

Enablers and Barriers to Initiating Professional Development



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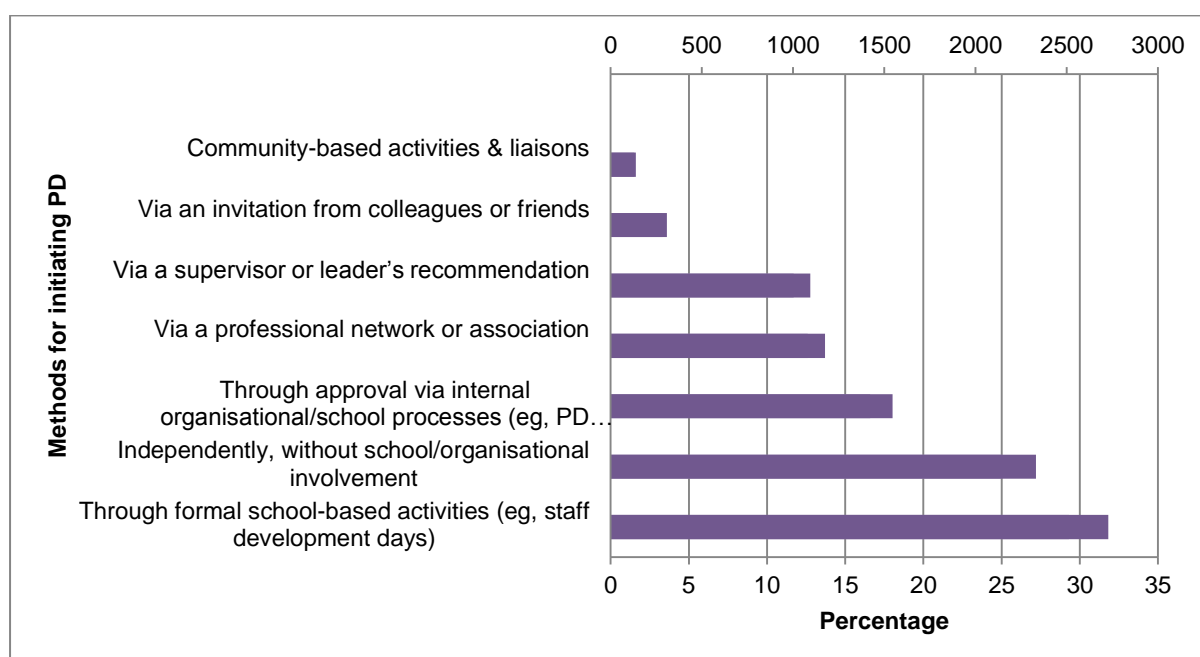
In 2015 over 100,000 NSW teachers were surveyed about their professional development experiences, preferences and needs. Almost 12,000 teachers responded to the survey. Among other things, teachers were asked how they had initiated their PD over the previous 18 months, and about the factors that prevented them from engaging in PD during that period.

How was PD initiated?

Schools were involved in approximately 60% of the preferred access methods for teacher PD. Most PD was either initiated at school through formal school-based activities (30%), and via a supervisor or leader's recommendation (12%), or through approval via internal organisational/school processes (17%).

One quarter of teachers reported that they initiated their PD independently of school involvement, and 13% reported that their primary access was via professional networks. Only 3% acted on an invitation from colleagues and 1.5% gained access through community-based activities (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Main methods for initiating PD (n=9318)



Geographic location

Teachers from all geographic locations, with the exception of a small group of remotely located teachers, initiated PD in similar ways.

When the data were analysed by geographic location (metropolitan, regional, rural and remote), responses were similar for all groups but the small number of respondents in remote areas, initiated PD less often through formal school-based activities (22%) than metropolitan (32%), regional (30%) and rural (28%) teachers. Remote teachers more frequently relied on

professional networks/associations. They acted on a supervisor or leader's recommendation more often than teachers in other areas (Table 1).

