

Advanced Skills Teachers:
Dilemmas and Demands

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ABSTRACT

The classification of Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) has been established in Australian schools during the last five years. Although there has been variation in terms of eligibility, salary and professional status across different states and education systems throughout the country, the basic notion of an AST is similar to a classroom teacher with superior teaching skills. This paper focuses the classification of AST within the NSW Department of School Education, and addresses questions regarding classroom teachers selected and appointed as ASTs. What motivates classroom teachers to apply/not apply for AST status? What reasons are perceived as affecting application outcomes? Would classroom teachers apply/reapply for AST status in the future? Information was gained from over 400 ASTs and classroom teachers in the NSW Department of School Education in the Hunter Region. In 1992 and 1993, primary teachers completed an attitude survey which questioned their opinions about the AST selection process, their involvement in AST selection and their perceptions of effects of ASTs in schools. Results indicated mixed feelings among teachers concerning the effects (both positive and negative) of ASTs in schools in terms of teacher efficiency, student outcomes and overall school effectiveness. The notion of ASTs as classroom teachers with superior teaching skills appeared to be overshadowed by perceived problems concerning AST eligibility, AST selection and appointment, the roles and responsibilities assigned to ASTs and the overall accountability of ASTs in schools.

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ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHERS © NATIONAL OVERVIEW

This paper outlines an investigation of the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) classification and selection within the NSW Department of School Education. To provide a perspective on the situation in NSW, the evolution of the national AST classification is first explained.

In recent years the Australian education system has experienced increased public scrutiny because of perceived inadequate student success. This situation has resulted in efforts to establish greater teacher accountability in the key learning areas for improved student outcomes. In an effort to keep effective teachers in the classroom (rather than promoting them to non-teaching administrative positions) and to provide teachers with recognition for demonstrating superior classroom teaching skills, the career path classification of 'Advanced Skills Teacher' was

introduced.

In a 1990 paper prepared by the Schools Council for the National Board of Employment, Education and Training entitled Australia's Teachers: An Agenda for the Next Decade, the nationwide classification of Advanced Skills Teacher was recommended. The Advanced Skills Teacher classification was seen as recognition of the fundamental importance of classroom teaching inschooling, and acknowledgment that many teachers gained their strongest sense of fulfilment from classroom teaching and did not wish to pursue careers in administration.

In support, Bluer and Carmichael (1991) perceived the nationwide classification of the Advanced Skills Teacher as an attempt to provide classroom teachers with greater rewards for demonstrating superior classroom teaching skills, therefore embodying a significant career path change for Australia's more than 200 000 school teachers. The career restructure was seen as providing greater motivation and incentive for experienced teachers, promoting the development of new and supportive relationships between Advanced Skills Teachers and other teachers, developing systematic on-the-job skills acquisition programs for teachers and providing new methods for organising teachers' work.

AST CLASSIFICATION IN NSW DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATIONf

In 1992, the New South Wales Department of School Education initiated theclassification of Advanced Skills Teacher. As suggested by the Department (1992a) the Advanced Skills Teacher position was created to encourage theretention in the classroom of highly skilled teachers.

What is an Advanced Skills Teacher?

The NSW Department of School Education (1992a & 1992b) has defined an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) as follows:

An Advanced Skills Teacher is a classroom teacher who provides

educational leadership and guidance to classroom teachers.

In order for teachers to apply for Advanced Skills Teacher status, they needed to demonstrate high levels of competency in classroom teaching and student learning. They had to outline their involvement in areas such as contribution to professional development of other teachers, contribution to curriculum development, contribution to student progress and involvement in improving the educational outcomes of students, and assisting beginning teachers with support and guidance related to classroom performance.

There are specific conditions which pertain to AST application within the NSW Department of School Education. Some of these conditions are unique to this education system, and therefore need to be clarified.

