

## **An Analysis of the Status of Teacher Certification in the Australian Capital Territory Following the Introduction of the Modular Model**

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*Abstract: This paper reports on research conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Certification Modular Model 2.0 (CMM 2.0) offered by the Teacher Quality Institute of the Australian Capital Territory. The research evaluated the extent to which the CMM 2.0 was attractive, sustainable and developmental. The data was collected via two surveys conducted with, teachers who were prospective applicants to the CMM 2.0 and current and former certification participants. A case study method was used to conduct this research. Coding and systematic analysis were applied to the data by using the three selected categories attractive, developmental and sustainable. Most participants appreciated the developmental nature of the Modular Model and saw this approach as affording them with opportunities to gain professional recognition. This study contributes to knowledge about modular approaches to teacher certification and has potential to have influence on certification design and implementation in the Australian context and internationally.*

**Keywords:** Teacher Certification, Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers, Certification, Teacher Professional Development/Learning, Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

### **Introduction**

#### **Teacher Certification in the Australian Capital Territory**

This paper is concerned with teacher certification in the Australian context with a particular focus on the Australian Capital Territory (the ACT). The terms certification and accreditation are considered as the same process (Willis et al., 2022) however in this paper the term certification will be used mainly. There are many types of certification and among them there are qualifications such as Bachelor of Education and post graduate teaching qualifications to become a certified teacher in Australia. The type of certification considered in this paper is the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) certification that assists professional learning including the performance and development process for registered teachers. The HALT accreditation is a national certification that recognises teaching practice which meets the Australian Professional Standards for teachers at the relevant HALT career stage. The certification of teachers in Australia is the responsibility of an appointed jurisdictional body in each state and territory. In Australia, all states and territories have the same criteria for assessing candidates who apply for certification: the HALT levels of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs). Bourke (2020) claims that the APSTs have become the default mechanism for quality assurance of teachers and their

teaching practice. As the accrediting authority in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) certifies teachers against the APSTs, within a nationally consistent framework used for certification (ACT TQI, 2020). The TQI has developed a certification system known as Certification Modular Model (CMM) 2.0, for teachers to complete HALT levels. This certification model is also aligned to the APSTs developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). The Modular Model has been designed as an alternative to the Full Portfolio Model, which was in place up until 2019. Instead of teachers submitting one large portfolio for assessment, the Modular Model involves teachers submitting discreet modules for the teacher standards usually over a period of two or more years. The modules are assessed by appointed assessors who are trained by the TQI. The Modular Model is tailored towards participants' individual circumstances as it provides them with the opportunity to undertake the work in more manageable pieces. The model also allows for more dispersed payments for undertaking certification and feedback from assessors after every modular submission (ACT TQI, 2020). In 2017, after five years of HALT certification in the ACT, an independent review process was undertaken. The review affirmed the value of the certification process and informed the approach towards stronger alignment with the needs of key stakeholders in the school system (ACT TQI, 2020).

As a commissioned research project by the TQI, this study was conducted by the authors of this paper in 2020 and 2021. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the CMM 2.0 introduced by the TQI and produce a research report for the TQI in 2022 with recommendations for enhancement of the model based on a broad range of data collected. Statistical data collected from two online surveys in the first phase of the research project will be presented in this paper. Qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups in the second phase will be published in a different article. The study also examined if the CMM 2.0 makes teacher certification more achievable, while maintaining the rigour and credibility of the full portfolio approach. Thereupon, the research findings also aim to increase knowledge and understanding about the ways in which certification processes can be made more accessible, attainable and meaningful for teachers. Willis et al., (2022) identify the need for such studies in the HALT process. The following research question was developed for this investigation which includes three categories (attractive, sustainable, and developmental) to frame the research findings.

### ***Research Question***

*In what ways does the modular approach achieve the objectives of making certification more attractive, sustainable, and developmental?*

The research question has guided the data collection and discussion of the findings of this research. The categories of attractive, sustainable and developmental were identified by the TQI in relation to the implementation of the CMM 2.0.

The category of attractive involves an exploration of the aspects of certification that would incline educators to undertake it. These aspects include financial (the cost), a manageable workload, meaningful content and flexibility of delivery, potential to enhance career prospects and salary remuneration, provide recognition of teaching practice and school leadership, and a manageable workload. The attractiveness of the CMM 2.0 is also understood in comparison to the Full Portfolio Model.

The category of developmental means having sufficient rigor to strengthen teaching practices and professional capacity leading to improved student learning outcomes. Developmental also involves incremental advancement designed to build on knowledge which is anchored on the APSTs. The concept of developmental also involves the

applications of the standards through the presentation of evidence by progressing through the modules. The category also means professional growth and reflection for teachers through responding to feedback from the assessors to module submissions.

The category of sustainable involves evaluating what factors are important in the medium to long term viability of the CMM 2.0 as a vehicle for certification of HALT educators. Sustainability may involve substantive support from school leaders and school systems and ensuring that certification is robust and contributes to school communities, and teaching and learning capacity. Sustainability is also premised on the viability of the structure and sequencing of the certification model to meet the needs of participants through standards based assessment and feedback processes.

