



Independent
Schools Victoria



Why do teachers teach?

Understanding the satisfaction and support needs of Independent school teachers

Foreword

Teachers and teaching are the focus of national attention. We have a problem – a shortage of teachers, because not enough people are entering the profession and too many are leaving it. Many feel they are not respected. Late last year federal and state education ministers adopted a national plan to deal with the problem with measures to retain current teachers, increase the supply of new ones, improve their professional education, elevate their status, and gain a better understanding of future needs.

Announcing the plan, Australian Education Minister Jason Clare made this point: 'It's also about respect. In the classroom and in the community. We need to stop bagging teachers and start giving them a wrap.' The plan makes this report a timely and valuable contribution to the national conversation about teachers and the crucial role they play in society. It's based on a survey of 270 teachers who work in 103 Victorian Independent schools and who speak about why they teach, what they like about their jobs, and what they don't like.

It points to actions that governments, policy makers, school leaders, and, crucially, parents, can take to improve levels of teacher satisfaction, by lifting some of the irksome distractions that are imposed on them and giving them the respect they deserve, and in the process enhance the education of young Australians. The survey confirms that the experience of teachers in Independent schools in many ways mirrors that of their counterparts in Government and Catholic schools.

This survey contains reassuring news. Most teachers are driven by a passion for making a difference in the lives of their students. They see their work as a calling, not just a job. They speak of their personal and professional satisfaction when they help a student find joy in learning. Despite their daily challenges, most are satisfied with their choice of career.

At the same time, the survey reveals what teachers don't like and what causes them to be dissatisfied. While work in the classroom is what's most satisfying, they are burdened with non-teaching tasks, with administration and accountability requirements which take them away from what is supposed to be their core function.

There's an irony here, one that might be lost on policy makers, bureaucrats and education leaders – the focus on administration and accountability, on endless meetings and the constant tinkering with curriculum, which presumably aim to improve student results, actually distracts teachers from achieving that aim. The report warns that excessive demands on teachers' time for non-teaching tasks has the potential to increase dissatisfaction and extinguish the passion that calls teachers to the role.

These distractions, also reflected in other research that focusses on all school sectors, point to actions our educational bureaucracies and school leaders can take, to lift the non-teaching burden from our teachers and allow them to teach.

There is also a lesson for parents in this report with a finding that's also reflected in research focussing on other school sectors – teachers are increasingly confronted with unreasonable demands and unrealistic expectations from some parents. The lesson for parents is to temper their expectations and to recognise the professionalism of teachers. Principals can assist in this by setting clear boundaries for parents on what's reasonable, and what's not, in their engagement with teachers.

As Minister Clare put it, it's about respect.



Michelle Green

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Introduction

This study explores the experiences of teachers working at Independent schools, to understand the reasons why they teach, what they find satisfying about teaching and what support they need. These are important questions to ask as teacher shortages and attrition are an ongoing challenge for schools.

According to the Australian Department of Education (2022a), there is a national decline in new teaching graduates, while the World Economic Forum highlights the challenges of teacher shortages for many nations, including Australia (Myers, 2015). Understanding the drivers of teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction, what teachers value and do not value is therefore important for school leaders and Governments alike to ensure they can attract, retain and meet the ongoing needs of teachers.

This research complements what is already known about teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction by contrasting it with the experiences of teachers currently working at Independent schools.

By exploring in-depth the experiences of teachers working at Independent schools and understanding what is important to them, we can assist school leaders to reflect on their practices and the environment they provide for their teachers.

By understanding which aspects of teaching provide the greatest satisfaction for teachers working in Independent schools, we can better understand what issues may lead to teacher dissatisfaction with their work and thus their profession as a whole.



Executive summary

Teachers are critical in shaping society through the education, mentoring and development of our future generations. It is essential that the profession is strong and that teachers remain motivated and committed to their role.

According to the Australian Department of Education (2022a), there is a national decline in new teaching graduates, while the World Economic Forum highlights the challenges of teacher shortages for many nations, including Australia (Myers, 2015).

This study explores the experiences of teachers working at Independent schools, to understand the reasons why they teach, what they find satisfying about teaching and what support they need.

In 2022 we surveyed 270 teachers from 103 schools. For those surveyed, teaching is a more than an occupation, it is a calling.

Most teachers are driven by a passion for making a difference to students, yet they perceive that demands that are external to the classroom – such as administrative tasks, meetings and extracurricular activities – are eroding their time to teach students. Key findings include:

- Seventy-one per cent of teachers surveyed are satisfied with their decision to become a teacher.
- Three-quarters of respondents said 'making a difference in a student's life' is most satisfying aspect of being a teacher.
- Almost all respondents (98 per cent) indicated that 'working with students to help them achieve their potential' was important to teacher satisfaction.
- In contrast to what teachers found most satisfying regarding teaching – the work inside the classroom – other aspects of the role, such as demanding parents, feeling underappreciated and the burden of administrative work, are least satisfying.

- Almost half of teachers surveyed (47 per cent) said 'engaging with parents' is the least satisfying aspect of teaching in an Independent school.
- 11 per cent of respondents selected 'other' when indicating what they find least satisfying about teaching. Unprompted, the bulk of these teachers (70 per cent) cited issues relating to workload and administrative tasks.
- When asked what support would assist them in their role as a teacher, the majority (78 per cent) indicated they would like less non-teaching demands on their time.
- Less experienced teachers, with 0–5 years teaching experience, were more likely to require support with managing and dealing with classroom behaviour and maintaining classroom discipline than teachers with more experience.
- We asked respondents if they felt more or less fulfilled at work over the COVID-19 years of 2020 and 2021. Only 16 per cent felt more fulfilled during this period, while almost half (49 per cent) did not feel more fulfilled.
- We asked respondents to project the general public's view of teachers by ranking a list of professions according to how well respected they believed they were across the wider community. Teachers surveyed ranked secondary and primary teachers near the bottom of the list – 10th and 11th out of 13 occupations.

These findings demonstrate a need for greater understanding from governments, policy makers and school leaders around the various motivating factors for teachers. The interplay between the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction is an important, yet often overlooked aspect of job satisfaction.

Excessive demands on teachers' time for non-teaching tasks and administration has the potential to drive dissatisfaction and extinguish the passion that calls teachers to the role.

Context

The contribution that teachers make in society is multifaceted and irreplaceable (Hattie, 2003). A teacher's work is influenced by educational policies, leadership, colleagues, students and families (Buonomo et al., 2020). The Australian Minister of Education, the Hon. Jason Clare, highlighted the importance of having a constant supply of quality teachers to maintain the success of Australian schools, improve outcomes for students and positively drive national productivity (Department of Education, 2022). Yet global data on teacher supply and demand has revealed that 74 countries, including Australia, face an acute shortage of teachers (Myers, 2015).