In order to apply for AST status, applicants must have fulfilled minimum service requirements (i.e. reached the final step of their salary scale). Application involves both a written and interview process, with the outcome as either an AST appointment, being considered suitable without gaining appointment (most commonly due to lack of available AST positions), or a ranking of unsuitable. AST appointment is for 12 months, followed by a review and possible reappointment. Teachers who are 3 year trained gain permanent 4 year trained salary status through AST appointment, even if that appointment is for one year only. Four year trained teachers are given a set allowance (approximately \$1200) for the 12 month AST contract. These conditions have important implications in terms of teacher attitudes towards the AST classification and selection process.

After appointment, ASTs are given role statements, outlining specific responsibilities they are expected to carry out in their position as ASTs. These role statements are evaluated after 12 months in order to continue (or terminate) their AST appointment.

THE RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Two studies were designed to investigate teacher attitudes towards aspects of AST classification and selection in NSW schools. It was hoped that by examining teacher attitude, information could be gained regarding the success of AST implementation and the benefits that were experienced by teachers.

A teacher survey completed by teachers in 1992 and 1993 was used to obtain information about teachers' involvement in the Advanced Skills Teacher application and selection processes. Teachers were asked whether they applied for Advanced Skills Teacher status. Teachers who did apply were asked whether they gained Advanced Skills Teacher positions, and/or were deemed suitable or unsuitable. Finally, all teachers were asked whether they would apply for Advanced Skills Teacher status in the future. For each of these questions, teachers were asked to explain their answers.

For both studies, the population was ASTs and classroom teachers in the NSW Department of School Education, Hunter Region. The same 66 schools were involved in both Studies. In Study 1, a total of 340 teachers were involved; 54 males and 283 females. Study 2 involved 58 males and 279 females in a total of 339 teachers. For both Studies, the average age of teachers was 39 years. Average years of teaching for Study 1 was 16 years, 17 years for Study 2. In both studies, average age and years of teaching was higher for males than females.

For both studies, a greater percentage of eligible males applied for AST status than females. Forty percent of males in Study 1 who had reached the top of their salary scale (and were therefore eligible to apply for AST status) made AST application, and 41 percent in Study 2. For females, only 27 percent in Study 1 and 33 percent in Study 2 of eligible teachers applied for AST status. However, females were more successful in gaining AST positions. Thirty nine percent of males who applied in Study 1 gained positions, while 42 percent of females were successful. The difference is greater for Study 2, where 65 percent of males and 70 percent of females were successful in gaining AST positions. These gender differences were significant for Study 1.

Table 1 shows teachers from both Studies who were eligible to apply for Advanced Skills Teacher status, teachers who actually applied for AST status and the outcome of their application (gained a position (AST), were deemed suitable (SUIT) or unsuitable (UNSUIT)).

TABLE 1: Frequency distributions of teacher AST involvement for both Studies

Other aspects noted in Table 1 related to the greater proportion of females who chose to apply for AST status in Study 2. Also, a greater proportion of applicants in Study 2 were successful in gaining AST positions, because more positions were available.

REASONS FOR APPLYING/NOT APPLYING FOR AST STATUS

Teachers were asked to provide reasons for their decision to apply (or not apply) for AST status. In Study 1, 241 (71%) of the 340 teachers were eligible to apply, yet only 70 (29%) applied. In Study 2, 251 (74%) of

teachers were eligible, yet 88 (35%) applied @ a slightly larger percentage than Study 1.

Reasons for Applying for AST Status

In both studies, the reasons could be divided into five major categories: recognition, personal satisfaction, financial gain, career/promotional opportunities and encouragement from others.

Table 2 shows teacher responses according to the five designated categories. The major motivating factor for teachers applying for Advanced Skills Teacher status was recognition of past and present endeavours in teaching. Recognition encompassed teaching ability, roles and responsibilities undertaken in the school and/or in education as a whole, and areas of leadership and decision-making. Other motivating factors were personal satisfaction (going for Advanced Skills Teacher status was seen as a good experience), financial gain (access to 4 year salary status), to enhance career/promotional opportunities (the notion of Advanced Skills Teacher was to provide an alternate career path for teachers who wanted recognition without promotion © yet many teachers saw Advanced Skills Teacher as the only means of gaining promotional status) and because they were encouraged by others.