### **Teacher Certification as Professional Development**

International research shows that professional development - PD (also called professional learning - PL) is more effective if sustained over time; when teachers take part as a group; when it involves training in subject knowledge; when it involves outside expertise; when embedded in the teacher's own practice and when it involves opportunities to use, practise, or apply what has been learned (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Dunst et al., 2015; King, 2011; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021; Wei et al., 2009; Willis et al., 2021). There is a wide research base that explores the benefits of teacher PD (Liu and Phelps, 2020; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). However, for the purpose of this study it is appropriate to consider research that explores PD/PL aspects of teacher certification. Weston and Hindley (2019) identified interactive process with opportunities to apply learning in real practice as one of the most important factors of effective PD for teachers. While certification processes are not primarily designed for the purpose of engaging teachers with PD, but the reading, reflection and conversations teachers undertake in the process represents a form of PD (Willis et al., 2022). The features of CMM 2.0 which are more development-driven than the original model for certification align with these effective aspects of PD for teachers evident in international research (Scutt & Harrison, 2019), including some of the key features identified by Campbell et al. (2017) in an extended case study that explored perspectives and evidence on effective PD from Canada. The most important factors identified by Campbell (2019) are similar to effective elements of PD mentioned earlier, although some factors were named differently for example collaborative learning experiences (teachers take part as a group) and job-embedded learning (embedded in the teacher's own practice).

The AITSL (n.d.) claims that "Certification offers a professional learning opportunity in which teachers engage in collaborative learning, collect evidence of impact and improve their practice" (p.11). Increasing the capacity of school educators through certification is expected to have a positive effect on student learning and outcomes across a broad range of areas. Having a higher number of certified teachers has great potential to positively enhance school life and experience through enhancing teacher capacity to lead and implement important programs and initiatives in their schools (Ingvarson, 2018). However, only a relatively small number of teachers (0.3% in 2022) have been certified as HALTs in Australia (Willis et al., 2022). There is limited research that explores HALT certification offered for qualified teachers to achieve recognition for the next stages in their teaching career. It is evident that these stages can be pathways to formalised leadership roles and may affect teacher retention and classroom effectiveness (Ingvarson, 2018). Therefore, it is important to explore the recognition of HALT certification for HALT certified teachers in terms of why educators working in different contexts and sectors should consider undertaking certification.

How HALT certification supports teachers during their teaching careers to improve their practices and achieve their full potential is also worth investigating (Ingvarson, 2018).

It is anticipated that the findings of this research will contribute to understandings the nature and the effectiveness of the PL gained from the HALT certification, especially from the CMM 2.0. As a result of undertaking certification there is an expectation to enhance teacher quality, teacher knowledge and capacity in classroom practice, curriculum planning and assessment programs and the practice of supporting and mentoring colleagues during the HALT application process (Cole, 2021) in their schools. For Lead Teacher level this includes the leadership of colleagues and reviewing education processes along with building the capacity of other teachers and modelling expert teaching practice to them. Highly Accomplished teachers are expected to possess in-depth knowledge of subject areas they teach and curriculum content and the ability to model sound teaching practices and plan collaboratively. The findings of this study also make a viable contribution to the emerging body of academic literature (Appel, 2020; Barry et al., 2020; Call, 2018; Call et al., 2021; Ingvarson, 2002 & 2019) in this field aligned with the APSTs. As the literature in this area is still developing and there are many gaps in key areas of knowledge.

### **Methodology Used for the Research**

This research was conducted as a case study (Creswell, 2014). The case study method (Yin, 1984; Stake, 1995) was identified as the most suitable approach as it can offer an in-depth understanding of complex issues and enables researchers to select a small number of participants as the subjects of a study (Zainal, 2007). The study was multi-sectoral, drawing participants from primary and secondary schools including senior Colleges from the public, Catholic and Independent school sectors. Ethics approvals were gained from the University of Canberra; The ACT Education Directorate; The Canberra Goulburn Catholic Education Office and Independent Schools in the ACT. Participants were recruited via e-mail and phone calls and their privacy and anonymity was protected throughout the process.

This research involved collecting data from two online surveys designed using the Qualtrics software program. These surveys were carried out to understand the extent of satisfaction of the participants with the HALT certification. One for teachers who had registered their interest (prospective applicants) in certification but had not commenced. The other survey was for participants of Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher certification who have undertaken the CMM 2.0 and teachers who have completed the Full Portfolio Model (certification assessment process used prior to the introduction of CMM 2.0).

The design of the research survey emerged from a dialogue with the senior leadership of the TQI who wanted the study to evaluate the viability of continuing to offer the CMM 2.0 which was in a pilot phase. The TQI identified the categories of attractive, developmental and sustainable as being of primary importance and wanted to examine the participants' understandings of these key areas. The survey questions were largely designed to elicit participants' experiences and views in relation to these categories. For each category specific survey questions were included to examine limitations and weaknesses and identify areas for enhancement related to each category.

Most of the survey questions had some qualitative responses which allowed for the quantitative data to be clarified and better understood. For validation, the survey was presented to the senior TQI staff who provided professional and constructive feedback in terms of the wording, sequencing and relevance of the questions. We piloted the survey by asking several school teachers who were familiar with certification but were not participants

in the research to do the survey and provide feedback. We used the TQI staff and teacher feedback to make refinements which improved the comprehension and relevance of the survey content in relation to the research objectives and research question.

After receiving permission from the school principals to approach their staff we e-mailed interested participants the explanatory statement, consent form and the link to the online survey. Different types of survey questions were used such as closed and open-ended questions including multiple choice questions. There were some five-point Likert scale questions and open text questions in the online survey which were primarily designed to collect statistical and qualitative data. The collected data was de-identified ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, categorised and analysed using Qualtrics (Bradon et al., 2014). Qualtrics was used to analyse the statistical data, to present and summarise data in a meaningful way with statistical patterns and trends. Dynamic text comment box questions were included in the surveys to collect additional information from the respondents. Descriptive textual data collected from the surveys were explored inductively using content analysis and categorised (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 1999) to identify patterns.