Table 1 Methods of initiating PD by geographic location

Option	Metropolitan		Regional		Rural		Remote	
	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%
Through formal school-based activities (eg, staff development days)	1145	31.7	591	29.8	410	27.7	66	22.2
Independently, without school/organisational involvement	863	23.9	497	25.0	346	23.4	80	26.9
Through approval via internal organisational/school processes (eg, PD committee or head teacher)	608	16.8	345	17.4	262	17.7	41	13.8
Via a professional network or association	437	12.1	230	11.6	188	12.7	50	16.8
Via a supervisor or leader's recommendation	403	11.2	233	11.7	188	12.7	54	18.2
Via an invitation from colleagues or friends	112	3.1	63	3.2	65	4.4	5	1.7
Community-based activities & liaisons	45	1.2	27	1.4	22	1.5	1	0.3

Sector

Systemic school teachers more often initiated PD through formal school-based PD activities than independent and government teachers.

Respondents were categorised as government, systemic, independent and other (not belonging to one of the former three groups). Systemic school teachers (Catholic and other schools with central administration, for example, Seventh Day Adventist) more often initiated PD through formal school-based PD activities than their government and independent school counterparts (36% compared to government 30% and independent 27%).

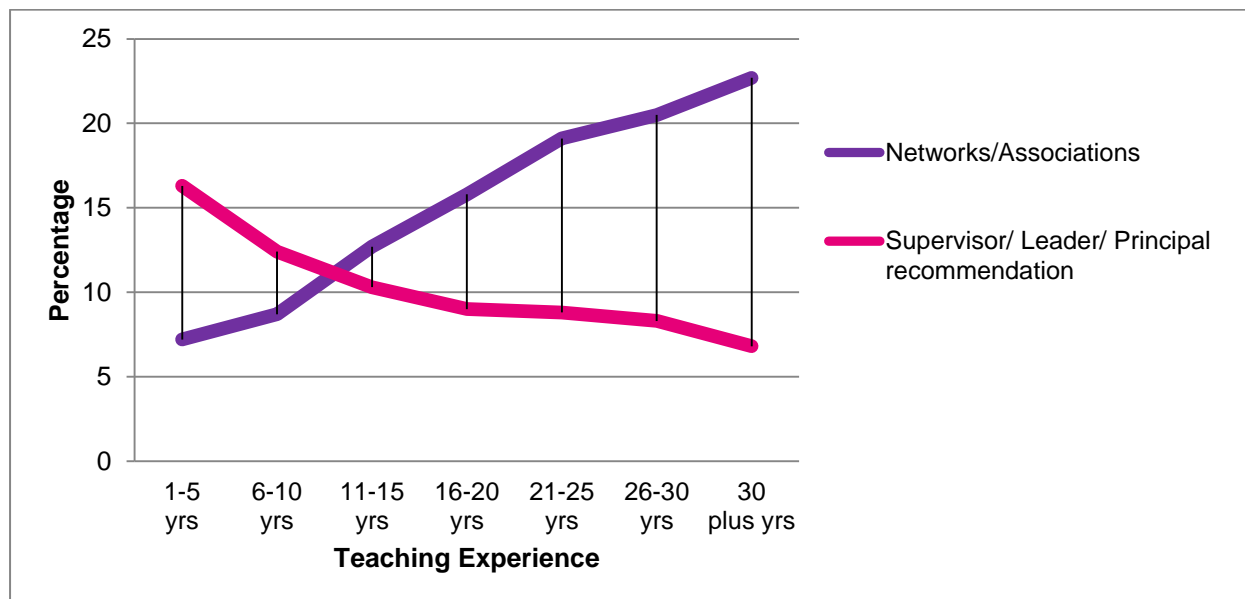
The profile of those in the 'other' category was different from their counterparts. They made least use of formal school-based activities (9%) and approval via internal organisational/school processes (11% compared to government and systemic schools 16% and independent schools 20%). Over 40% of the 'other' group initiated their PD independently, without school/organisational involvement and 20% used a professional network or association. The 'other' group also sourced PD more frequently through community-based activities and liaisons.