Data from the National Skills Commission (2022) show that Australia has a shortage of school teachers across all year levels except middle school. Further, the report highlights that the number of suitable applicants (per vacancy) has reduced from 3.8 (on a scale of 0-5) in 2021 to 1.8 in 2022 and the proportion of vacancies filled reduced from 86 per cent in 2021 to 60 per cent in 2022.



According to the Australian Department of Education (2022a), the issue of teacher shortages is driven by three factors: a decline in new teaching graduates, increased demands of the student population and an ageing workforce.

Nationally, Initial Teacher Enrolments (ITE) declined by five per cent from 2009 to 2019 (Department of Education, 2021). In Victoria, new enrolments saw a sharp decline of almost 25 per cent between 2017 and 2019 which some suggest is a result of the introduction of tougher university entry standards (Carey, 2022). However, data on the decline in number of teaching graduates is imprecise. Other reports indicate that the supply of teachers across all education settings will exceed the demand of teachers by 2024 (Victorian Department of Education and Training, 2021; National Skills Commission, 2022).

Australia is also seeing a growth in its student population, which increased by 4.7 per cent between 2017 to 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This may also negatively impact teacher shortages.

Lastly, an ageing teacher and leadership workforce may exacerbate the problem of teacher shortage in Australia. According to the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (2020), the percentage of teachers who were between the age range of 30-39 years fell from 22.58 percent to 17.07 percent between 2018 and 2020 and the percentage of teachers who are in the age group of 50-59 years increased from 24.76 percent to 28.59 percent during the same time (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2020). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020) suggests that education systems, including Australia, will have to renew at least one-third of their teaching workforce in the next 15 years.

Teacher shortages, and the parallel problem of teacher turnover, has garnered considerable attention from government and policymakers. The Australian Department of Education's National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, released in late 2022, aims to address the issue of teacher shortage and to attract new people to the profession and retain existing staff (Department of Education, 2022b).

Toropova et al (2021) explains teacher turnover as an interrelated notion of teacher migration and attrition, where migration is teachers moving to other schools and attrition is teachers leaving the profession altogether. Data on actual turnover rates is limited and difficult to measure as once a teacher leaves an organisation, it is difficult to locate them (Altunogu & Sarpkaya, 2012). Borman and Dowling's research indicates that highest attrition rates are generally seen early or late in teachers' careers (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Irrespective of whether a teacher migrates to another school or leaves the profession altogether, the impacts are far-reaching and can lead to reduction in the effectiveness and impact a teacher has on students (Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2012; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). It also has negative impacts on collegiality, a loss of institutional knowledge and high economic costs relating to recruitment and training (Heffernan et al., 2019).

Despite the challenges of retaining a highly skilled teaching workforce, many teachers are highly committed to their role, and motivated by philosophical beliefs and the joy of working with children (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012). These altruistic motivations often drive teacher satisfaction (Ornstein & Levine, 2006). Herzberg et al (1957) has broadly divided job satisfaction into intrinsic and extrinsic factors. In the context of education, intrinsic factors include motives marked by unselfish concern for others that stem from within the teacher and are associated with a feeling that the job is a life calling (Arnett & Polkinghorne, 2010). Extrinsic factors such as compensation, administrative work and societal perceptions on the value of the teaching profession influence the perceived level of job satisfaction of teachers. Intrinsic factors are cited as significant predictors of job satisfaction and extrinsic factors are predictors of job dissatisfaction (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012).

"Policies that aim to lift the status of teaching as a profession and how teachers are valued may be an effective intervention to drive teacher attraction and retention."

There is research suggesting that if teacher satisfaction increased it would have a positive impact on their occupation overall, and dissatisfaction has been cited as the primary reason teachers leave their job (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Choy et al (1993, as cited in Ouyang & Paprock, 2006) indicate that teachers who are highly satisfied are more likely to remain in their school and continue working in teaching professions compared to their dissatisfied colleagues (Perie, Baker and Whitener, 1997). Further, teachers who are satisfied with their job were reported to provide more instructional support to students and have higher morale than their less satisfied peers (Locke, 1976; Opendakker & Van Damme, 2006).

If, as Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd (2012) have argued, intrinsic motivators such as a passion for teaching and working with students drive teacher satisfaction, can providing opportunities for intrinsic motivations to flourish (while controlling extrinsic factors like administrative work) provide the conditions to reduce teacher turnover?

There is some evidence to support this view. Sahlberg (2010) argues that teaching is a profession usually driven by values, ethical motives or intrinsic motivations. In their day-to-day teaching and classroom management teachers espouse their own educational beliefs and values (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Skaalvik & Skaalvik describe this as 'value consonance', or as 'the degree to which teachers feel that they share the prevailing norms and values at the school where they are teaching' (2011: 1031). As Arnup (2016) notes, if policies focus on increasing the intrinsic motivation of teachers and their values align this will positively impact job satisfaction and reduce a teacher's intention to leave.

A further element of job satisfaction is feeling respected and valued for the role one performs (American Psychological Association, 2012). Dolton and De Vries' (2020) work demonstrates that, for teachers, there is a strong link between the value and respect a population place on teachers and the performance of students.

In Australia, increasing the value and respectability of teaching across society has become a media and political focus, and the Australian Government has allocated \$10 million to raise the status of the teaching profession (Department of Education, 2022b). Improving the respectability of teaching is important, as Iligan and Ceviz (2019) found that if the value assigned by the society to the profession is increased, it can have a small positive effect on teacher motivation and satisfaction. As the Australian government has recognised with its recent investment in this space, policies that aim to lift the status of teaching as a profession and how teachers are valued may be an effective intervention to drive teacher attraction and retention.



Aims and method

This study explores the experience of teachers working at Independent schools to understand the main drivers of teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The study aims to help school leaders identify some of the issues faced by teachers that impact their satisfaction and recognise the kind of support required to retain and attract teachers to their school. The report also aims to raise awareness about the issue of teacher retention and contribute to the policy debate to help increase teacher satisfaction.

To explore teacher satisfaction, we developed the following six research questions:

1. Which aspects do teachers find most satisfying about teaching in an Independent school?
2. Which aspects do teachers find least satisfying about teaching in an Independent school?
3. How satisfied are respondents with their decision to become a teacher?
4. What do teachers feel is important to support their role as a teacher in an Independent school?
5. What impact has COVID-19 had on teacher satisfaction in Victorian Independent schools?
6. How respected do Independent school teachers feel by the general public?

To address these questions, we conducted an initial literature review focusing on teachers' view of their profession, and perceptions of their work and conditions. We used the results to develop an online survey in 2022 focusing on Independent school teaching staff.

The questionnaire included open-ended questions to collect rich data on the reason for their answers to certain survey questions.

We invited 1,580 teachers who were, by virtue of having attended a seminar or similar at the offices of Independent Schools Victoria (ISV), in the ISV database, to participate in the survey. These teachers worked at 197 different Independent schools.