TABLE 2 Teachers' reasons for applying for Advanced Skills Teacher status in percentage terms for Studies 1 and 2.

The following response from a 53 year old female (Study 1) focussed on recognition and financial gain as reasons for applying:

" I have over a number of years been considered to be competent and hardworking..... As I am nearing retirement I felt that this was the last chance to have my worth recognised and to increase my salary."

This applicant was subsequently deemed unsuitable.

This 39 year old female, who highlighted personal satisfaction and recognition as reasons for applying, gained a position:

"I've been involved and offering such services for past years I very much enjoy having students, demonstrating lessons, and sharing and helping my colleagues."

The following comments (Study 2) came from females in their forties who gained AST positions. In both cases recognition was a major influence in their decisions to apply for AST status:

"I had reached the top of the salary scale with nowhere to go as I do not wish to seek promotion. It [applying for AST status] gave formal recognition to a role as support to other teachers in small schools which I was already providing."

"[I applied for AST status to] fulfil a need to be recognised as an effective teacher, and continue my work, supporting both executive and peers to develop a positive, relaxing learning environment © where the child is the centre or focus."

Reasons for Not Applying

A majority of teachers in both Studies did not apply to be Advanced

Skills Teachers. In Study 1, from the 241 teachers able to apply for Advanced Skills Teacher status, 171 (71%) chose not to apply. In Study 2, 251 (74%) were eligible, yet 163 (65%) did not apply. Table 3 showed that teachers' distrust of the system (Advanced Skills Teacher selection and the education system as a whole) was the major deterrent.

TABLE 3 Teachers' reasons for not applying for Advanced Skills Teacher status
(N=177; 33 males, 144 females)

As shown in Table 3, teachers' main motivation for applying/not applying was not monetary, although this was an important factor for many teachers. Teachers also mentioned lack of confidence, lack of support from school executive and unwillingness to compete with colleagues as reasons for not applying for Advanced Skills Teacher status. A proportion of teachers were happy to remain classroom teachers and/or had other commitments.

What is interesting to note is the variation of percentage responses for some categories between the two Studies. For Study 2, distrust of the system was not as strong a deterrent as for Study 1, but lack of confidence was stronger. Also, in Study 2, teachers' reasons for not applying were more strongly related to other commitments, or their desire to remain 'happily' in the classroom. Problems with executive staff members proved to be a deterrent of AST application in Study 1, but not so in the latter Study, where the amount of additional responsibility given to ASTs was a new discouragement. This change in focus over 12 months may be due to greater information gained about the AST classification and selection, therefore less distrust of the system in Study 2. The focus of deterrents to AST application in Study 2 were more personal © lack of confidence, other commitments, happy to be in the classroom. Teachers had seen the effects of AST selection and as Table 1 shows, more teachers applied for AST status in 1993. It would seem that some teachers who initially felt distrust of the system became more informed of the selection process and chose to apply the second time around, leaving those teachers lacking the confidence, busy with other commitments or happy to stay full-time in the classroom in the majority.

It is also reasonable to assume that a greater number of teachers lacked confidence by the second survey, because they had observed how some teachers had experienced difficulties with AST selection or roles and responsibilities. This may explain why teachers were discouraged to apply in 1993 because of the amount of responsibilities given to ASTs, not apparent in the 1992 survey.

The following two responses (Study 1), the first from a 45 year old male and the second from a 35 year old female, exemplify the distrust many teachers felt with both the Advanced Skills Teacher selection system and

the education system as a whole:

"The A.S.T. position was poorly thought out, poorly implemented and poorly administered. No two schools are approaching the appointment of A.S.T. the same way. The duties of the A.S.T. are ill defined and vary from school to school. Good idea, badly executed."