According to the annual report 2020-21, the TQI has “received 24 new certification submissions” (ACT TQI, 2021, p. 256). Fourteen teachers have undertaken the survey for current and former HALT applicants and twelve teachers have responded to the survey of the prospective applicants. These participant numbers represent an appropriate sample size for small population surveys (a minimum of 50%), based on resource constraints (Lakens, 2021). De-identified data collected from the online surveys are presented below providing tables and charts generated by the Qualtrics data analysis and presentation tools.

### Survey of the Prospective HALT Applicants

Respondents for this survey were prospective applicants, meaning they had registered their interest in completing CMM 2.0 HALT certification. The survey was implemented with the intention of eliciting the views of these teachers about certification, especially their expectations and motivations for participating in the CMM 2.0. This survey mainly includes sample characteristics in numbers and patterns of preferences from the respondents. Direct statements from participants provided as qualitative comments are presented “using inverted commas”.

#### Details of School Level, School Sector and Type Including the Information about the Teachers Who Completed this Survey

#	School type	<i>n</i> %	<i>n</i> Count
1	Primary (Foundation year to Year 6)	15.38%	2
2	Secondary (Year 7 to Year 10)	76.92%	9
3	College (senior secondary years 11 & 12)	7.69%	1
	<b>Total N</b>	100%	12

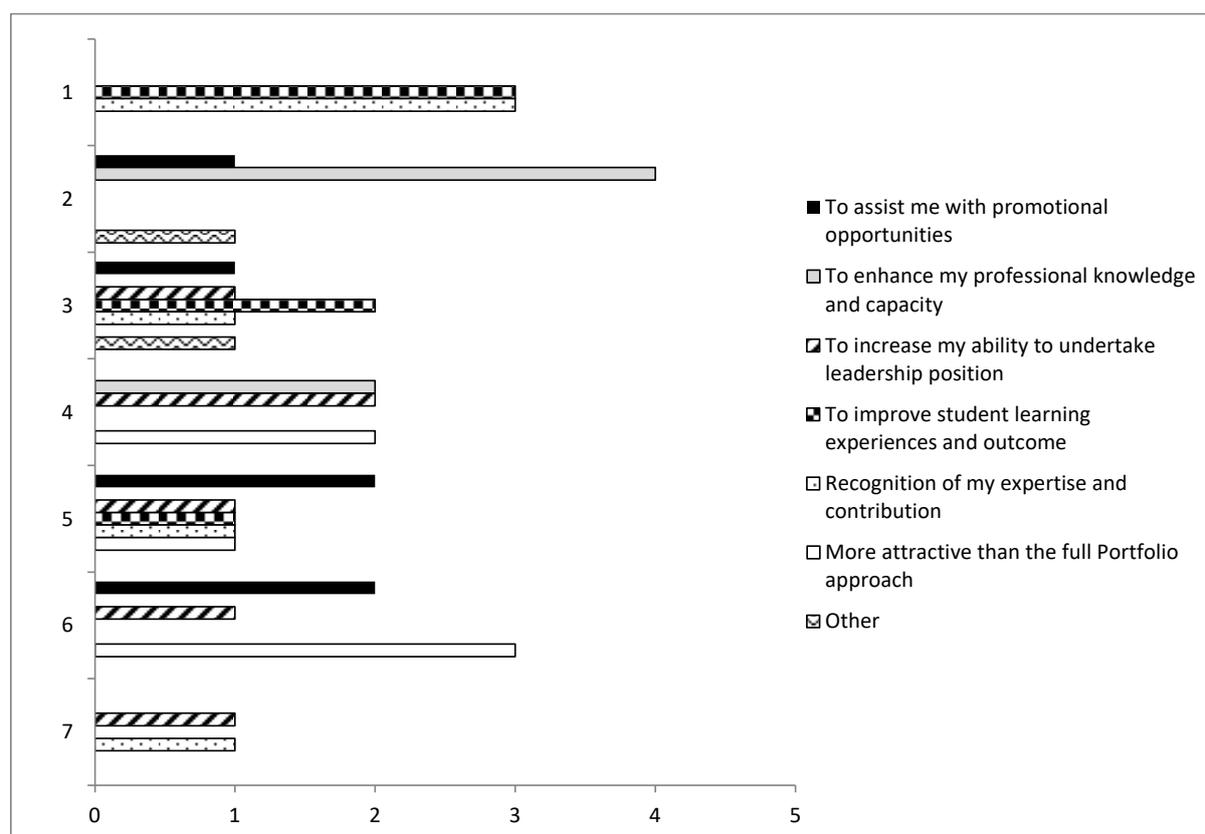
**Table 1: Details of School Level, School Sector and Type Including the Information about the Teachers Who Completed this Survey**

Among this group, seven teachers were from Independent schools, three from public schools and two were from Catholic Education sector schools. There were five classroom teachers in this mix of survey respondents and the rest were teachers with leadership roles in various areas.

All ( $N=12$ ) respondents were planning to undertake the Highly Accomplished level by the time they completed this survey in 2021.

The following bar chart shows the responses received describing the reasons for considering the HALT certification.