Teaching experience

The use of professional networks and associations increased with teaching experience.

When responses were analysed by years of teaching experience there were few differences between groups. However, small differences were found in access through formal school based activities, independently, without school/organisational involvement and through approval via internal organisational/school processes. It was clear that professional networks and associations became more influential as experience increased (over 30 years of experience 23%, compared with 1-5 years of experience 7%). The use of a supervisor or leader's recommendation decreased with years of experience, from 16% for teachers with 1-5 years of experience to 7% for teachers with over 30 years (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Change in the use of professional networks and associations and supervisor or leader's recommendation with teaching experience



Employment Status

Temporary teachers initiated PD in different ways from permanent teachers.

When the data were analysed according to employment status (permanent full-time, permanent part-time, temporary full-time or temporary part-time/casual), it was found that casual teachers were more reliant on finding PD independently (43%) than permanent teachers (20%) and temporary part-time teachers (16%). Temporary full-time teachers more regularly accessed PD via school-based activities (42% compared to less than 30% for all other groups), and by supervisor or leader's recommendation (17% compared to 12% or less for all other groups) than other teachers. By contrast, casual teachers reported that they accessed PD through formal school-based activities in similar proportions to full-time teachers, but were less involved through internal organisational/school approval processes and in following supervisor/leader recommendations. Whether part-time or full-time, temporary teachers accessed PD less through professional networks or associations than their full-time colleagues (Table 2).

Table 2 Main method for initiating PD by employment status

Option	Perm F/T		Perm P/T		Temp F/T		Temp P/T Casual	
	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%
Through formal school-based activities (eg, staff development days)	1405	27.4	201	29.7	520	41.7	536	27.4
Independently, without school/organisational involvement	971	19.0	146	21.6	200	16.0	848	43.3
Through approval via internal organisational/school processes (eg, PD committee or head teacher)	1069	20.9	119	17.6	190	15.2	144	7.4
Via a professional network or association	847	16.5	101	14.9	69	5.5	138	7.0
Via a supervisor or leader's recommendation	627	12.2	74	10.9	214	17.2	159	8.1
Via an invitation from colleagues or friends	140	2.7	19	2.8	48	3.8	95	4.9
Community-based activities & liaisons	63	1.2	16	2.4	6	0.5	38	1.9

Accreditation status

Teachers were grouped by accreditation status (not yet accredited, conditional, provisional, proficient, highly accomplished and lead). The number of responses from highly accomplished and lead teachers exceeded the number registered with BOSTES which may mean that some teachers chose to identify with this category based on their position in the school or perceived skills level. The responses of highly accomplished and lead teachers were (notably) different from those of their peers. They less often accessed their PD through formal school-based activities (20%, compared to 30% for other groups). Highly accomplished and lead teachers (23%) along with not yet accredited teachers (those who became qualified before 2004 and were not required to be registered at the time of the survey, and therefore the most experienced, 21%) relied on professional networks and associations more than other groups (less than 10%).

Not yet accredited teachers, like their proficiently accredited colleagues, were less likely to initiate PD independently compared to conditionally or provisionally accredited teachers or highly accomplished and lead teachers.

PD was initiated via organisational/school approval processes more often by not yet accredited, proficient, and highly accomplished teachers than by conditional, provisional, and proficient, and lead teachers.

Setting

Early childhood teachers responded differently from primary or secondary teachers.

