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Schools report finds graduates . . .

Fit to teach in six weeks

Tanya Chilcott
SCHOOLS REPORTER

TEACHERS trained for just six weeks before they enter a classroom are not better or worse than their counterparts, a report shows.

The report, commissioned by the Queensland College of Teachers, also found student results didn't improve or decline under intensive teacher preparation programs in the US or England.

The results come as the Bligh Government considers whether to use Teach for Australia "associates" in classrooms from next year, with the first national recruitment deadline for 2010 closing this week.

The associates are top-performing graduates, or employees from fields other than teaching, who undergo a six-week intensive training course before being placed in tough classrooms in the hope they would inspire students.

They would continue to study part-time over two years while they teach, with mentors on and off-site checking their progress.

The first Teach for Australia associates started in Victorian classrooms this year.

The QCT report – by Griffith University senior lecturer Dr Cheryl Sim, who reviewed reports on similar programs overseas – found the mentoring process was a weak point in Britain's "Teach First" program.

QCT director John Ryan said the report highlighted what they needed to target if the Teach for Australia program came to Queensland.

He said the intensive training course would suit some, but not others, including those who were reserved.

"It doesn't necessarily produce better teachers, so it is never going to replace the current process we have for training teachers, because it

can't be replicated on a large scale," Mr Ryan said.

But Teach for Australia CEO Melodie Potts said the review had not looked at one longitudinal study, which found associates in the Teach for America program were more effective.

She said Teach for Australia provided more mentoring support than overseas programs.

"Unlike overseas programs, Teach For Australia has a strong partnership with the University of Melbourne's Graduate School of Education, a leading teacher education institution," she said.

"We also provide over double the amount of mentor support than overseas programs.

"Teach For Australia seeks to recruit outstanding individuals who otherwise wouldn't have considered teaching as a profession, and is working collaboratively with our partners, including school communities, to ensure their efficacy."