**Reasons for Considering Undertaking the HALT Process and the Level of Certification**



**Bar chart 1: Reasons for Considering Undertaking the HALT Process and the Level of Certification**

In Bar chart, the vertical axis represents the hierarchy of importance through numbers one to seven (indicating level importance, with 1 being the most important) and the horizontal scale represents the number of respondents who selected a number for ranking. The seven reasons that are colour coded including the option *Other*.

The reason *to improve student learning experiences and outcomes* was ranked by six participants at various levels and three teachers as the most important reason.

Similarly, *Recognition of my expertise and contribution* was ranked by three participants at the same level from the six teachers who ranked it at different levels. However, one participant ranked *Recognition of my expertise and contribution* as the least important reason.

Four participants ranked *To enhance their professional knowledge and capacity* at the second most important level, and one ranked *To assist me with promotional opportunities* at the same level.

Six respondents ranked *More attractive than the Full Portfolio approach* at different levels and 50% ranked it at sixth level giving less importance to this factor. One respondent has ranked it at fifth level and two respondents have ranked it at level four.

Under the option *Other* the respondents were given the opportunity to provide explanations in a comment box. Two participants provided further details describing the incentives: “My school has established a team of teachers who are applying and the idea of having people to support the process within my school helped me to make the decision to undertake the modules” (TR 2) and “Financial incentive such as allowances and as an alternative to promotion” (TR 4).

In summary the most highly ranked reasons by most respondents were *To improve student learning experiences and outcomes* and *Recognition of my expertise and contribution*. The reasons *To enhance my professional knowledge and capacity* and *More attractive than the Full Portfolio approach* were ranked as the least important aspects.

Participating teachers were asked to explain why they selected undertaking the HALT certification instead of considering a master’s degree or an Independent Schools Teacher Accreditation (ISTA) certification. The HALT and ISTA are similar accreditation certifications but a masters degree is a qualification. Most of the respondents indicated that they already had a masters qualification but three (TR1 TR2 & TR3) indicated that the school leadership suggested they undertake HALT certification. The responses also indicated that teachers undertake HALT certification for improving their teaching practices and improving student learning outcomes.

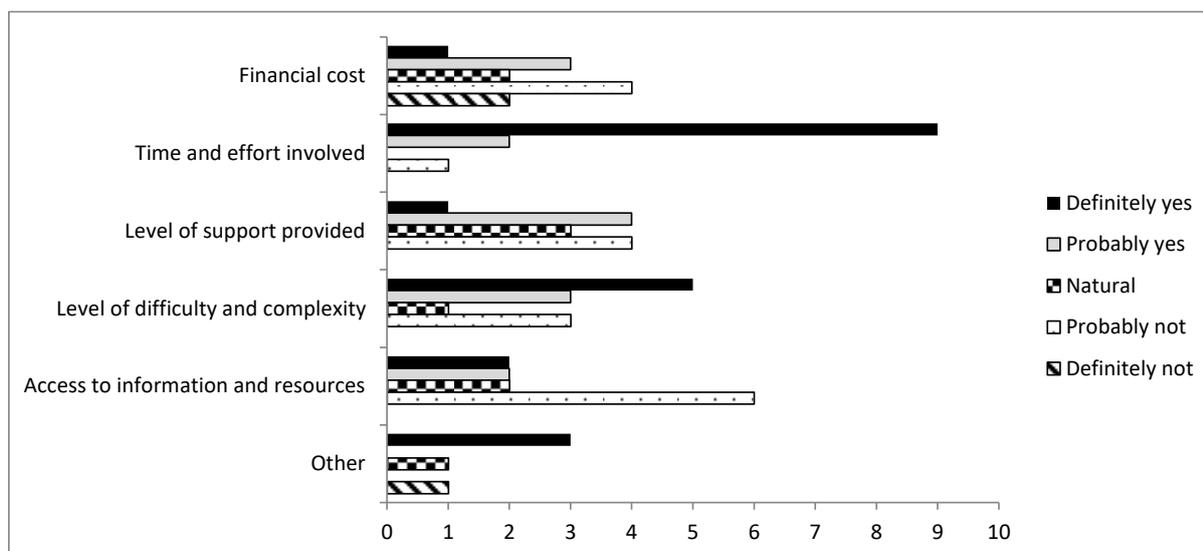
As a reason for considering HALT certification, a couple of participants mentioned that HALT certification is “more likely to lead to promotion than alternatives” (TR 3) and another two participants have indicated that “highly accomplished involves a pay rise” (TR 9 TR 10). Further, participant TR 10 explained “to get recognition for my skills as a classroom teacher” as the reasons for selecting the HALT certification. From these explanations it is possible to understand that teachers consider incentives such as promotions and financial gains as well as professional practice improvement as the main reasons for undertaking HALT certification.

### **Choice in undertaking the TQI Certification**

From all ( $N=12$ ) participant responses, only four indicated that they found about the TQI certification process from the TQI website and e-mails. Most participants were informed by their colleagues and the school authorities.

Undertaking both modular model and portfolio models of certification involve a cost. It is important to mention that there was a concern raised about the cost involved and one participant was “still deciding whether to undertake HALT certification because of the expense and amount of work on top of my regular duties” (TR 12). In contrast another participant has explained that the offer from the school principal to pay part of the fees for teachers who apply for certification has made it an attractive proposition to consider the HALT certification. These explanations clarify that the teachers who are supported (also financially) by their schools are more likely to undertake HALT certification, while the others weighed up factors mentioned above before deciding.

