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expert teacher, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT), teacher pay, teacher workload, Teachers' work

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AARE blog, Alison Bedford, expert teachers, HALT

November.7.2022

What you should know now about the NSW government and Dolores Umbridge's evil ways

By Alison Bedford

The NSW Government has announced the creation of an 'expert teacher' role, [to be paid almost \\$150 000 pa](#). While this could replace the ineffective Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher [HALT] system, the work expected of these expert teachers is already part of many teachers' standard practice, [as social media was quick to highlight](#).

Alice Leung
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□ "Expert teachers" will be "opening their classroom for observation, supervising teaching students and early career teachers, developing lesson plans and doing class observations" <- We all do these already so pay rise for everyone? [#MoreThanThanks](#)

smh.com.au

Pay of almost \$150,000 for 'expert teachers' in reform proposal

A survey of 1350 public school teachers found more than two-thirds would be interested in taking on one of the proposed roles.

5:02 AM · Nov 1, 2022



548



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These reforms, while offering some positives, do not address teachers concerns about pay and conditions for all teachers, not just an elite few. The recent announcement of a [behaviour expert](#) to be appointed as part of the NSW government's plan to resolve the teacher workload crisis was also met with [derision online](#), with many invoking JK Rowling's brutal disciplinarian, [Dolores Umbridge](#), in their responses. Can Hogwarts solve the education crisis, or is that magical thinking?

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry offers a vision of an idealised (if at times fairly dangerous) school. As [Katherine Firth explains](#), Hogwarts can be seen as an example of Michel Foucault's construction of schools as sites of social control and discipline. In most readings, the teachers are part of the disciplining apparatus, however, I would argue that in the current circumstances, the teachers themselves are being subject to disciplining through the exertion of government power over their workplace.

At Hogwarts' NSW campus, the Ministers for Magic(al Thinking) (State Premier Dominic Perrottet and Education Minister Sarah Mitchell) have waved their wands to [produce resource packs](#), disregarding teachers crying out for more planning time to allow them to collaboratively



develop materials suited to their students' needs. Just as Umbridge's secondment at Hogwarts was as much about ensuring staff compliance as student behaviour, so too does the appointment of a behaviour expert suggest that NSW teachers aren't doing their job well, further perpetuating the media narrative that it is teachers failing their students, not the system failing the teachers.

French philosopher and theorist Michel Foucault explores how schools, hospitals, the military and other large-scale public institutions work as sites of "discipline", training individuals to comply with social expectations. These sites of discipline "establish in the body the constructive link between increased aptitude and increased domination" (166): the more you comply, the better. Teachers (products of the schooling system themselves) reinforce structures and behaviours for students that they replicate in their own work. Yet what happens when teachers reject these attempts at discipline?

Schools work in lesson-units, where both students and teachers are expected to be present, and behave in particular ways, according to a set schedule. All of these organisational structures are designed to promote compliance and therefore increase productivity. While analysis of this often focuses on the regimenting of the student's day, it is also a disciplining act that teachers are subject to. The point of this scheduling is to allow for [what Foucault labels "exhaustive use"](#) – "extracting from time, ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more useful forces". As teachers shout [into the online void about unsustainable workloads](#), the (disciplining) government seeks only "maximum speed and maximum efficiency", refusing to concede that the workload is the problem. It is here we come to the (hor)crux of [the teacher shortage crisis](#): The Ministry have lost their grip on teachers and they are in open revolt, just as McGonagall and the staff of Hogwarts united and fought back against the He Who Must Not Be Named.

Just as McGonagall led an internal resistance to the unreasonable demands of the Ministry, so too NSW teachers have united to protest the expectations being forced upon them [in recent strike action](#). They see the institution to which they have subscribed for their own schooling, and their careers as fundamentally flawed, and they begin to resist the powers that have sought to direct their conduct. This abandonment of and loss of faith in schools as an institution by the very workers who are meant to maintain them presents an existential crisis to our governments. If they wish to maintain schools in something resembling their current forms, they will need to change how they exert their power. How will [higher pay for a select few entice](#) people to the profession? How will the provision of generic resources, when teachers already have robust collegial networks for resource sharing, reduce workload and burnout? How will the maintenance of national systems of testing (a form of observation and control) reduce teacher stress? How will the appointment of one behaviour advisor make every classroom safer? These rewards for compliance, for docility, [have lost their power for many teachers](#), and so they [seek an escape](#), just as one would when wrongfully held in another institution Foucault describes – the prison.

If the governments which control Australia's education sector hope to restore trust in schools, they must regain the good will of teachers, as their compliance is what makes the system work. Increased reward and reduced workload are the common elements of teachers' calls for reform, not yet another consultant, off-the-shelf package or reward for a select few. Having pushed teachers beyond the limits of their productive capacity, and thus united teachers in a way that supersedes the partitioning of schools, sectors and states in protest and solidarity, governments must reform the institution itself if they hope to restore the magic of learning in our schools in the future.



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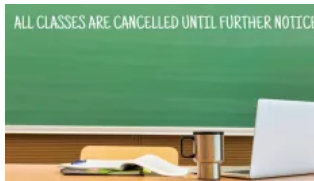
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2 thoughts on "What you should know now about the NSW government and Dolores Umbridge's evil ways"



Des Griffin

November 7, 2022 at 12:05 pm

Who on earth is advising this Minister? Not one of her recent decisions is based on good evidence or solves any relevant problem. It is not acceptable!

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Tom Worthington

November 7, 2022 at 12:08 pm

JK Rowling's stories, the brurachy was defeated not by appealing to better nature, but by superior use of the skills provided in school. I suggest that teachers, and those who train them, give up the idea that they can simply appeal to the better nature of education departments, with evidence based policy prevailing. Instead, those who educate teachers, in all sectors, should equip them to do battle with the forces of bureaucracy.

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