Two hundred and seventy teachers from 103 schools (44 per cent of ISV Member Schools) responded. The table on the next page provides a breakdown of these figures.

The survey was launched on 19 July 2022 and closed on 14 August 2022, giving respondents four weeks to participate. The schools surveyed were a mixture of secular and faith-based schools.

Data analysed in this report is based on 270 respondents from 103 Victorian Independent schools.

Table 1: Survey respondents by key demographic traits

Demographics		
Teaching staff (have taught in the last 3 years)	269	100%
Teaching staff (have not taught in the last 3 years)	1	0%
Total	270	100%
Leadership role within the school		
Yes	112	41%
No	158	59%
Total	270	100%
Age distribution		
Under 20	1	0%
20 to 39	94	35%
40 to 59	141	52%
60 plus	26	10%
Not answered	8	3%
Total	270	100%
Years of teaching experience		
0 to 5 years	44	16%
6 to 10 years	53	20%
11 to 15 years	35	13%
16 plus years	130	48%
Not answered	8	3%
Total	270	100%

Findings

We began by looking at the aspects of teaching in an Independent school that teachers find satisfying or dissatisfying and how satisfied they are with their decision to enter the teaching profession, before looking at the type of support teachers would like to assist them in their role. We finished by exploring how teaching has changed during the current COVID-19 pandemic and how teachers perceive their profession is valued by Australian society.

Which aspects do teachers find most satisfying about teaching in an Independent school?

We provided teachers with a list of 10 aspects about teaching in an Independent school and asked respondents to select up to four aspects that they find most satisfying about their work.

These items were grouped around three broad themes:

- Working with students to help them achieve their potential

- Autonomy in their teaching and acknowledgement of their expertise
- Engaging with parents.

Respondents selected an average of 3.6 aspects out of the four available to choose from. Only one respondent selected 'other' and provided their own explanation concerning what satisfies them in their profession.

Our analysis demonstrated that working with students to help them achieve their potential was overwhelmingly the most popular response. Ninety-eight per cent of respondents selected at least one aspect relating to the 'working with students to help them achieve their potential' theme.

In contrast, 56 per cent of respondents selected at least one response from the theme 'autonomy in their teaching and acknowledgement of their expertise'. Only four per cent of respondents selected the option relating to engaging with parents.

Table 2: Themes of teacher satisfaction

Theme	Survey item	%	n
Working with students	Making a difference to a student's life	67%	179
	Interaction with the students	65%	175
	Bringing the joy of learning to pupils	64%	173
	Motivating students to achieve their potential	61%	163
	Shaping the lives of the next generation	21%	57
	NET: Working with students	98%	263
Autonomy in teaching	Autonomy in the way I teach	32%	87
	Acknowledgment of my experience and expertise	19%	51
	Collaborative development of the school's curriculum	15%	41
	Affecting / contributing to the pedagogy	12%	33
	NET: Autonomy in teaching	56%	151
Engaging with parents	Contact with parents	4%	11

Total sample; Unweighted; base n = 269; total n = 270; 1 missing

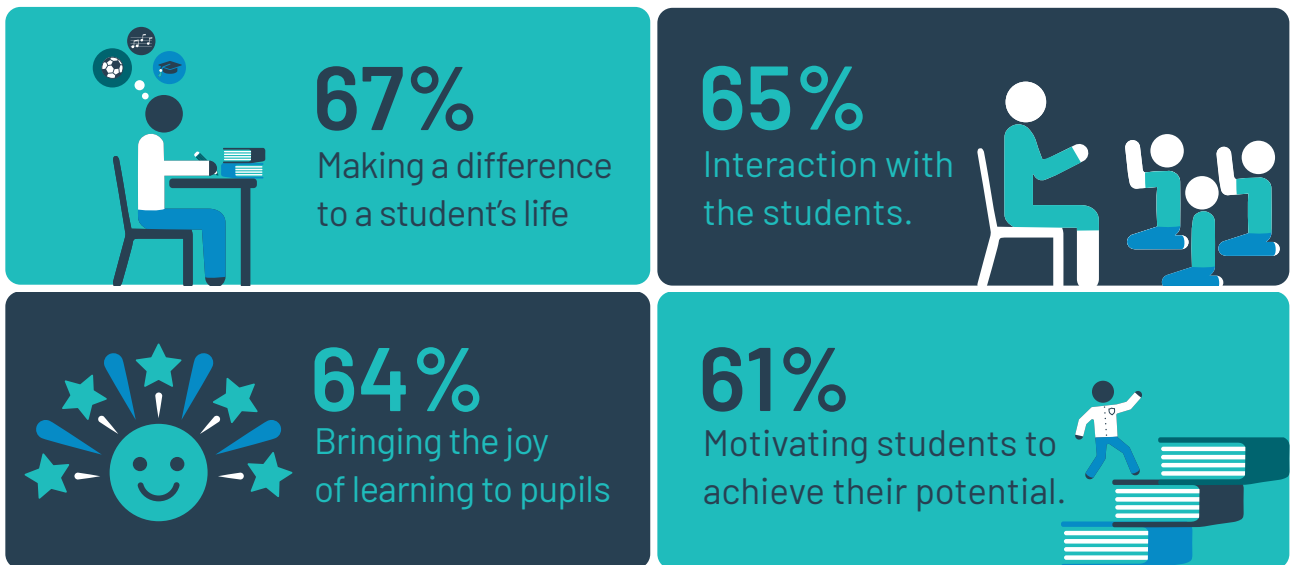
This demonstrates that when it comes to what teachers find most satisfying about teaching in an Independent school, it all comes back to working with students. Our analysis showed that teachers were uniform in their choice of the most satisfying aspects of teaching, and that these choices were consistent across all the demographic groups.

We asked teachers to elaborate on the reasons for their choices and conducted thematic analysis on these comments. The analysis revealed that most comments focused on wanting to make a difference in a student's life, highlighting the intrinsic motivation that drives teachers toward the profession, and the reward they receive through helping shape a young person's future. This comment captures this sentiment among teachers:

"We teach for a reason, and it is to have an impact on student's lives."

Top four response items, teacher satisfaction

Theme: Working with students to help them achieve their potential



Many teachers also spoke of their passion for working with students, placing this front and centre as their reasons for becoming a teacher and remaining in the profession.

"Bringing the joy of learning to my students is why I started teaching and to combine this with motivating students to achieve their potential allows me to make a difference to a student's life. Connecting and interacting with students is how this happens."

"I became a teacher to make a difference on young people's lives. This is always going to be the most enjoyable and important factor in my career."

A consistent thread throughout the qualitative comments for this question was that teachers were drawn toward the profession to help grow and nurture students. The below comment best sums up the flavour of these responses.

"I teach because it is a vocation."