Teachers were asked to nominate the setting in which they worked (early childhood, primary,

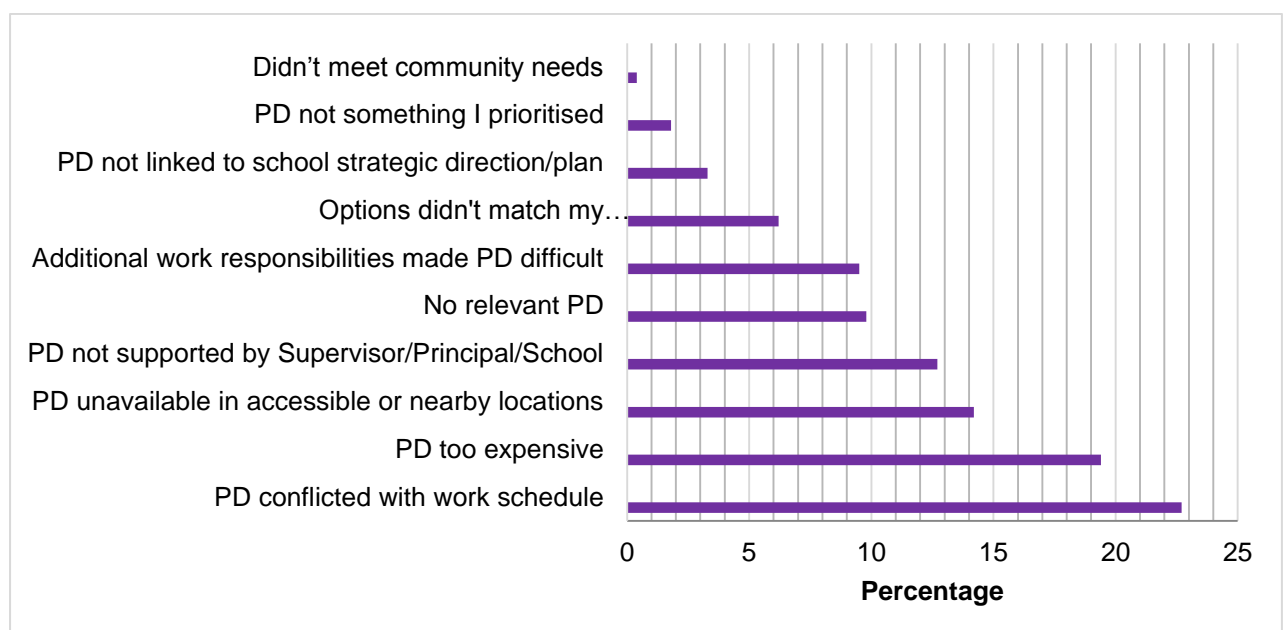
secondary). Teachers who worked in early childhood education and care facilities along with some teachers of children aged 5 to 8 in primary schools indicated they were ‘early childhood’ teachers. This group of teachers less often accessed their PD through formal school-based activities (10% compared to primary teachers 35% and secondary teachers 30%) and more often relied on professional networks or associations (25% compared to primary teachers 8% and secondary teachers 13%). Early childhood teachers also made more use of community-based activities and liaisons than other groups. While primary teachers reported the highest reliance on formal school-based activities (35%), they had less reliance on internal organisational/school approval processes (13%) than early childhood (18%) or secondary teachers (20%). The three groups reported little difference in their independent organisation of PD.

What barriers prevented teachers from participating in more PD?

Conflict with work schedules and cost were the main barriers to PD.

The factors preventing further participation in PD activities were conflict with work schedules (23%), cost (19%), unavailable in accessible or nearby locations (14%), lack of support from a supervisor/principal/school (13%), no relevant PD (10%), and responsibilities outside of work (10%). The following factors were prioritised by less than 10% of respondents; PD options didn’t match their experience/seniority/accreditation level, PD was not linked to school strategic direction/plan, PD was not something they prioritised, and PD didn’t meet community needs (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Barriers to PD (n=6162)

