

# THE Daily Telegraph

## Pay the way for class act

By Maralyn Parker  
October 25, 2006 12:00

Article from: **Daily Telegraph**

**DON'T believe the pollies and the bureaucrats when they say what we pay teachers does not matter.**

New research by Australian National University academic Andrew Leigh shows the more teachers are paid, the better results their students get.

Why? Higher salaries attract smarter students into teacher courses at university. Proof at last.

When these students graduate they become higher quality teachers, so their students achieve more.

Yes I know it all sounds very logical, who could believe anything else.

In fact we have been conned for decades by governments saying teacher salaries are not very important in attracting bright people into teaching.

Teacher unions have also always claimed merit pay would not improve the general quality of teaching.

People teach – we have been told – because they love the job and want to make a difference in a child's life. The dedicated would teach anyway, no matter the pay or conditions.

Leigh's research tells us otherwise. Even a modest salary increase of 1 per cent can make a difference to the quality of students entering teaching.

More telling, the difference has to be in comparison to other professions a student could start studying for.

So if teacher salaries increase while salaries of other professions remain static, more bright students will opt for teaching.

Previous research by Leigh shows the academic standard of student teachers in Australia has dropped in the past 20 years.

So if Australia wants to be a clever country, it needs to take notice of this significant Australian educational research.

I bet other countries will.

US research shows there is a big gap in teaching quality between the best and worst teachers – something any parent who has had a child at school for a few years is painfully aware of.

Also in the US, it is proven the districts that pay more get better teachers. And they found a 10 per cent increase in salaries in a district reduces the drop out rate of students a decade later by 3 to 4 per cent.

Leigh's research also found that, as teacher salaries lose ground in comparison to other occupations, the brighter teachers are more likely to leave to work elsewhere.

This research also, I believe, debunks the union's claim merit pay will not improve general teacher quality.

If bright students think they will get the higher-paid teaching jobs, they are more likely to do a teaching degree and go for jobs in the public system.

Merit pay aside, this research is a compelling argument for the State Government to increase all teacher salaries considerably.

By how much you ask? What price do we put on our future?

Copyright 2006 News Limited. All times AEST (GMT + 10).



[Print this page](#)

## New teachers outstrip old in salaries

Justine Ferrari, Education writer

23oct06

EXPERIENCED teachers received pay rises worth only 5 per cent over eight years, while their newest colleagues enjoyed a 30 per cent increase, giving Australian teachers one of the flattest pay scales in the OECD.

An OECD education report shows the top level of the teachers' pay scale in Australia is only 50 per cent higher than the starting pay, and that teachers hit the top rate after nine years in the classroom - well below the OECD average.

Among OECD countries, teachers reach the top of their pay scale after an average of 24 years, when they are paid 70 per cent more than their first pay packet.

By comparison, South Korean teachers take 37 years to earn their top wage, which is almost three times higher than their starting rate, and Japanese teachers work for 31 years to receive pay 2.5 times higher.

Increasing starting salaries is used to attract people into teaching, and a study released yesterday by the Australian National University found it attracts a better calibre of student.

An analysis by economist Andrew Leigh of test scores for university students found that raising a teacher's starting salary by 10 per cent boosted the average student's test score by six points.

"When a state or territory raises teacher salaries, talented students are more likely to enter teacher education courses," he said yesterday.

Dr Leigh, from the ANU Research School of Social Sciences, found that pay rises in other professions drew talented students away from teaching into better-paid careers.

"More academically talented people are going to be drawn to professions with higher average salaries and also more pay dispersal where you get more returns for being better in the profession," he said.

The OECD report warns that while flat pay structures offer incentives to attract people into teaching, they offer fewer incentives to reward continued development of the profession.

"In contrast, a steep age-earnings profile offers workers substantial salary increases throughout their work lives," the report says. "These factors are among those that could influence the career decisions of potential teachers and the types of people who are attracted to the teaching profession."

After 15 years on the job, an Australian high school teacher is paid \$55 for every hour of teaching time, compared with the OECD average of \$63.

Labor backbencher Craig Emerson said to reverse the flat pay structure by giving all teachers a 30 per cent salary rise - negotiated by state governments over the past decade to attract graduates and others to the profession - would cost about \$1.5billion.

"It seems pretty clear we need to rethink the way we regard the teaching profession in Australia," Dr Emerson said.

"In the sort of countries cited, teachers are held up on a pedestal, and regarded as a highly prestigious profession.

"In Australia, we haven't got to that point."

Dr Emerson said that as well as lifting starting salaries to attract quality students, it was important to reward teachers throughout their careers.

Federal Education Minister Julie Bishop announced in July her intention to introduce a system of merit-based pay for teachers and floated the idea of paying incentives directly to high-performing teachers and schools.

[privacy](#)   [terms](#)   © The Australian

## Teacher talent linked to pay rates

*23rd October 2006, 14:30 WST*

Better pay buys better teachers, an economic analysis has found.

Every one per cent increase in starting pay for teachers increased the academic aptitude of student teachers by 0.6 per cent, according to study results released by the Australian National University.

Study author Andrew Leigh said when choosing a career, many students made the decision with an eye to starting salary.

But he said an across-the-board pay rise might not be the most cost-effective solution, rewarding aptitude might be an even better way to raise teacher quality.

In his analysis Dr Leigh, an economist, researched the test scores for every Australian student entering university during a 15-year period and compared the scores of those entering teacher education with other students.

He then matched this to information on the salaries of new teachers to estimate the impact of pay.

"When a State or Territory raises teacher salaries, talented students are more likely to enter teacher education courses," he said.

The State School Teachers Union president, Mike Keely agreed pay mattered but said measuring aptitude was difficult because being a good teacher was more than just about academic ability.

Peta Rasdien