Clearly for the respondents of this survey, the most satisfying aspect of teaching in an Independent school is the opportunity to shape the lives of their students. For many, being a teacher is more than just a job. It is a calling that contributes to making a difference in the lives of young people.



Which aspects do teachers find least satisfying about teaching in an Independent school?

We presented the same survey items to explore the aspects of teaching in Independent schools that they find *least* satisfying. Our analysis showed a general inverse of the aspects that teachers found the most satisfying, which validates the strength of these results.

Table 3: Teacher dissatisfaction by theme

Theme	Survey items	%	n
Autonomy in teaching	Collaborative development of the school's curriculum	33%	89
	Affecting / contributing to the pedagogy	29%	77
	Acknowledgment of my experience and expertise	26%	70
	Autonomy in the way I teach	16%	42
	NET: Autonomy in teaching	64%	173
Working with students	Shaping the lives of the next generation	6%	17
	Motivating students to achieve their potential	3%	9
	Bringing the joy of learning to pupils	3%	7
	Making a difference to a student's life	2%	5
	Interaction with the students	1%	4
	NET: Working with students	11%	30
Engaging with parents	Contact with parents	47%	126

Total sample; Unweighted; base n = 269; total n = 270; 1 missing

Almost half of all responses (47 per cent) selected the option 'engaging with parents' as one of the least satisfying aspects of teaching in an Independent school. Sixty-four per cent of respondents selected at least one option/aspect related to the theme 'autonomy in their teaching and acknowledgement of their expertise', while 11 per cent of respondents selected at least one option related to the theme of working with students to help them achieve their potential.

The top four aspects teachers found least satisfying belonged to the theme autonomy in their teaching and acknowledgement of their expertise or engaging with parents. Eighty-one per cent of all respondents cited one or more of the top four reasons as being least satisfying.

That teachers can feel disrespected by parents, and engaging with them can sometimes be a challenge, is not unique to the Independent sector. Monash University's *Perceptions of Teachers and Teaching in Australia* (2022) survey found that just 33.3 per cent of teachers surveyed across all sectors agreed that parents respected their work (Longmuir et al., 2022, p.11).

For public or state schools, 72 per cent of teachers felt disrespected by the public, compared to 69.8 per cent of teachers in faith-based schools, and 66.7 per cent of teachers in private or Independent schools (66.7 percent) (Longmuir et al., 2022, p.110). The report highlights 'disrespect from students and parents' as a key reason teachers felt disrespected or underappreciated (Longmuir et al., 2022, p.14).

For respondents to our survey who suggested contact with parents was the least satisfying aspect of teaching, analysis of qualitative comments revealed a feeling of underappreciation of their work:

"Parents are worse to deal with than students, I feel like 80% of them don't recognise how much effort and work goes into their children."

"Parents have become more demanding."

"There is a huge underestimation of how much effort it takes to liaise with parents."

Many school teachers who responded to the survey suggested that challenges around dealing with parents have intensified over the COVID-19 period.

The sentiments of many are captured in this comment:

"For me personally, parents have caused the most impact on my mental health and wellbeing over the past two years. I feel that parents have become increasingly demanding, and management have facilitated this increase to the detriment of teachers."

Unlike our question relating to the most satisfying aspects of teaching, over 11 per cent of respondents selected other (31 respondents). Analysis of these responses provide a further aspect of teaching that teachers find unsatisfying: issues relating to workload and administrative tasks.

Our analysis of these comments shows that teachers are unhappy with the additional workload placed on them, to the perceived detriment of their teaching. Comments suggesting that administrative tasks, including meetings and increasing workload demands, accounted for 70 per cent of 'other' aspects teachers found least satisfying about their role. The below comments provide a flavour of these additional aspects:

"Administration that appears merely for reasons of accountability rather than actually improving face to face teaching."

"Lack of work/life balance, unmanageable load and the impact it has on providing a more rich learning experience for students."

"In contrast to what teachers found most satisfying regarding teaching – the work inside the classroom – other aspects of the role, such as demanding parents, feeling underappreciated and the burden of administrative work, are least satisfying."

In analysing the qualitative comments teachers provided as the reasons for their choices, we found a consistent theme that points to this source of frustration with increased administrative work. For many teachers, expressed in the comments below, the constant reviewing of curriculum and pedagogy often results in an increased administration burden and time away from teaching:

"At times I feel we are reinventing the wheel when the whole staff discuss the curriculum. Unless there is a clear vision of what we are trying to achieve it can at times be discussed for hours and go nowhere. If change is going to be made and implemented after discussion I welcome the discussion otherwise I would prefer to look at students' needs and how we can improve desired learning outcomes."

"I understand that curriculum is under constant review, however I feel that with the last 2 years we should be in a period of consolidation, rather than constantly being bombarded with new ideas/ programs and initiatives."

"Shaping curriculum, pedagogy, etc requires a lot of extra time that I don't have."

In contrast to what teachers found most satisfying regarding teaching– the work inside the classroom –other aspects of the role, such as demanding parents, feeling underappreciated and the burden of administrative work, are least satisfying. This finding aligns with recent research from Monash University who in its Perceptions of teachers and teaching in Australia (2022) survey, pointed out that for many teachers there is an imbalance between the enjoyable aspects of teaching (i.e. working with students), and the additional aspects of the role teachers find unenjoyable. As the authors of the report note, for many teachers, 'the draining aspects outweigh the enjoyable aspects (Longmuir et al., 2022, p.19).

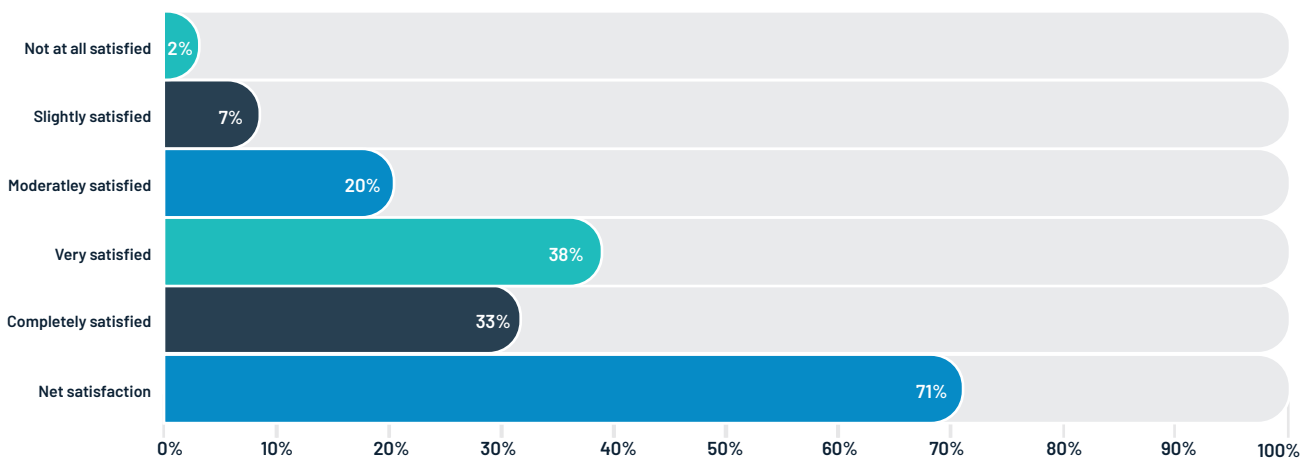
How satisfied are respondents with their decision to become a teacher?

