



Online submission					
First name	Lou		Surname	Baxter	
Age	Not specified	Gender	Male	State	VIC
Occupation (if available)	Retired teacher				
Text of submission	<p>Although retired I am writing this submission on behalf of the many teachers who work on contracts and therefore lack job security. I have observed their situation over the years and am only glad that their working conditions were not mine when I started teaching. Their job insecurity, in Victoria at least, has been greatly acerbated by the move towards school-based hiring rather than the former centrally based system of hiring new teachers.</p> <p>However perhaps I should also point out that I consider having some contract work a good thing - it is the widespread use of contracts that I find deplorable.</p> <p>Young teachers particularly find contract work onerous, but contracts extend into other age brackets as well. However many schools take young, recently graduated teachers on contract and then, if they prove 'satisfactory', offer them ongoing positions. You may well regard this as acceptable but it has hidden dangers. Aware of their predicament, young graduates cannot easily try out new approaches, or dissent at the level of professional discourse. They cannot easily experiment to find their own style, the one that works best for them, and new ideas cannot be evaluated because they are not given in the first place for fear of not 'fitting in'. Without an ongoing position young teachers cannot relax and concentrate mainly on learning the trade. Nor is it good for a new graduate to find themselves being used as a cheap 'fill-in' for a long-service leave position (their cheapness means this happens quite a lot)as constant change, a term at a time, can lead to rapid disengagement with their chosen profession as they struggle to adapt to different students and schools within a short space of time.</p> <p>The contract situation also means that feedback is not always supplied - instead a teacher can be condemned in private and behind their backs, without accountability. Management is not always just or accurate and the teacher may not be fairly evaluated. Without even knowing about the criticism, countering complaint is impossible. Although contract work has advantages - it lessens the associated problem of 'excess to requirements' - young teachers should at least be given an initial contract of 2 to 3 years so they can learn their profession without constant fear of criticism. However I do not mean to suggest that having mainly contract work is acceptable if somewhat older teachers are involved. The fear factor is still there and other disadvantages come into play. Contract work</p>				

	<p>has great disadvantages for financial reasons, like obtaining mortgages. Indeed I remember one really conscientious teacher who left the profession to work as a building labourer because he received nearly as much money (if not more) but, in addition, could then get a mortgage. Furthermore, although his contract would have been renewed, he had applied for his 'job' for several years in succession and was sick of being treated so cavalierly (and the school actually valued him highly!).</p> <p>One difficulty with contracts in teaching is the move to pay staff at the school level. The salaries have to come out of the school budget inasmuch as the Department does not give the actual salary total involved - it gives a ratio based on a formula which means a school often has to pay more because of having older, experienced teachers. The extra money comes out of school funds which should really go elsewhere. This induces a use of cheap beginner teachers in short-term situations.</p> <p>The lack of central hiring also means an increased use of contracts to avoid later 'excess' - a teacher may be perfectly acceptable in standard but, if school numbers drop, may be declared in excess in which case they stand little chance of getting a new job because of the negative connotations involved. Disadvantaged though contract teachers are, teachers in excess are far worse off. Before, with centralised staffing, a transfer was eventually arranged and teacher skills were not lost. However I should note here that non-performing teachers should be dealt with, but through structured discipline procedures - excess gained its bad name because many principals simply used it to get rid of staff they didn't want (sometimes for performance reasons and sometimes for less valid ones).</p> <p>The above problems with contracts illustrate some of the disadvantages found in teaching through their extended use. Many of them come down to an increasing consolidation and extension of power to school 'management'. This increasing concentration of power is not always desirable, particularly in an education system. Moreover such increased and greatly unequal power has resulted in a climate of fear becoming slowly established in at least some schools, going by what my still-teaching friends say, and this is unacceptable, especially in what is supposed to be a profession. Increasingly the classroom teacher is not being given equal respect by management that is intent on getting its own way (indeed recent research shows much poor teacher morale is due to managerial attitudes) . This is a destructive process.</p> <p>The above is more in the nature of observations made over the years than a coherent expose of the problems of contract teaching and education overall. However some of the difficulties resultant from contract use have been mentioned.</p>
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<http://securejobs.org.au/independent-inquiry-into-insecure-work-in-australia/>

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