"I feel the initial idea of A.S.T.s being to reward hard working classroom teachers who contributed to school and its management was a great idea. However, I feel now that it's just another name for E.T. [executive teacher]. I don't wish to climb through the ranks of Executive. I wish to remain a classroom teacher and be acknowledged for the extra work I do for the school."

This 46 year old female (Study 1) did not want to compete with her colleagues:

"I did not feel I should have to compete with friends for what I feel is my right and thereby disrupt the good team that is at present building a good school culture."

The following 48 year old female (Study 2) also felt the negative effects of AST on collegiality:

"My observation has shown AST concepts have been divisive and have created an atmosphere of competition rather than cooperation."

The following response came from a 35 year old female (Study 1), explaining how she was too busy to apply because of her commitment to school activities. Yet this was the very reason she should have applied.

"I believe I have enough to do with my class, as well as being on the D.S.P. [Disadvantaged Schools Program] panel, student welfare Rep [representative], in charge of the choir, training Enduro team, curric. [curriculum] development etc. etc. etc. I feel I couldn't fulfil the duties of an A.S.T."

These two comments came from females in their forties (Study 2) and highlight the problems of AST classification being confused with executive classification:

"The AST status is fine if it is awarded for classroom teaching skills but it seems to be regarded as a way of expecting executive-like duties to be done."

"I don't wish to pursue leadership and management areas @ the avenue already exists for this. AST's original idea was to allow teachers who chose the classroom as their career path to still move up the salary scale."

If this is what had been maintained I would have applied."

OUTCOME OF ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHER APPLICATION

Applying for Advanced Skills Teacher status had three possible outcomes: gaining of an Advanced Skills Teacher position (either within a school or on a cluster basis), not gaining a position but being deemed suitable (some teachers were granted suitability but did not gain a position because they were not successful enough with application and interview; others were deemed suitable but did not gain a position because there was no position available), or classified as unsuitable.

Reasons for Gaining Advanced Skills Teacher Position

Twenty nine (41%) of the 70 teachers who applied for AST status in Study 1 gained AST positions @ seven males and 22 females. In Study 2, 61 (69%) gained AST positions from 88 who applied @ 48 females and 13 males. Table 4 shows that teachers perceived their qualifications, according to the Advanced Skills Teacher criteria, enabled them to be successful in gaining AST positions. Supportive executive, good teaching ability and good experiences at interview were also seen to have contributed to the successful outcome.

TABLE 4 Teachers' reasons for gaining an Advanced Skills Teacher position for Studies 1 and 2 in percentage terms

There were some interesting contrasts between Studies 1 and 2 in terms of reasons given for successful application outcome. In Study 2, good teaching ability was seen as a much stronger determinant of AST appointment than for Study 1. Also experience during interview had a stronger influence for Study 2. It appeared that more teachers successful in AST appointment in 1993 attributed their success to intrinsic, rather than extrinsic forces.

The following two responses came from 37 and 44 year old females (Study 1) respectively. These comments showed that meeting of criteria and supportive

executive were perceived to enhance successful AST application outcome:

"I believe that my application illustrated that I adequately met the criteria..."

"Obviously I fitted the necessary criteria and there was a position available. I have a very supportive principal who considered I was ready to apply for the position."

This 39 year old male (Study 1) considered his qualification for the position guaranteed his success (in AST appointment), even though his experience during interview was not good:

"... I feel I am a teacher possessing superior teaching, communicating and

motivating skills. The interview did not go well but panel members could see my worth despite nervousness."

Reasons for Gaining Suitability for Advanced Skills Teacher Status
Thirty (43%) of the 70 applicants for Advanced Skills Teacher in Study 1 status gained suitability @ 7 males and 23 females. For Study 2, 17 (19%) of the 88 who applied were deemed suitable @ 4 males and 13 females. Responses regarding this outcome were divided. Some teachers were pleased with the granting of suitability, as there was no Advanced Skills Teacher position available at their school and being deemed suitable was an indication that they would be more likely to gain a position as soon as one was available. Other suitable applicants were disappointed that they had missed out on available positions, which had been given to 'better' applicants. Table 5 shows frequencies of various responses for Studies 1 and 2.