Despite the challenges teachers identified around their role, when it came to their choice of profession, the majority of teachers we surveyed are satisfied with their decision to become a teacher.

Responding to the question, 'How satisfied are you with your decision to become a teacher?', 71 per cent of Independent school teachers were either completely or very satisfied (net satisfaction) and only two per cent were not at all satisfied.

This figure of 71 per cent net satisfaction is higher than other recent surveys exploring this issue. Monash University's Perceptions of teachers and teaching in Australia (2022) survey, which involved teachers from all educational sectors and all Australian states, found that 52 per cent of teachers from private or Independent schools felt strongly or very satisfied with their role as a teacher. The survey also found that 47 per cent of teachers from faith-based schools felt strongly or very satisfied with their role (Longmuir et al, 2022, p.17). It is important to note that the Monash University study did not separate independent schools from Catholic schools.

Figure 1: Satisfaction with decision to become a teacher



Older teachers (60 plus) and those with 11+ years teaching experience had the highest net satisfaction rating (85 per cent and 77 per cent respectively) with their decision to become a teacher. Younger teachers (20 - 39) and those with 6-10 years teaching experience had the lowest net satisfaction rating (65 per cent and 60 per cent respectively) with their decision to become a teacher.

Feeling respected and valued is known to contribute to job satisfaction (American Psychological Association, 2012). This is supported in the table below, where teachers in a leadership position have a higher net satisfaction rating than those not in a leadership position (77 per cent and 67 per cent respectively), with their decision to become a teacher.

Table 4: Satisfaction with decision to become a teacher by age, teaching experience and leadership

Satisfaction level	Age Groups			Teaching Experience				Leadership Role	
	20-39 year old	40-59 year old	60 plus year old	0 to 5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16 plus years	Yes	No
Net (Completely or Very) Satisfaction	65%	73%	85%	62%	60%	77%	77%	77%	67%
Moderately Satisfied	21%	20%	15%	30%	23%	17%	17%	15%	24%
Slightly Satisfied	11%	6%	0%	7%	13%	6%	5%	7%	6%
Not at all Satisfied	2%	1%	0%	2%	4%	0%	1%	1%	2%

Table 5: Thematic analysis of changes that could increase satisfactio

Theme	# of comments	% of total
Better work/life balance or a decrease in workload	22	43%
Less administration and regulatory work	15	29%
Greater pay	12	24%
More recognition and respect for the profession	10	20%
Excessive community expectations	7	14%
More time for lesson planning, better curriculum implementation, smaller classes	6	12%
More opportunities for career progression	2	4%
Issues with student behaviour	2	4%
Challenges associated with COVID-19	2	4%
Total teachers who responded	51	

We asked teachers who selected moderately, slightly or not at all satisfied what changes could be made to improve their satisfaction. Table 5 above provides a thematic analysis of the 78 comments that 51 teachers provided.

The data above confirms that issues around work/life balance, heavy workloads and a high administration and regulatory burden were the key drivers of dissatisfaction. Better work/life balance with a decrease in workload, and less administrative and regulatory requirements made up almost half of all suggestions (22 and 15 mentions and respectively).

Issues around greater pay and more respect for the profession among the broader society accounted for a further 22 mentions.

On closer inspection, these four themes are essentially commenting on two broad issues: workload and respect for the profession. Together, they account for three quarters of all suggestions to improve teacher satisfaction and, by extension, teacher retention.

"Support for teachers is vital to ensure they can perform at their best. Having the appropriate resources and support to perform their role may lead to greater satisfaction and help retain teachers."

What do teachers feel is important to support their role as a teacher in an Independent school?

As clearly outlined in the previous sections, the biggest issue for teachers who responded to this survey is the erosion of their time doing things that impact their ability to focus on students. Responses to the question 'What would help to support you in your role as a teacher in an Independent school?' further enhances this finding.

Teachers were given a list of 20 areas where support from leadership may be needed to help perform their role as a teacher in an Independent school. They were asked to choose all support options that were relevant to them.

In table 6 we have grouped these 20 support areas into five themes.



Table 6: Areas teachers would like support in

Theme	Question theme	%	n
Non-teaching demands/ administration	Reduction in the amount of administrative work we have to do	58%	155
	Having more time for lesson preparation	56%	150
	Reduction in extracurricular activities we are expected to do	25%	67
	NET: Non-teaching demands	78%	210
Professional support	Accessing professional, relevant and timely professional development to suit my needs	29%	78
	Networking opportunities within the school and with others outside	20%	53
	Receiving timely feedback on my teaching ability and content knowledge	13%	34
	The allocation of a mentor	10%	27
	Dealing with intimidation/ verbal abuse by other staff members	8%	21
	NET: Professional support	54%	144
Managing diverse student needs	Managing students with complex needs/struggling students	34%	92
	Modifying lessons for differentiated learning	22%	60
	Assessing students needs	16%	44
	Monitoring students' development and learning	8%	21
	Teaching in a mixed ability setting	7%	19
	Teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting	0%	1
	NET: Managing diverse student needs	54%	144
Dealing with parents	Dealing with parental expectations	25%	68
	Dealing with parental pressure	17%	46
	Dealing with aggressive/abusive parents	16%	44
	NET: Dealing with parents	36%	97
Student discipline	Managing and dealing with classroom behaviour	14%	37
	Maintaining classroom discipline	11%	29
	Managing and dealing with aggressive/abusive students	10%	28
	NET: Student discipline	23%	63
No other support needed		5%	14

Total sample; Unweighted; base n = 269; total n = 270; 1 missing

Areas teachers would like support in

78%

of teachers would like less non-teaching demands on their time.



54%

Needed help managing students' diverse needs.

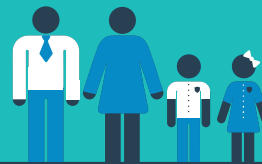


54%

needed professional support.



36% required support to deal with parents.



The majority (78 per cent) of teachers would like less non-teaching demands on their time. Over half needed help managing students' diverse needs (54 per cent) and over half (54 per cent) needed professional support. Thirty-six per cent required support to deal with parents. Only five per cent said they needed no additional support.

We analysed the 20 support areas across various demographic traits. Support needs were similar across demographics in most areas, except for teachers who were in the first five years of their career.