**The Challenges and Difficulties of Doing Certification**



**Bar chart 2: The Challenges and Difficulties of Doing Certification**

Participants were requested to select and classify the challenges of doing certification providing different reasons: *Financial costs; Time and effort; Level of support provided; Level of difficulty and complexity; Access to information and resources & Other*.

In the set of *Definitely yes*-rated challenges, *Time and Effort Involved* was the most selected issue by 75% of participants and *Level of difficulty and complexity* as the second most by 41.67%.

Among the *Probably yes* responses 33.33% indicated *Level of support provided*, followed by *Financial costs* and *Level of difficulty and complexity*, each reason at 25%. Factors *Time and effort Involved* and *Access to information and resources* were nominated by 16.67% each.

In the *Neutral* category, from the twelve respondents, 25% identified *Level of support provided* as a challenge followed by *Financial costs* and *Access to information and resources*, each of which was selected by 16.76% of participants.

The reason *Access to information* was indicated as a ‘not a probable’ issue by 50% of the respondents (N = 12), followed by *Financial costs* and *Level of support provided*, each cause nominated by 33.33%. One teacher indicated *Time and effort* as a probable challenge.

From the twelve respondents two offered further explanations under the option *Other* stating that: “the workshops that require compulsory attendance frequently clash with school-based events such as staff meetings, parent-teacher interviews and school camps” (TR 7) and “family commitments and priorities” (TR 8) were the reasons provided.

**Information, Preparation and Support to Undertake the Certification 2.0 Modular Model**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	41.67%	5
2	Somewhat agree	50.00%	6
3	Neither agree nor disagree	8.33%	1
4	Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0
5	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	12

**Table 2: Information, preparation and support to undertake the Certification 2.0 Modular Model**

When participants were asked if they felt informed, prepared and supported appropriately to undertake CMM 2.0, 41.67% indicated that they strongly agree and 50% indicated that they *somewhat agreed*. None of the participants have indicated that they disagree in the responses.

**Importance of Having Colleagues Completing the Certification Process at the Same Time**

Most participants indicated that having colleagues completing the certification process at the same time with them as a motivating factor, seven indicating this as *Highly desirable*; four as *desirable* and one pointing out it as *of some benefit*.

**Benefits of Undertaking the HALT Certification as an Educator**

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Certainly	25.00%	3
2	To a fair extent	33.33%	4
3	Only in some respects	25.00%	3
4	Of limited benefit	16.67%	2
5	Of no real benefit	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	12

**Table 3: Benefits of undertaking the HALT Certification as an educator**

The twelve participants were asked if there was a benefit to increasing their professional capacity as educators and 25% indicated *Certainly* followed by 33.33%

indicating *to a fair extent*. Three teachers indicated *Only in some respects* followed by two specifying *of limited benefits*. In summary, there is some indication that undertaking certification has the benefit of increasing the professional capacity of these educators (Table 3).

**Additional Comments/Feedback about the Certification 2.0 Modular Model (CMM 2.0) or the Full Portfolio Model.**

Participants were provided with the option to offer further feedback/comments about HALT certification, both the Full Portfolio Model and the CMM 2.0 and two respondents indicated the CMM 2.0 as their preferred option stating that “The modules definitely make the process easier to manage as I do not have to focus on all standards at once” (TR 1) and “the Modular Model is more do-able than the portfolio” (TR 2).

Providing more information about the HALT (CMM 2.0 or Full Portfolio mode), a participant explained that “certification seems to be a way of justifying that your work is of a high standard, but it seems to be taking a significant amount of administration and draws teachers away from the classroom” (TR 7). Another participant mentioned that “there is still an enormous amount of work involved for someone who is a teacher, pastoral leader, and works long hours anyway” (TR 5). Participant TR 3 explained that “It is arduous as a full or part time teacher to find all the evidence and create the portfolio of work needed to prove you can teach”. These comments flag that participants were concerned about the workload and the time requirement.

**Survey of the Current & Former HALT Applicants**

This survey was used to gather information from current applicants undertaking CMM 2.0 and staff who have completed the Full Portfolio HALT Certification Model. There are some direct quotations included in this analysis from comments provided by the survey respondents and they are presented as Research Participant (RP) with a number ( $N= 14$ ) to protect privacy of data. This survey mainly includes sample characteristics in numbers and patterns of preferences.

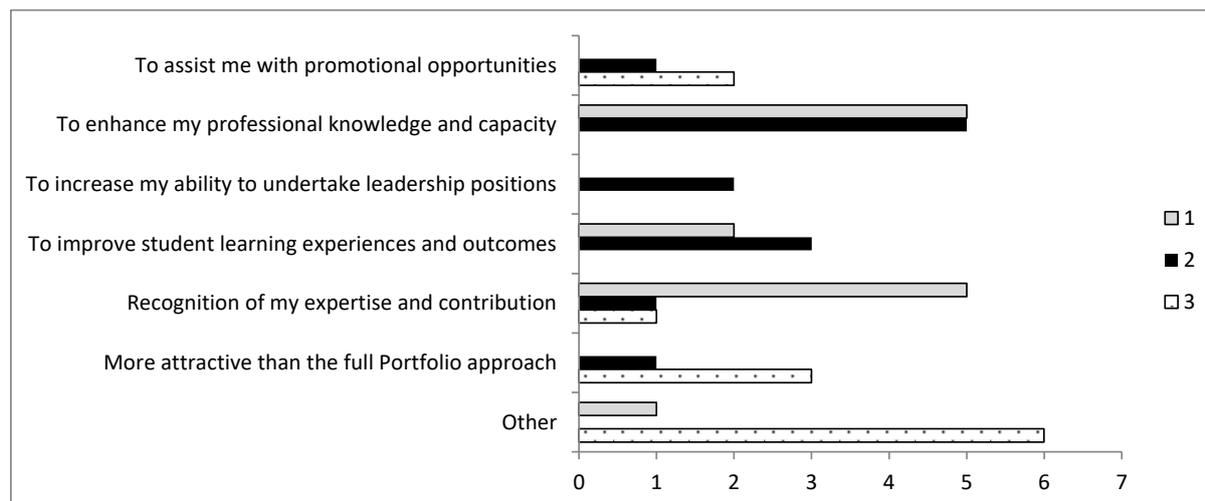
**Details of School Level, School Sector and Type Including the Information about the Participants Current Who Completed This Survey**

