



Australian Government

**Quality Teacher
Programme**



Secondary case five

This case is open-ended and is designed to generate rich discussion about leadership issues affecting all head teachers.

Setting the scene

A key member of your faculty has suddenly left on long term sick leave. It is Week 3 of Term 4. Year 11 classes have rolled over into Year 12 and the study of HSC courses has commenced.

A casual teacher has been employed to replace the absent teacher but has been having difficulty teaching the bottom Year 12 class.

No one on the staff was prepared to give up their own class to teach this group of students.

There are a growing number of complaints by students and parents with one parent threatening to remove her daughter from the school. Students are pressuring you to move them to another class.

Individual reflections

1. What are the key issues?
2. As head teacher, what do you do?

Leadership issues

Educational	pedagogy, programs, assessment, reporting, learning styles, learning environment, learning community
Organisational	timelines, resources, management, systems, accountability
Strategic	planning, vision, values, culture
Personal	social skills, ethics, commitment, personal vision
Interpersonal	relationships, team building, conflict resolution, communication

Focus questions

Educational

1. What are the teaching and learning issues for this teacher on this particular class?
2. What are issues surrounding the class of able students who do not feel they are being properly taught?
3. As head teacher, what should be your first priority? How will you articulate this to staff, students and parents?
4. How could you develop the skills of the casual teacher and your faculty to benefit the learning of all students?

Organisational

1. If you have to reallocate the class to another member of staff, what are the considerations and likely outcomes from parents and students from all classes?
2. What will you do if no staff member is prepared to take the class?
3. How will you manage if everybody wants to take the class?
4. Do you dismiss the casual teacher? Why or why not? What if there are no other casuals to be found?
5. Is it an option to run the class off the timetable?

Strategic

1. What faculty discussions need to occur in order to have the best possible outcome for the students in the long term?
2. How do you promote the idea that the student learning is the first priority?
3. Who will win and who will lose? Can everyone win? How?

Personal

1. Is it appropriate to seek outside (faculty or school) input into the problem? Who will you approach?
2. What meeting procedure skills will you need to make effective decisions?

Interpersonal

1. How will you communicate the idea that one class is not more valuable than another?
2. What strategies can you use to promote the ideas of fairness and equity for all? How can the apparent inequity be resolved?
3. How will you deal with parental concerns when they arise?
4. How do you manage the casual teacher?

Considerations

Notes to facilitators: It is the process of analysing the case and the issues that is important in using the cases as a professional development tool. A selection of DET policy documents made available for quick referencing by participants will support informed decision making.

If participants are from the same school, they may identify with key issues in the case and become snared in a discussion of school-specific problems. Sensitive intervention and guidance back to the case may be required.

Using the considerations or sample solutions too early may defeat the purpose and value of head teachers reflecting on the issues and their own practice. It should be remembered that a single issue case is in fact highly complex. If limited time is available, groups could analyse different leadership domains or focus on just a few issues.

Educational

- All students have a right to quality instruction by a competent, committed teacher. However, this is going to be difficult to achieve.
- Does reallocation imply that the high-achieving class is more important than the others? How do you overcome this perception?

Organisational

- A decision must be made now. What decision will you make and how will you justify it?
- Are there long term solutions?
- You need access to policies and information and adequate support with the interpretation and implementation of policies and procedures. Where will this come from?

Strategic

- Consider the relationships within the faculty.
- A win/lose situation may arise. How do you avoid this?
- What are the implications for the reputation of the school/faculty/head teacher if the situation is not handled well?
- What professional development activities need to take place in the future?

Personal

- You may have to carry the weight of disagreement from some colleagues, parents and students.
- What are some of the responses you would consider to solve the problem?
- How will you demonstrate ethical decision making?
- As a head teacher what capabilities, information or skills, do you need to acquire for your own professional development to solve the problem?
- Do you need to learn about managing people. Do you need to explore different leadership styles?
- Consider the ramifications of your choices. 'Is this the hill you will die on?'

Interpersonal

- This problem is potentially destructive to the whole faculty.
- Consider how to deal with increased "stress" within the faculty if one staff member has to take on extra work.
- Is this a situation where the faculty can brainstorm the solution and come to a consensus or decision they are prepared to live with?
- How can the problem be dealt with in the future should it arise again?

- What if a decision is made to change the class teacher and the teacher allocated the class becomes angry and vindictive?
- What strategies can you use to rebuild damaged relationships?
- What if the casual teacher decides to leave and you cannot find a replacement teacher in your faculty?

Disclaimer

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training.

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