Less experienced teachers need more support than the more experience teachers in the following areas:

Table 7: Areas less experienced teachers need support in

Support areas	Years of teaching experience			
	0- 5 years	6- 10 years	11- 15 years	16 plus years
Maintaining classroom discipline	36%	8%	9%	5%
Managing and dealing with classroom behaviour	30%	9%	14%	12%
Dealing with aggressive/abusive parents	25%	11%	17%	15%
Managing and dealing with aggressive/abusive students	23%	6%	6%	10%
Dealing with intimidation/ verbal abuse by other staff members	16%	9%	9%	5%

Less experienced teachers, with 0-5 years teaching experience, highlighted that they need support with managing and dealing with classroom behaviour and maintaining classroom discipline (30 per cent and 36 per cent respectively). This is 2-4 times higher than the needs of the other teaching experience groups, where between nine and 14 per cent asked for support in managing and dealing with classroom behaviour, and only five to nine per cent asked for support in maintaining classroom discipline. This less experienced group also said they need more support than the more experienced teachers when dealing with aggression, intimidation and abuse, whether it comes from parents, students or other staff members.

This finding reveals an important difference in the support needed, according to teaching experience. Whilst perhaps not surprising that less experienced teachers would need more support and guidance when it comes to managing others' behaviour, as table 10 reveals, they are less concerned than their more experienced peers, with the administrative work and extracurricular activities they are expected to complete.

Our survey results demonstrate that, regardless of their role, teachers require more support for non-teaching activities, particularly administrative work and time for lesson planning. However, depending on a teacher's experience, different support is required to allow teachers to perform their role. Teachers at the beginning of their career are more likely to require support for classroom management than experienced teachers.

Table 8: Difference in support needed by years of experience

Support areas	Years of teaching experience			
	0- 5 years	6- 10 years	11- 15 years	16 plus years
Reduction in the amount of administrative work we have to do	45%	58%	57%	62%
Reduction in extracurricular activities we are expected to do	18%	28%	29%	25%

What impact has COVID-19 had on teacher satisfaction in Victorian Independent schools?

COVID-19 has had a profound effect on Victorian teachers. Virtually overnight, the entire profession was forced to reinvent the way they taught, as the classroom moved from the school grounds to the lounge room (Flack et al., 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetre, 2021). It appears we are finally entering a COVID-19 normal phase and schools are beginning to see some normality in their operations.

To gain insight into how teachers experienced COVID-19, we asked respondents if they felt more or less fulfilled at work over the COVID-19 years of 2020 and 2021. Only 16 per cent felt more fulfilled during this period, while almost half (49 per cent) did not feel more fulfilled. The remaining 35 per cent of teachers neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Further analysis showed there was no real differentiation between most demographics. However, when looking at fulfillment by age group we found that respondents aged 40 to 59 were more definitive in how they felt.

Table 9: Level of fulfillment at work over the last two years (2020 and 2021) during the COVID-19 period, than they did before it, by age group.

Age group (row %)	More fulfilled	Less fulfilled	Neither agree nor disagree
Under 20	0%	100%	0%
20 to 39	14%	45%	41%
40 to 59	18%	54%	28%
60 plus	15%	38%	46%
All age groups	16%	49%	35%

Respondents in the 40 to 59 age group had stronger views than the other age groups, with the largest percentage of teachers who felt more fulfilled (18 per cent) and also less fulfilled (54 per cent).

Of the 42 teachers who said they felt more fulfilled at work during COVID-19, over half (55 per cent) provided a reason. While the sample size is relatively small, our analysis of these reasons reveals five distinct themes:

Table 10: Reasons for being more fulfilled during COVID-19 years

Reasons for being more fulfilled during COVID-19 years N = 23		
Answer themes	Number of teachers who mentioned this	% of teachers who mentioned this
More time for teaching; better work/life balance	8	35%
Challenging but rewarding to guide students through this difficult period	6	26%
Forced a re-think of the way we teach	5	22%
Deepened connections to students and families	4	17%
Became more comfortable with technology	2	9%

While the question asked was specific to fulfilment in their role during the COVID-19 interrupted years, two themes, 'deepened connections to students and families', and 'challenging but rewarding to guide students through this difficult period', speak to the intrinsic motivations of teachers who responded to this survey. Qualitative comments associated with these respondents attest to this. For example:

"Being able to support and guide students through this period was a challenge but life changing for many of my students, thus highly satisfying."

As discussed previously, another key finding from the survey relates to the dissatisfaction with the current workload many teachers feel. For some, as captured in the comment below, COVID-19 helped alleviate this issue to a degree:

"I think working from home freed myself to focus my energy purely on preparing a program of learning for students without the added burden of constant meetings, filling in paperwork and doing other administrative work. It was great to have the time and space to think about the students, and what they needed to maximise their learning opportunity."

We also asked those who found the experience unfulfilling for their reasons. Of the 130 teachers who said they felt less fulfilled at work during COVID-19, 85 (65 per cent) provided a reason. Our analysis of these reasons reveals nine distinct themes:

Table 11: Reasons for being less fulfilled during COVID-19 years (n=85)

Answer themes	Number of teachers who mentioned this	% of teachers who mentioned this
Expectations /pressure too great	14	16%
Burnt out/workload too much	14	16%
Disengaged from students	13	15%
More productive/fulfilling face-to-face	12	14%
Students struggled/disengaged	9	10%
Online teaching/learning not good	9	10%
Too stressful	8	9%
Not appreciated /acknowledged by leaders	5	6%
Subject taught/student group not conducive to online learning	4	5%

The overarching reason teachers were less fulfilled during COVID-19 was due to the conditions and workload, compounding their already noted dissatisfaction with these extrinsic factors. Comments under the themes 'too stressful', 'expectations/pressure too great' and 'burnt out/workload too much' made up 41 per cent of all comments. For example:

"Because the stress of constantly changing expectations and service delivery is still and has worn us all out. We are fatigued. And cannot deliver the level of work we used to now that "a new normal" - one that is constantly uncertain, is required of us."

However, as can be seen throughout this report, teachers' intrinsic values are also reflected at every stage with 49 per cent of teachers putting student issues as the reason they were less fulfilled during the COVID-19 period, with comments such as this:

"While I enjoyed some aspects of remote teaching, the lack of face-to-face interaction took away from the teacher-student relationship, which I find one of the most fulfilling parts of the job. Students' mental health struggles during this time also made it difficult to prioritise their academic progress when their wellbeing was at risk."

The analysis reveals that previously reported issues with teacher satisfaction and support needed, were compounded during the pandemic years and, depending on many factors, teachers either saw the restrictions as positive or negative, often citing similar reasons for either argument.

How respected do Independent school teachers feel by the general public?