#	School type	n %	n Count
1	Primary	50%	7
2	Secondary	42.86%	6
3	College	7.14%	1
	<b>Total N</b>	100%	14

**Table 4: Details of School Level, School Sector and Type Including the Information about the Participants Current Who Completed This Survey**

From the total number of respondents ( $N=14$ ), eight were applicants for CMM 2.0 and six were former Full Portfolio Model applicants. Among this group ( $N=14$ ), there were four participants from the public-school sector, five from systemic Catholic school sector and five from independent school sector. Twelve respondents have completed or currently undertaking the ‘Highly Accomplished’ level and two were from ‘Lead Teacher’ level. There were eight classroom teachers, two assistant principals and four teachers in leadership roles (e.g., year level and subject coordinators) in this cohort.

### Reasons for Undertaking HALT Certification



Bar chart 3: Reasons for Undertaking HALT Certification

The two most highly ranked reasons 38% (of  $n=13$ ) were *Recognition of my expertise and contribution* and *To enhance my professional knowledge and capacity* at the same level. The next most important reason (at level 2) was *To improve student learning experiences and outcomes* was ranked by 23% (of  $n=13$ ) respondents (Pie charts 1, 2 and 3).

Some respondents (of  $n=12$ ) selected the option Other to provide explanations in the comment box provided. Among them, most respondents stated that the reason to undertake HALT certification process was to engage with the APSTs as a PL opportunity followed by incentives such as increments in pay. A couple of participants explained that they considered the HALT certification as a result of considering suggestions by their colleague/s to undertake the process as a collaborative activity.

### Information about the TQI Certification

Explaining how they found about the TQI certification process, most respondents mentioned that they were informed by the school authorities (e.g., principals and deputies), colleagues and school newsletters/bulletins. Two participants noted that they became aware “from TQI emails” (RP 2 & RP 10). This suggests that recommendations from colleagues who are aware of the HALT certification are important for encouraging teachers to undertake the HALT certification along with the TQI’s communication strategies.

**Reason to Undertake HALT Certification Rather Than Other Qualifications or Courses**

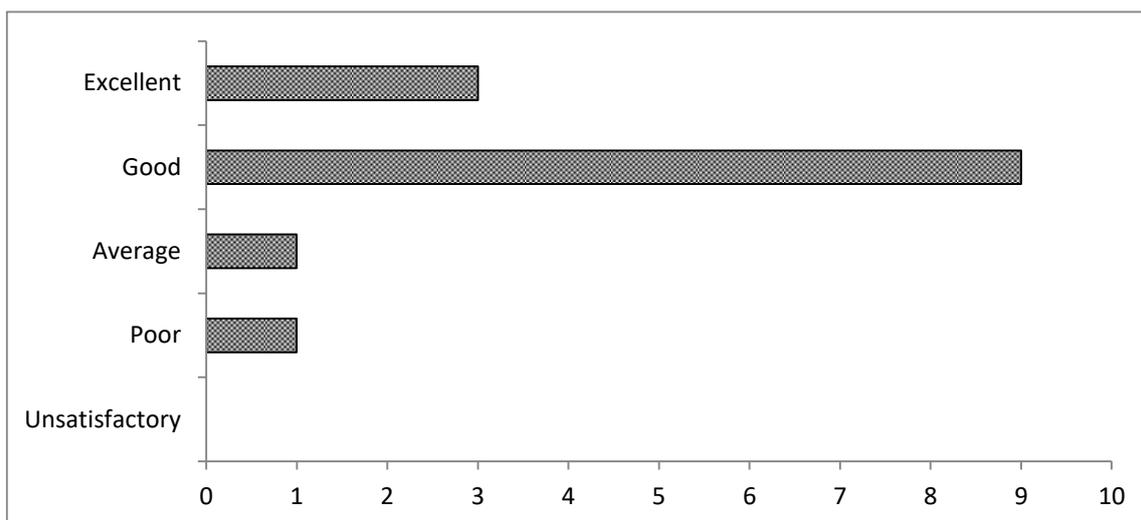


**Figure 1: Word Cloud 1**

Twelve participants provided explanations for undertaking the HALT certification and most ( $n= 8$ ) indicated that they had already attained a post-graduate qualification (e.g., Graduate Certificate and Masters degrees), as evident from the Word cloud 1 (Figure 1). This suggests that teachers undertake certification for reasons other than for formal qualifications. Enhancing professional practice is one of the main goals followed by gaining a solid understanding of the AITSL standards for considering the certification process.