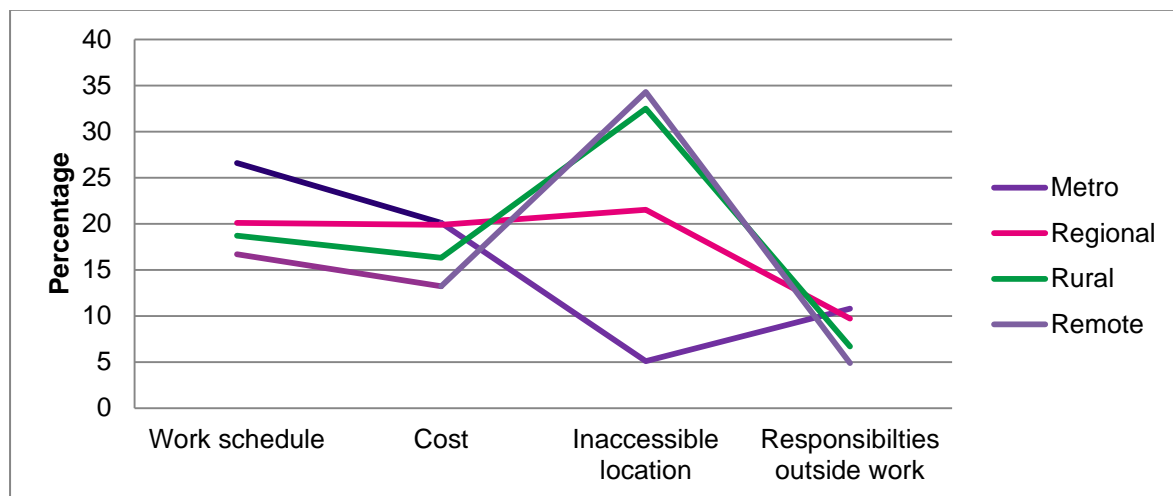


Geographic location

Teachers in regional, rural and remote areas found it harder to access PD than their metropolitan colleagues.

Responses analysed by location revealed that teachers outside of metropolitan areas found it harder to participate in PD because it was not available in accessible or nearby locations. One fifth of regional teachers and one third of rural and remote teachers cited this inaccessibility as the main deterrent to undertaking more PD. However, compared to metropolitan teachers, regional, rural and remote teachers less often cited conflict with work, cost and responsibilities outside of work as preventing them from accessing more PD (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Barriers by geographic location



Sector

Teachers from independent schools more often responded that PD conflicted with their work schedules, however they also responded that PD was more often available in their area.

Teachers from independent schools (28%) more frequently reported that PD conflicted with their work schedules than teachers from government (21%) and systemic schools (23%) and those who identified as belonging to none of the former three categories ('other' 22%). A quarter of these 'other' teachers also found PD to be too expensive, which was higher than their counterparts in government (19%), systemic (19%) and independent (18%) schools. Compared to the other three groups, teachers from the independent sector less often found that PD was not available in their area, and respondents from systemic schools more frequently found responsibilities outside of school prevented their participation in PD.