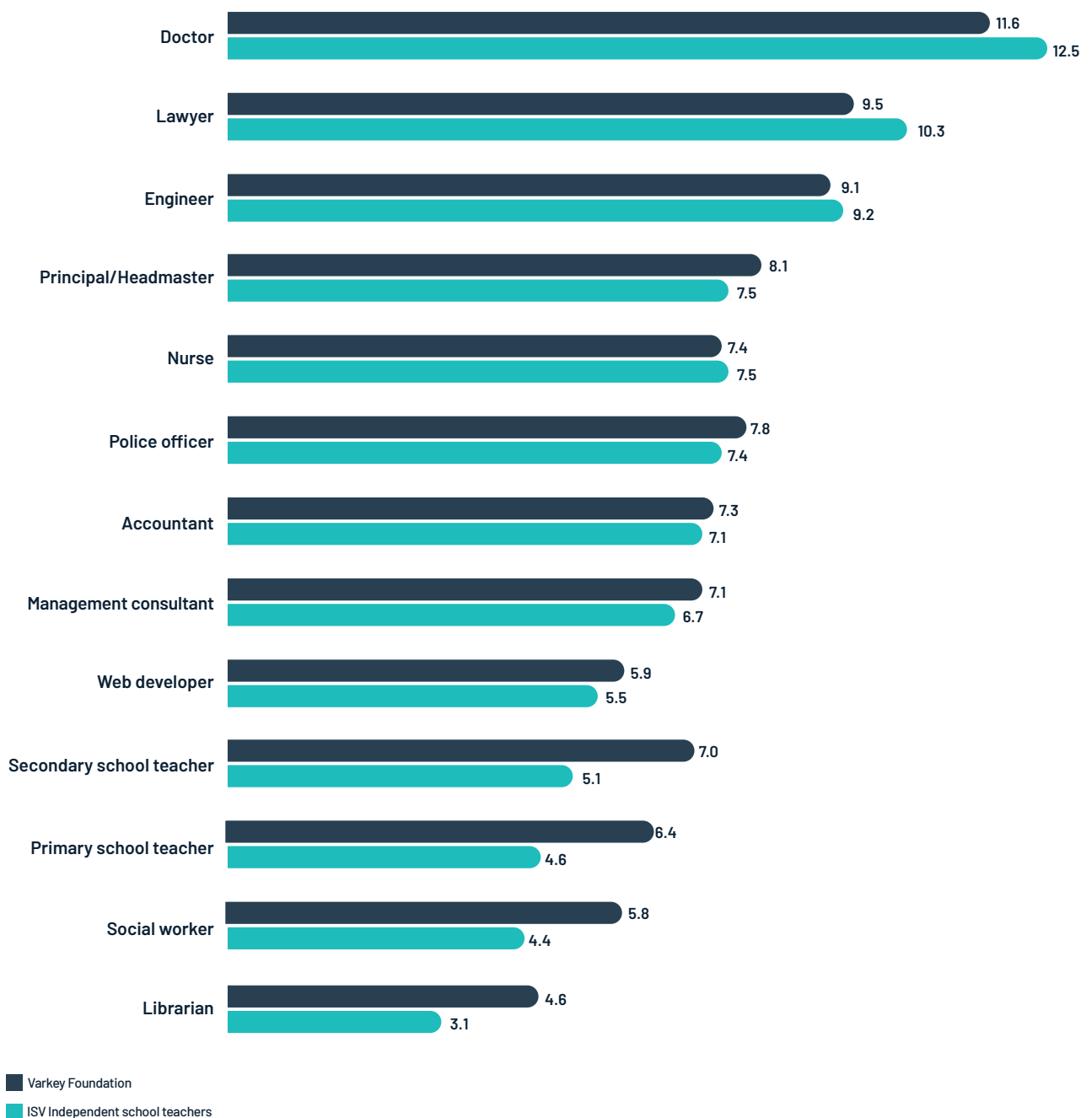
As described earlier in this report, one of the drivers of satisfaction and retention is feeling respected and valued for the work you do (American Psychological Association, 2012). Another measure of satisfaction we explored was to establish how respected and valued teachers believed their profession is seen by the general public.

Research conducted in 2018 by the Varkey Foundation, an international charity focused on improving education outcomes for underprivileged children across the world, explored the status of teachers compared to other professions. They asked more than 41,000 people in 35 countries (covering Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australasia, UK and Europe), to rank 14 professions in order of how well they thought they were respected - with 14 being the highest and 1 being the lowest - before providing an average rank across the professions (Dolton & De Vries, 2020, p.14).

Using all but one of the Varkey Foundation's list of occupations, we replicated key aspects of their ranking status methodology to determine if the result of their global survey mirrors the view of Victorian Independent school teachers.

While the Varkey Foundation asked respondents to directly rank various professions, we asked teachers in our sample to project the general public's view of their profession by ranking professions according to how well respected they believed they were across the wider community. The highest profession was afforded the value of 13 and the lowest a value of 1.

Figure 2: Average status rank – Varkey vs. our findings



Almost three-quarters of teachers (71 per cent) are satisfied with their decision to join the profession with the older (60 + years old) and longer serving (11+ years of experience) teachers being more satisfied (85 per cent and 77 per cent respectively) with their decision to become a teacher than the younger (20 to 39 years old), shorter serving teachers (0 to 5 years of experience) (65 per cent and 62 per cent respectively), which once again points to the need for support differentiation within schools.

The results of the Varkey Foundation's research showed that, on average, the general public rank Principals/Headteachers among the top four professions and Secondary and Primary teachers near the bottom of the list (10th and 11th out of 14 occupations). There were differences in rankings by country, however the majority of nations ranked teachers and principals similarly.

Our results suggest that teachers who responded to this survey do not feel respected by the general public in comparison to other professions.

Aside from the Principal/Headteacher occupation, which respondents ranked among the top four occupations, secondary and primary teachers were ranked near the bottom of the list, 10th and 11th out of 13 occupations.

These findings are consistent with the average found across the 35 countries surveyed by the Varkey Foundation. Here the Headteacher was also fourth on the list with Secondary and Primary school teachers ranked 10th and 11th. (Dolton & De Vries, 2020, p.15).

There are several ways to interpret this finding. One is that this is a systemic issue that could be seen as being at odds with their choice to enter the teaching profession. Conversely, it may confirm the findings around teacher satisfaction discussed earlier in this report, that reveal an altruistic motive to join the profession. Despite teaching not rating highly on the professional scale, they are still satisfied with their decision to become a teacher.

In fact, almost three quarters of teachers (71 per cent) surveyed indicated they are satisfied with their decision to join the profession.

More research is required to unpack this finding to determine an explanation. However, what is clear is that teachers feel their profession is not respected by the general public, vis-à-vis other occupations. A lack of respect for the critical role they perform suggests a lack of perceived value from participating teachers. As outlined earlier in this report, this is a key driver of satisfaction and thus retention in the workplace (American Psychological Association, 2012).

