



News

**Ask what you can teach your country**

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471 words

22 April 2009

The Age

First

6

English

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EDUCATION

YOUNG, talented and passionate about education, Lizzie Calder is the sort of newly minted university graduate the Government hopes will revive struggling schools.

Victoria will be the first state to adopt an international scheme that places top non-teaching university graduates into disadvantaged schools, Education Minister Julia Gillard announced yesterday.

High-achieving recruits from any field of study must commit to two years' teaching in a government school after six weeks of training.

They will emerge with an accredited teaching qualification and get a salary of about \$45,000.

The hope is that they will develop a taste for the rewards and challenges of teaching, but many experts say the scheme will do little to overcome the long-term problems of an ageing workforce.

The **Teach for Australia** graduates are expected to go on to careers with corporate partners of the program or continue their involvement with education, Ms Gillard said.

"I want to see the pathways into teaching become broader and more flexible," she said.

The first intake of about 90 graduates will go into Victorian schools next year. More than 200 people have applied so far, Victorian Education Minister Bronwyn Pike told a launch at Debney Park Secondary College.

But the Australian Education Union has reacted angrily to Ms Gillard's claims that similar programs - such as Teach First in Britain and Teach for America in the US - have improved student achievement and helped raise the status of the profession.

Federal president Angelo Gavrielatos said this was untrue and "demeaning" to qualified teachers, pointing to a study by eminent US academic Linda Darling-Hammond that found certified teachers produced stronger gains in student achievement, compared with uncertified teachers.

"We have countless surveys by beginning teachers who tell us that they don't believe their teaching education courses have properly prepared them, so it beggars belief that a six-week program would be enough," Mr Gavrielatos said.

Based on overseas evidence, many educators are not persuaded that unqualified teachers would be able to sustain themselves in the long haul, said Sue Willis, president of the Australian Council of Deans of Education.

Teaching at struggling schools would also present challenges. "At the period when they are at their most vulnerable, they are teaching the most vulnerable students," she said. "Personally I wish the students well - and I don't want to undermine them -but this is a big challenge."

In the penultimate year of a commerce degree at Melbourne University, Ms Calder, 21, wants to be a part of **Teach for Australia** and hopes to learn from experienced teachers.

"Some of my strongest memories are of amazing teachers I had at school - I'd like to try and bring that enthusiasm to my students."