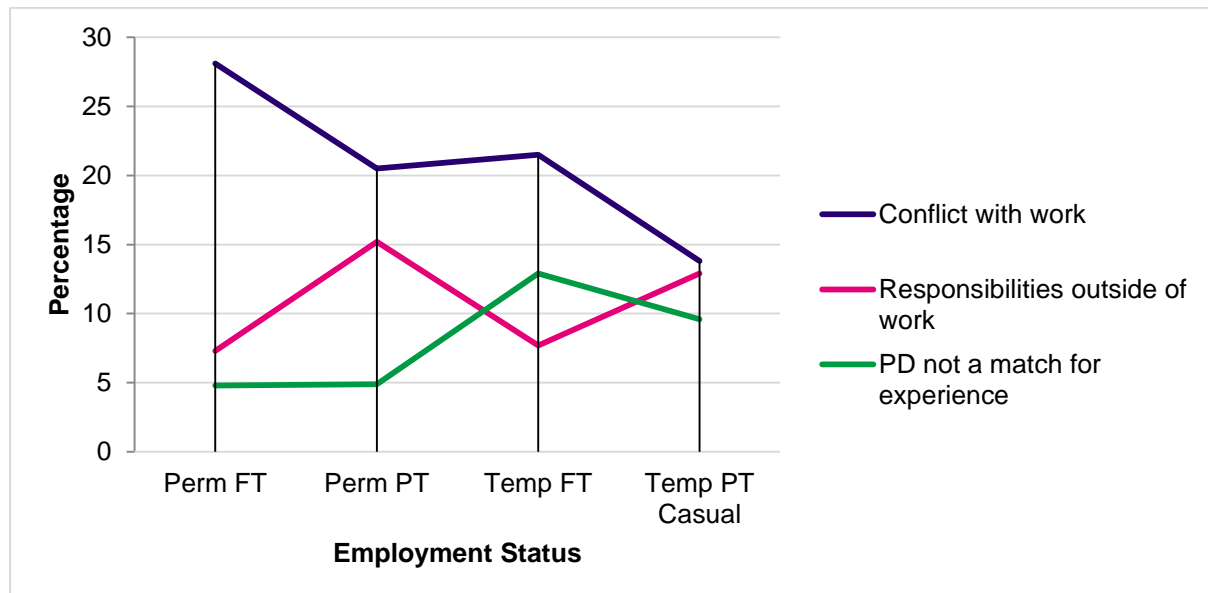
Employment Status

PD conflicted most often with the work schedules of permanent full-time teachers.

PD conflicted with work schedules more for permanent full-time teachers (28%) than for permanent part-time and temporary full-time teachers (20%) or casual teachers (14%).

Part-time staff, whether permanent or casual, found that additional responsibilities outside of work made PD more difficult than their full-time colleagues (casual 13%, permanent part-time 15% and full-time staff 7%). Temporary-full time staff more frequently reported that PD was not supported by their supervisor/principal/school.