A respondent who has recently completed the certification has claimed that “it improved my teaching straight away” (RP 11) and another has highlighted the significance stating that “it is more authentic and embedded than other PD methods” (RP 12). These explanations clarify that some participants consider HALT certification mainly as effective PD/PL.

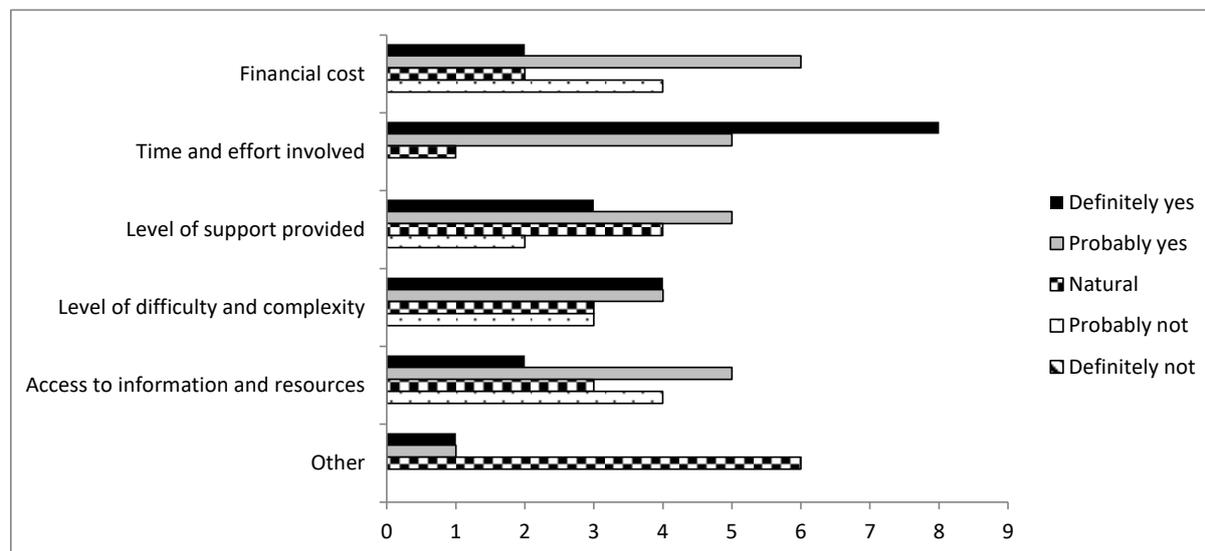
**Experience with the Certification Process**



**Bar chart 4: Experience with the certification process**

When participants were asked to rate their experience with the HALT certification process 64.29% (from  $n= 14$ ) indicated that they had a *good* experience while 21.43% rated it as *Excellent*. This demonstrates that only a few applicants had a poor experience while most respondents had a good experience.

### Challenges and Difficulties of Undertaking the Certification



Bar chart 5: Challenges and Difficulties of Undertaking the Certification

For the *Definitely yes* response, the highest responses were eight (of  $n= 14$ ) respondents identified *Time and effort involved*; and Four (of  $n= 14$ ) identified *Level of difficulty and complexity*.

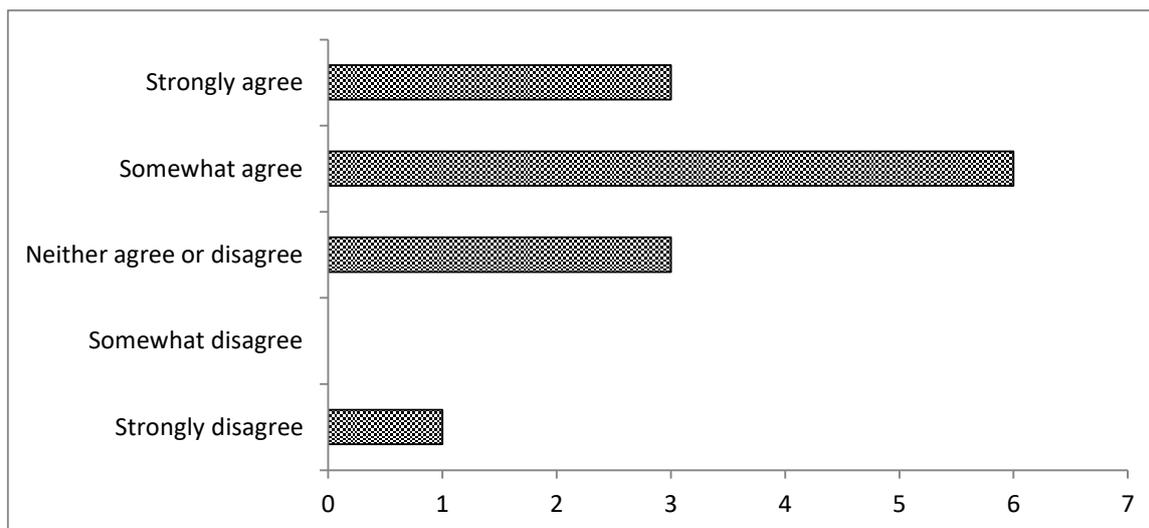
For *Probably yes*, the main reason identified was *Financial cost* was identified by six (of  $n= 14$ ); and by five participants *Time and effort involved* by five (of  $n= 14$ ), *Level of support provided* by five (of  $n= 14$ ); *Access to information and resources* by five (of  $n= 14$ ).