TABLE 5 Teachers' reasons for becoming suitable for Advanced Skills Teacher status for Studies 1 and 2 in percentage terms

Categorising responses for the application outcome of suitability was therefore more difficult. However, comments, both positive and negative, could be sorted into the six categories shown in Table 5 @ interview experience, availability of an AST position, competition at interview, currently in acting executive position, and comments related to teachers' applications. In Study 2, the sixth category, nepotism, had to be included because of comments which related to perceived unfair selection due to favouritism. Overall, comments tended to be more negative for Study 2 because more AST positions were available and the category of teachers deemed 'suitable' without gaining AST positions were in the minority. This may have made these teachers feel more like 'left overs'.

The following two comments, from females in their forties (Study 1), highlighted how differently the outcome of suitability was perceived. Both applicants have stated (in their opinion) reasons for their being granted suitability:

1. Great support from Principal ...
2. Breadth of my educational experience.
3. Variety of in-school involvement."

"Not confident in an interview situation. Did not sell myself adequately. Didn't obviously show I was a skilful classroom teacher."

It was interesting to note that some responses regarding suitability for both Studies were made by applicants in acting executive positions. Several applicants were successful in application and interview, yet could not accept Advanced Skills Teacher positions because they were in relieving positions on the school executive. These applicants possibly viewed the Advanced Skills Teacher role as a 'stepping stone' to promotion, possibly

the only one available to them. Also, their executive experience apparently enhanced their applications, because all were informed they would be given Advanced Skills Teacher positions in the future.

Reasons for being deemed Unsuitable

Eleven (16%) of the 70 applicants in Study 1 were deemed unsuitable for Advanced Skills Teacher status @ 4 males and 7 females. The 10 (11%) applicants deemed unsuitable in Study 2 consisted of 3 males and 7 females. Unsuitable applicants perceived this outcome to be related to their application and interview, lack of support and/or experience, and unfairness. Table 6 shows the distributions of these responses.

TABLE 6 Teachers' reasons for being deemed unsuitable for Advanced Skills Teacher status for Studies 1 and 2 in percentage terms

What was interesting to note in the comparison between Studies 1 and 2 was the greater emphasis on extrinsic influences for Study 2. In Study 2, reasons for being unsuccessful at AST application were attributed more to lack of executive support and less to actual performance at interview (although the small population of 'unsuitable' applicants needs to be considered when percentage differences appear to be great). This change of emphasis contrasts with the reasons for successful AST application in Study 2, which appeared more as a result of intrinsic factors.

This 52 year old 'unsuitable' female applicant (Study 1) felt that her interview affected her chances:

"I was told that my application was excellent, but I didn't handle the interview well, and dwelt too much on pupil welfare.."

It was noted that this applicant felt her 'dwelling on pupil welfare' affected the outcome. It might be expected that it should have enhanced her eligibility status, as pupil/student welfare is a main focus of AST criteria.

This 39 year old female's unsuitability status (Study 1) was seen to be related to the Advanced Skills Teacher/promotion dilemma, and perceived to be unfair:

"... I hadn't supervised anyone but had had experience as a classroom teacher and had shared that knowledge with colleagues. I understood the position to be one of excellence in classroom teaching, not leadership."

APPLYING FOR ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHER STATUS IN THE FUTURE^f

Final questions of the Teacher Attitude Survey for Studies 1 and 2 concerned teachers' future decisions regarding AST application. Teachers were asked whether they would apply/reapply for AST status in the future and to give reasons for their decision. This question involved all teachers, not just those presently eligible to apply for Advanced Skills Teacher

status. For both Studies, male teachers were more definite in their decision to apply or not apply, while females tended to be unsure of whether they would apply/reapply for AST status in the future.

Table 7 shows the breakdown of responses on the question of future AST application for teachers from both Studies. Some teachers did not answer this question, hence the category of 'missing' @ again pointing to indecision, particularly of female teachers.

