-field, as part of their core business. Diverse sources of funding need to be identified to ensure this can take place, including self-funding through professional learning programs run by associations, but also government funding, given the extent of the out-of-field phenomenon and the importance of funding professional associations to support out-of-field teachers. This work also needs to be unified and coordinated, for example through subject association representation on a body dedicated to out-of-field teaching, or an organisation like the Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria (CPTAV).</p>	<p>Middle leaders' (discipline leaders) proficiencies play an important role in mentoring and supporting the professional learning of out-of-field teachers, although this can be time-consuming in some situations. Middle leaders need to be upskilled to effectively implement a range of support mechanisms known to be effective, including, for example: co-planning/co-teaching/co-reflection; providing demonstration lessons and observing expert teachers; and collaborative planning.</p>
RECOMMENDATION 5.1.1	RECOMMENDATION 5.2.1	RECOMMENDATION 5.3.1	RECOMMENDATION 5.4.1	RECOMMENDATION 5.5.1	RECOMMENDATION 5.6.1
<p>Generate data from out-of-field teachers (and their students) about their professional learning needs.</p>	<p>Professional associations and universities research and develop models for exemplary out-of-field professional learning, mentoring and support, including ongoing relationships between universities and alumni teachers in schools.</p>	<p>Establish a national body to support professional learning for all teachers, with the remit to also support out-of-field teachers. For example, the National Association for Teacher Education and Professional Learning (NATEPL).</p>	<p>Mandate school leaders to provide out-of-field teachers with professional learning calibrated to the needs of the teacher so that they can effectively teach the out-of-field subject, especially if they are likely to be teaching the subject long-term.</p>	<p>State and/or national associations liaise and run a joint conference to share how they are addressing out-of-field teaching and what might be done in the future to better address it.</p>	<p>Short courses and other learning opportunities (such as micro-credentialling and short professional learning programs) should be offered by curriculum authorities, professional associations, universities, and other professional learning providers specifically tailored to the needs of out-of-field teachers.</p>
RECOMMENDATION 5.1.2	RECOMMENDATION 5.2.2	RECOMMENDATION 5.3.2	RECOMMENDATION 5.4.2	RECOMMENDATION 5.5.2	RECOMMENDATION 5.6.2
<p>School leaders need to recognise and consider the implications of allocating staff to teach out-of-field so that these allocations are in the best interests of students and the out-of-field teacher.</p>	<p>Out-of-field teachers need to be well supported by in-field teachers, including middle leaders, to develop their experience, confidence, and expertise in an ongoing basis through collaborative planning, mentoring, co-reflection and other such approaches.</p>	<p>Education systems need to ensure scaffolded, evidence-informed support for school leaders by experts in the field of out-of-field teaching, including examples of best practice for supporting and fostering the learning of out-of-field teachers.</p>	<p>Systems need to provide additional funding to schools with high incidences of out-of-field teaching to provide a time allocation for discipline leaders to mentor out-of-field teachers.</p>	<p>Risk assessment and a needs analysis should be conducted for all teachers when teaching out-of-field, which allows for a career trajectory of teacher learning.</p>	<p>Systems need to provide additional funding to schools with high incidences of out-of-field teaching to provide a time allocation for discipline leaders to mentor out-of-field teachers.</p>
			RECOMMENDATION 5.4.3	RECOMMENDATION 5.5.3	
			<p>School leaders prioritise subject-specific professional learning opportunities targeted at the individual teacher needs in addition to whole of school generic professional learning.</p>	<p>Professional associations should consider working in partnership with each other, government, authorities, and universities to maximise impact at state and national levels.</p>	

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