Discussion

This study adds to the available evidence concerning teacher satisfaction in Independent schools and provides several important insights relating to teacher retention. The results of the survey also raise some important issues and considerations for school leaders and policy makers which we now explore.

Teaching is a more than a job, it's a vocation

Teachers choose this profession because they are passionate about working with students. The desire to help and guide students is fundamental to them and is an extremely important and basic characteristic of the majority of teachers surveyed. The results from the survey demonstrate this passion and commitment, as can be seen in the answers given to every question. These findings are also borne out by the literature (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Arnett & Polkinghorne, 2010).

Making a difference to a student's life, interaction with the students, bringing the joy of learning and motivating students to achieve their potential is why teachers teach and it is therefore very important to ensure these intrinsic values are always met in the school environment (97 per cent of teachers cited one or more of these reasons as being the most satisfying for them). Teachers are generally altruistic with less than a quarter (19 per cent) of responses saying acknowledgment of their expertise was important enough for them to place it in their top four reasons of satisfaction.

Almost half (47 per cent) cited contact with parents as being their least favourite aspect of teaching with a third (33 per cent) of respondents citing being acknowledged for their experience and expertise.

Implicit within the survey results is a frustration that teachers are being taken away from the core role that drives people to the profession: teaching students. This is an important point that requires consideration from school leaders and policy makers. While regulation, standardisation and accountability are obviously essential to a world-class education system, teachers in this survey suggest that the balance between these administrative tasks and the time required to teach effectively needs to be redressed. Our survey results suggest that without serious discussion about this balance, teacher retention will not improve as some teachers may be driven away from the profession:

"There are far too many expectations placed on teachers in terms of administration. Things like IEPs; curriculum reviews and audits; Health and Safety audits, Ready to learn plans, all the mandatory training, continuous reporting, meetings and more meetings. These things detract from rich and constructive collaborative planning time which then impacts on rich and deep teaching. The result is teachers who spend most of their time (usually on the weekends) completing admin tasks. This results in teachers who are spread too thinly and who then either don't teach well or who become overwhelmed and start to consider ways to leave the profession."

Put simply, we must be careful not to extinguish the passion to teach that burns inside many in the profession.



Identifying and supporting intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in teachers

The biggest issue for all teachers surveyed is the erosion of their time doing things that impact their ability to focus on students. Three quarters of respondents suggested that they require support for non-teaching demands on their time, such as administrative work, lesson preparation and extracurricular activities.

However, depending on a teacher's experience, different support is required to allow them to perform their role. Teachers at the beginning of their career are 3-4 times more likely to require support for classroom management than experienced teachers. While this knowledge will be self-evident for some school leaders, it may assist others to differentiate the support they offer to teachers, depending on their years of teaching experience and the specifics of the school.

Considering the diverse support needs based on teachers' demographic, school leaders can effectively prioritise support and resources by conducting regular evaluations of their experiences, expectations, and motivators. According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, intrinsic motivators and extrinsic motivators have an inverse relationship. That is, intrinsic motivators (the work itself, growth, sense of contribution) tend to increase motivation when they are present, while extrinsic motivators (salary, appropriate workload) tend to reduce motivation when they are absent. Due to employees' expectations, extrinsic motivators are expected and would not increase motivation if they are in place. The figure below depicts teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic factors from this study, aligned with Herzberg's model (LibreTexts, 2021).

Figure 2: Teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic factors from this study, aligned with Herzberg's two-factor principles



School leaders can reduce dissatisfaction by focusing on the work environment and other extrinsic factors. To increase motivation and job satisfaction, they could prioritise intrinsic factors such as empowering teachers, fostering responsibility and promoting collaboration in the nature of the work itself.

Maintaining a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic factors for teachers is important and requires a collaborative effort between schools and government policies. By paying attention to both sets of job factors, schools and government can reduce teacher turnover and enhance engagement, leading to improved educational outcomes.

As a starting point, school leaders can initiate an evaluation of teacher satisfaction and motivation by conducting a teacher satisfaction survey, such as **ISV's LEAD School Effectiveness Surveys**. This will provide a baseline understanding of where teachers stand in terms of their job satisfaction and motivators.

Status of Teachers

To feel job satisfaction, it is necessary to be respected and valued. Teachers believe they are not valued by the wider community. Principal/Headteacher is listed fourth in the list of ranked professions. However, of concern, is that Secondary and Primary teachers were ranked 10th and 11th out of a list of 13.

Surprisingly, despite not feeling like they are highly valued by society, teachers are still satisfied with their decision to become a teacher (net satisfaction of 71%). Again, this speaks to their altruistic reasons for teaching, to make a difference in students' lives.

It is widely accepted that teacher shortages, due to a decline in new teaching graduates and the attrition of those already in the profession, is a persistent and ongoing problem, in Australia and worldwide (Myers, 2015; Department of Education, 2021; Australian Department of Education, 2022a). It is imperative that work is done to find ways to stem this attrition and attract students to enrol in teaching courses. However, while the decline in new teaching graduates can be verified there is little robust evidence around attrition rates and Weldon (2018) states that the attrition rate is, in fact, unknown and dynamic.

Government initiatives to attract more teachers include monetary incentives and offering different pathways to becoming a teacher (Victorian Government, 2023; Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2022). They are offering scholarships to high achieving students who decide to undertake an education degree, and also pathways into teaching for career changers, who may or may not have a degree. While these offerings may attract more students, it doesn't guarantee they will join or remain in the teaching profession.

Currently those attracted to teaching have an intrinsic desire to make a difference in a student's life. The offer of scholarships to those that don't have this altruistic desire may change that dynamic. While it might seem contrary to our research findings to suggest encouraging students who do not necessarily see teaching as a vocation to become a teacher on the basis of a high ATAR score or success in a previous career, it may help raise the profile of teachers and their standing with the general public.

This would ensure both highly motivated and educated teachers join the profession for the benefit of future generations of students, and the country as a whole.

Conclusion

The survey findings in this report identify an intrinsically motivated and dedicated workforce who put the value of students at the centre of their work, sometimes to the detriment of their own wellbeing and career progression.

They value the time they spend working with students and helping them achieve their potential, but not the time they have to spend on non-teaching aspects that deflect this time. They are altruistic and generally satisfied with their decision to enter the teaching profession.

The survey findings also identify the need to support teachers, specifically with the amount of administrative work required and the lack of time they have for lesson preparation. Although some generalisations can be made, we identified that the support needed was different for each teacher and it is therefore important to respect and acknowledge this aspect if we are to increase teacher retention.

The balance between intrinsic and extrinsic factors must therefore be carefully managed by school leaders and policy makers. This will ensure each teacher is given the right support to manage their workload and not be overwhelmed with tasks that take them away from their reason for teaching: making a difference in students' lives.



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