TABLE 7 Numbers of Males and Females and their Decisions concerning Applying or Reapplying for AST Status in the Future for both Studies

Reasons for Applying in the Future

Eighty one (27%) teachers from Study 1 indicated that they would apply for Advanced Skills Teacher status in the future @ 17 males and 64 females. In Study 2 87 (26%) responded that they would apply for future AST @ 21 males and 65 females. In both Studies, a higher percentage of males indicated they would apply for AST in the future. Table 8 shows that recognition, financial status, career options and personal satisfaction were the major reasons teachers gave for applying in the future in both Studies.

TABLE 8 Teachers' reasons for applying for Advanced Skills Teacher status in the future for both Studies in percentage terms

There was a strong similarity between teachers' reasons for applying now and in the future (see Table 2), and recognition was the main reason in most cases. The main difference was in teachers' reasons for applying for future AST in Study 2. Career and promotional opportunity became the main motivator in Study 2, with recognition and personal satisfaction lesser motivators. Financial gain (including access to 4 year trained salary status) was also stronger in Study 2. The stronger emphasis on career and promotion in Study 2 may have been due to the increased availability of AST positions in schools during the 1993 Study, and therefore a more accessible career path. However, the dilemma between AST as a teaching or promotional career path was still apparent.

The following comments came from teachers who had applied for Advanced Skills Teacher status during Study 1. The first, a 50 year old female, became an Advanced Skills Teacher while the second, a 44 year old male, was granted suitability. They both indicated they would reapply for Advanced Skills Teacher status in the future.

"Have enjoyed P.R. [public relations] with kids, staff and community. Although a heavy load have found the job rewarding."

"I believe that I have skills and knowledge to impart to other teachers."

The following two comments in Study 2 came from ASTs. The first is from a 37 year old female who identified personal satisfaction as a motivator for future application. The second response came from a 36 year old male and reinforces the notion of AST as a promotional 'stepping stone':

"There is satisfaction in the work for me so far. Maybe if the jobs I was given were useless and uninteresting I may feel differently."

"AST position/placement raises my profile and creates a greater opportunity for me to gain a promotions position."

The following comment was made by a 41 year old female who had been deemed suitable through AST application but had not gained an AST position. The emphasis here is the perceived power of the principal in AST selection and appointment:

"I feel I am capable and as the previous principal has retired I feel I have a much better chance [of gaining an AST position] now."

Reasons for Not Applying for AST Status in the Future

Ninety one (27%) teachers from Study 1 stated that they would not apply for Advanced Skills Teacher status in the future @ 16 males and 75 females. For Study 2, 128 (38%) teachers indicated they would not apply for future AST @ 23 males and 104 females. Table 9 shows the responses for both Studies.

TABLE 9 Teachers' reasons for not applying for Advanced Skills Teacher status

in the future for both Studies in percentage terms

In both Studies, there was a higher percentage of males who were against future AST application. Females in both Studies tended to be more unsure of their future decisions, or did not answer the question.

There was a strong relationship between reasons for not applying now and in the future, as shown in Tables 9 and 3 respectively. In both cases and for both Studies, teachers' distrust of 'the system' (both the Advanced Skills Teacher selection system and the education system as a whole), financial concerns, lack of confidence, other commitments and contentment with being a classroom teacher were given as reasons for not applying for Advanced Skills Teacher status.

The following comment, from a 47 year old female who gained an Advanced Skills Teacher position (Study 1), showed that desire to apply in the future can be affected by experience:

"I will NEVER go through the interviewing process again. It was so artificial, so unreal, so purposeless."

This comment (Study 2) came from a 50 year old male, and highlighted financial factors and lack of faith in AST selection as deterrent to future AST application:

"It's [AST] not worth the money for the stated job criteria. It's only a token career path, not a real alternative to educational administration, nor is it separate from executive administration, as it's supposed to be."

