

TEACHER WORKLOAD OVERLOAD

A SNAPSHOT

Introduction

The Australian Education Union (AEU) Tasmania Branch conducted research into teacher workloads in 2012 and 2013.

The quantitative research consisted of three online surveys – the first conducted in 2012 and completed by 1692 AEU members. Two follow-up surveys were held in March and May of 2013 and completed by 1700 and 1030 members, respectively.

The response rates give a confidence level in the results of more than 90% with a margin of error of less than +/- 5%.

The qualitative research involved 80 members and comprised focus groups, individual interviews and work diaries that recorded a snapshot of the type and amount of work being carried out by teachers in a typical working week.

This report is a summary of the key findings of the research.

“I AM SO SAD THAT THE CAREER I LOVED NOW MAKES ME SO EXHAUSTED AND MY PRIVATE LIFE COULD BE NON-EXISTENT IF I KEPT UP WITH EVERYTHING.”

(PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER)

KEY FINDINGS

Growing complexity and administration

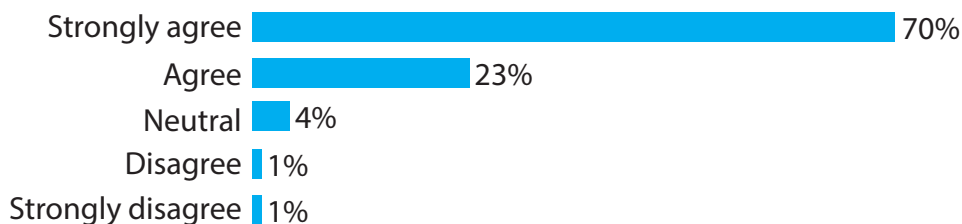
In addition to increasing growing workloads, teachers are reporting a growing complexity of their tasks. Ninety three per cent either agree or strongly agree that the job is growing more complex.

THERE IS FAR TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING. TO INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES, WE NEED TO SPEND MORE TIME ON PLANNING AND TEACHING AND LESS TIME ON REPORTING AND ADMINISTRATION TASKS.

(HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER)

Statement: Teaching involves significantly more work or more complexity than it did five years ago.

(May 2013)



Qualitative results

Planning and delivering the curriculum has become more complex and now must meet requirements under the Australian Curriculum (AC). The need for research and detailed planning and data entry continue to increase.

A female primary teacher at interview reported that she spent four hours per week, usually on a Sunday, planning her teaching activities under the Australian Curriculum (AC). She had spent four to five hours per day in her school holidays planning for the upcoming term and regularly spent four to six hours each week during term time on assessment and entering data into Edupoint.

Administrative demands

Teachers report that on-site time required to attend meetings has ballooned. In addition to curriculum, sectional and general staff meetings, one teacher listed the committees now requiring attendance within her school:

"The resource committee, the OH&S committee, the canteen committee, extracurricular committee, school management committee, school improvement committee, ICT committee, flexible programmes committee, reporting committee..."

(Primary teacher)

Escalating workloads

An overwhelming number of teachers (87%) report that they do not have enough time to do the work required of them in a typical day. (Fig. 1)

A majority of teachers feel that their workloads are unmanageable. More than half (52%) disagreed with the statement that their workloads were manageable. (Fig. 2)

Tracking the issue over time shows that excessive workloads are an increasing problem. A majority of teacher (58%), reported that their workloads had *substantially* increased between 2011 and 2012. (Fig 3)

THERE ARE MANY MORE ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS TO BE DONE THAN THERE USED TO BE. LEGAL LIABILITY CREATED MUCH MORE COMPLEXITY WITH ORGANISING EXCURSIONS, ETC.

(HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER)

Question: Are you satisfied that your work tasks can be reasonably performed in the hours for which you are employed?

(March 2013)

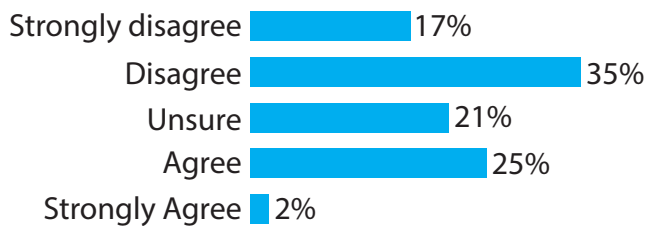
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Statement: My workload this year is manageable

(June 2012)

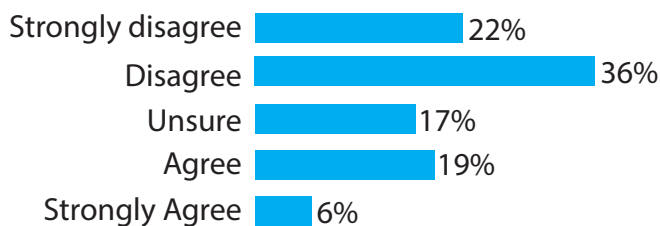
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Statement: My workload this year compared to 2011 has not substantially increased.

(June 2012)

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Quantitative results

Activities detailed by respondents in the workload diaries show that the majority are working well beyond their full-time requirement of 35 hours on site.

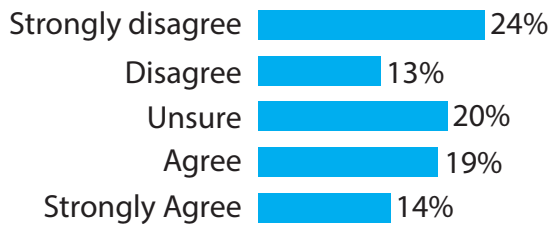
The average recorded working week for teachers was 55 hours or 157 per cent of the 35 hours required on-site time. The majority of teachers recorded working weeks of between 54.9 and 82.6 hours for the week in which they completed their diaries.

Preparation and planning time

Members have highlighted that lack of preparation and planning time is a key area of concern. Only one in three teachers, 33%, believe they have sufficient planning and preparation time.

Question: I am given sufficient planning and preparation time.

(June 2012)



Qualitative results

The work diaries were completed in June when many teachers were preparing the major student reports. Report writing and associated activities such as proof reading, preparing assessment records and entering data into SARIS formed the largest block of non-teaching time, ahead of planning and lesson preparation activities. During this time teachers reported being unable to do sufficient planning and preparation for lessons.

CASE STUDY

Hannah, Early childhood teacher, southern Tasmanian Primary School

Hannah, 51, has taught for more than 20 years. She went part time (three days a week) to look after her young children.

It was her intention to return to full-time work once the children were more independent, but her burgeoning teacher workload meant that she would have to stay part-time in order to cope.

Hannah's work diary showed that, although she was part time, she worked 33 hours or 157 per cent of the hours for which she was paid. She spends much of each Tuesday, one of her days off, classroom preparation and catching up on other administrative tasks.

Hannah described the increase in workload in her area of teaching over the past ten years as "huge". Now working part time for Hannah is not so

different to working full time.

She believes administrative and reporting requirements, added on top of actually teaching, have contributed to the huge increase in workload.

Hannah says planning and delivering the new Australian Curriculum has become more complex. Coupled with that, the frequency and quantity of work involved in reporting to parents had increased substantially.

Teacher Assistants, that previously assisted classroom teacher with preparing materials and helping with younger children, now must devote their time to students on the severe disability register.

More administrative duties, once done by office staff, were now the responsibility of classroom teachers, such as ordering class materials, managing class budgets, handling correspondence to parents and recording leave through the DoE's online Employment Self Service (ESS).