Figure 5 Barriers by employment status

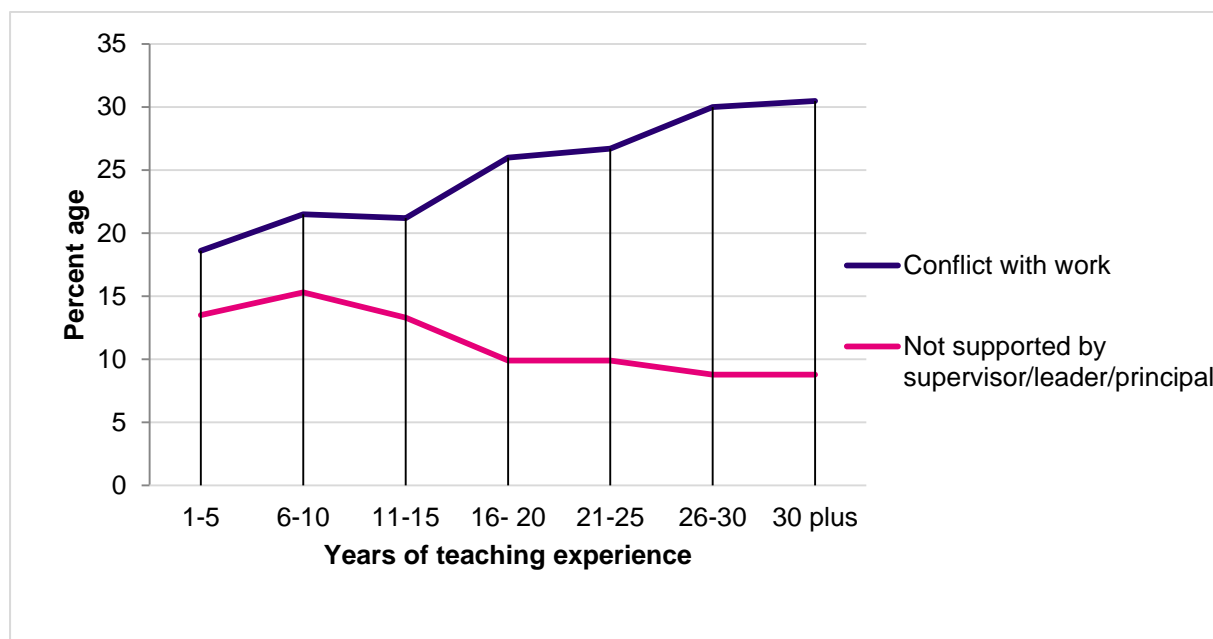


Years of teaching experience

Conflict with work schedules increased with the level of teaching experience.

Only 19% of teachers with 1-5 years of experience reported that a conflict with their work schedule was a barrier to PD but this figure increased to 30% for teachers with more than 30 years' experience. More experienced teachers (16 or more years' experience) reported that not being supported by their supervisor/principal/school was less often a barrier than their less experienced counterparts (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Change with teaching experience in the perception that ‘conflict with work schedules’ and ‘not being supported by supervisor/principal/school’ are barriers to PD



Accreditation status

Conflict with work schedules was the barrier most commonly cited for teachers at all levels of accreditation.

The most experienced teachers, that is, teachers who trained prior to 2004 (28%) and lead teachers (31%) most often cited conflict with work as the main barrier to PD, compared to proficient (21%), provisional (18%) and conditional (17%) teachers. At least 9% of teachers in all categories reported that there was no relevant PD. Conditional (18%), proficient (21%), highly accomplished (21%), and lead teachers (17%) reported that PD didn't match their experience, seniority or accreditation level more often than pre-2004 (5%) and provisionally accredited (10%) teachers.

Setting

Almost one third of early childhood teachers, one quarter of secondary teachers and one fifth of primary teachers reported conflict with work schedules was the main barrier to undertaking more PD.

Twenty percent of teachers from all groups indicated that PD was too expensive and 15% indicated that PD was unavailable in accessible locations. More than 10% of primary and secondary teachers reported that they were not supported by their supervisor/principal/school (primary 15% and secondary 12%), however only 7% of early childhood teachers indicated that this was their main barrier.

Summary

- Around 60% of NSW teachers indicated their main access to PD involved schools, either through formal school-based activities, by recommendation from their supervisor or leader, or through school approval processes. Around 25% of teachers initiated their PD independently, and 13% used professional networks or associations as their primary source of access.
- The main barriers to PD were; conflict with work schedules (23%), cost (19%), and lack of accessibility or nearby location (14%), lack of support from a supervisor/principal/school (13%), no relevant PD (10%), and responsibilities outside of work (10%).
- Metropolitan school teachers reported the highest reliance on formal school-based activities. Teachers from remotely located schools least often accessed formal school-based activities and more frequently gained access through their professional associations. The further the teacher was located from a metropolitan area the harder it was to access PD. Approximately 20% of regional teachers and one third of rural and remote teachers reported that accessibility and location was the main barrier to PD.
- Early childhood teachers accessed formal-school based activities less often than their primary and secondary counterparts and relied more frequently on professional networks or associations. They indicated that work schedules conflicted with PD more often than their primary or secondary colleagues.
- More than 40% of casual teachers sourced their PD independently, which was over twice as much as all other employment groups.
- Teachers not from government, systemic or independent sectors reported less opportunity to attend school-related PD and relied more heavily on independent action and on professional networks or associations.
- The use of professional networks or associations as a source of PD increased with teaching experience. Lead teachers less often accessed PD through formal school-based processes and more often relied on professional networks or associations.
- Work schedules conflicted with PD more often for permanent full-time staff than for permanent part-time or temporary staff. The conflict of PD with work was greatest for not yet accredited and lead teachers, but in general conflict of work schedules and PD increased with teaching experience.