Unsure of AST Application

Fifty-eight teachers (17%) in Study 1 were not sure about applying for Advanced Skills Teacher in the future and 79 (23%) in Study 2. The 37 year old female (Study 1) who gave this response was eligible to apply for Advanced Skills Teacher status. Although she didn't apply, she indicated being unsure of applying in the future:

"I need the money but I don't need the hassle, alienation and aggravation that can go with the position, particularly as things hot up politically."

CONCLUSION

The innovative classification of Advanced Skills Teacher for schools in the NSW Department of School Education would appear to be a positive step. Theoretically, it is an effort to reward and give recognition to superior teachers while allowing them to retain their classroom status. Yet there are many aspects of this selection which have been considered, and many concerns have been raised. Is AST classification and selection acceptable to NSW teachers? Has the competitive aspect of AST selection undermined staff collegiality? Have principals and supervisors submitted accurate work reports for prospective ASTs? Have interview panels remained unbiased in their decisions of suitability, unsuitability and AST selection? Have appointed ASTs had a positive educational impact in their schools?

The teacher input to these Studies provided some very valuable quantitative and qualitative data. Through analysing teacher responses, some points were made clear. The concept of Advanced Skills Teachers as teachers with outstanding ability in the classroom who wish to stay teaching and help other teachers was a step in the right direction. Although some Advanced Skills Teacher prerequisites such as being on the top of the salary scale were questioned, general approval of the Advanced Skills Teacher position, in abstract terms, was apparent.

Teachers perceived that there were inconsistencies, confusions and dilemmas over the Advanced Skills Teacher role considered as an executive position, which affected the success of the venture. Over seventy percent of teachers in both Studies who were eligible to apply for Advanced Skills Teacher status did not apply as a reflection of many teachers' negative feelings about the process.

Hopefully some of the problems with the Advanced Skills Teacher selection process will be remedied in the future. These concluding comments, both from principals (Study 1 and Study 2 respectively) illustrate this view:

"This scheme seemed like a wonderful opportunity to emphasise the importance of classroom teaching in the world of education. Instead the whole exercise has been marked by confusion and scheming to save money leaving many questioning its worth. It is to be hoped that at some time in the future a credible way of recognising the worth of classroom teachers can be devised. At this stage, this one has not achieved its purpose."

"AST positions were created to recognise and reward quality teaching and provide a career path that is classroom based. The development of the process has not achieved the purpose of creating the positions. The quota system locks out some teachers, the rewards (financially) are inadequate and the position's role statements generally go far beyond the original intentions. There needs to be a redirection of the AST process to the purpose of keeping good teacher teaching and sharing their skills with other teachers."

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APPENDIX

Specific Aspects of AST Classification

All permanent and temporary unpromoted teachers who are on the final step of their salary scale and who have met the Advanced Skills Teacher service requirements are categorised as eligible.

Eligible teachers who satisfy the school-based Advanced Skills Teacher interview and selection panel and also meet the general Advanced Skills Teacher criteria are classified as suitable.

All suitable applicants are placed on a suitability list within a

school or Cluster of schools. From the suitability list, principals appoint Advanced Skills Teachers. With each appointed Advanced Skills Teacher, principals negotiate specific roles and responsibilities aimed at meeting the defined needs of the school.

Unsuccessful applicants may be deemed ineligible if they do not meet the service requirement or unsuitable if they meet the service requirement but do not satisfy the panel that their skills and experience within the context of the Advanced Skills Teacher general criteria are of an Advanced Skills Teacher standard.

Advanced Skills Teachers @ Allowance

Teachers who were four@year trained or higher who were appointed as Advanced Skills Teachers are paid an annual allowance. Appointed Advanced Skills Teachers who are three@year trained are granted pay equivalent to four@year trained teachers. Their four@year pay continues for the remainder of their teaching career.

The Advanced Skills Teacher Review Process

Appointed Advanced Skills Teachers are subject to a review at the end of 12 months. This review determines whether appointed Advanced Skills Teachers have fulfilled the specific roles and responsibilities of their position. Re@appointment and/or progression to Advanced Skills Teacher Level Two would be based on this review.