For *Natural*, the highest response was *Level of support provided* was identified by four (of  $n= 14$ ); *Level of difficulty and complexity* by three (of  $n= 14$ ); *Access to information and resources* by three (of  $n= 14$ );

In the list of reasons under *Probably not*, the highest response was four respondents (of  $n= 14$ ) indicated *Financial costs* and four respondents (of  $n= 14$ ) indicated *Access to information and resources*.

In summary *Time and effort involved* was the highest-rated reason followed by *Financial costs*. Among the least nominated reasons rated were *other* factors and *Access to information and resources*. One respondent has stated that “the amount of documentation can be very overwhelming and difficult to find on the system” (RP 1).

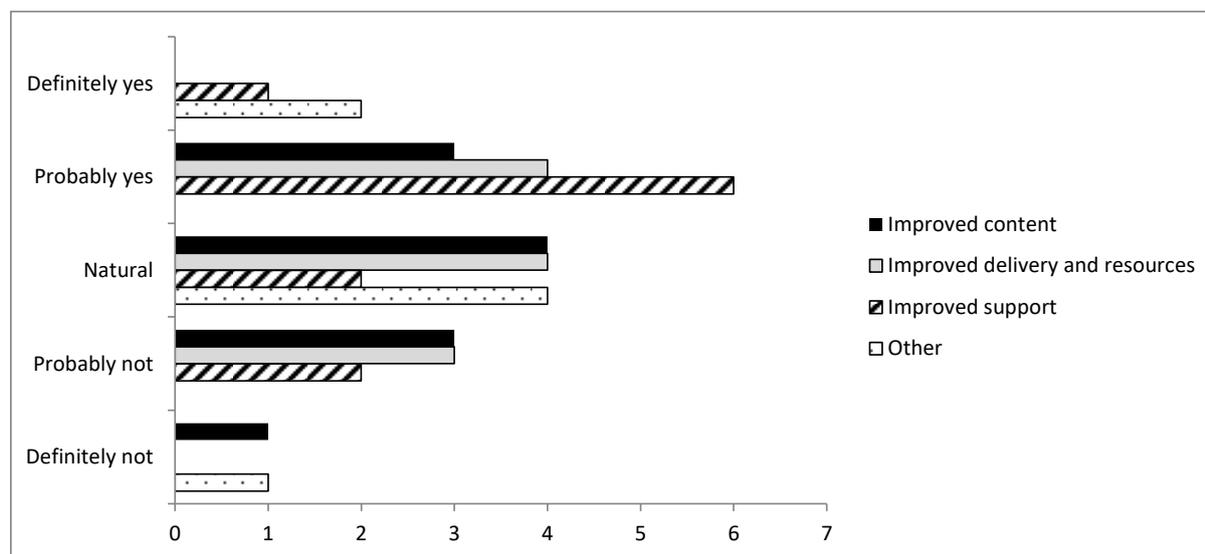
**Did You Feel Informed, Prepared and Supported Appropriately to Undertake the Certification 2.0 Modular Model?**



**Bar chart 6: Did You Feel Informed, Prepared and Supported Appropriately to Undertake the Certification 2.0 Modular Model?**

From the total (n=13) who responded to this question three chose *Strongly agree*, and six participants chose *Somewhat agree*. There were three participants who selected *Neither agree nor disagree*. In summary, most respondents indicated that they were informed, prepared and supported appropriately (Bar chart 7).

**How Could the Certification 2.0 Modular Model be improved?**



**Bar chart 7: How Could the Certification 2.0 Modular Model be improved?**

*Improved support* was indicated as *Definitely yes* by one participant (of n = 11). As *Probably yes*, aspects *Improved support* were nominated by six (of n = 11); *Improved delivery and resources* by four (of n = 11) and *Improved content* by three (of n = 11). Seven

participants rated and selected the option *Other* but only one respondent provided a suggestion to improve the recognition for HALT certification.

In summary, most respondents suggested *Improved support* while three indicated there is no requirement to improve the content at this stage. One participant raised a concern about the consistency of the HALT certification/s across states.

Respondents (n =14) rated the level of professional and intellectual rigor involved in the certification process. Twelve respondents rated it as *Very high* and 2 as *High*. It is important to highlight that none of the respondents selected the other options provided, *Reasonable; Low and Very low*.

The participants were asked to what extent participating in CMM 2.0 enhanced their capacity as an educator and from the total (n = 12) who responded, seven indicated *Greatly* and one participant indicated *Significantly*. Two participants indicated *Moderately*. It is evident that 66.5% have claimed that CMM 2.0 has enhanced their capacity as an educator.

The participants were asked if undertaking the certificate had a direct impact on increasing their professional capacity as educators (for example teaching) and 71.43% (from n= 14) claimed *Certainly*. Two participants indicated *to a fair extent* and another two *Only in some respects*. These responses indicate that most participants have benefitted by undertaking the certification as it has increased their professional capacity.

Seven respondents (of n = 14) indicated that having colleagues completing the certification process at the same time with them was *Highly desirable* and six said it was *Desirable*.

The respondents were asked if they would recommend or encourage their colleagues to undertake certification in the ACT with five options: Definitely; Probably; Unsure; Unlikely and No.

From the total who responded (n= 13), 53.85% indicated that they would *Definitely* recommend or encourage their colleagues to undertake certification and 23.08% selected *Probably*. These responses indicate that many (more than 75%) were prepared to encourage colleagues to undertake the HALT certification in the ACT.

#### **Further Information about the Certification 2.0 Modular Model (CMM 2.0) and Full Portfolio Model.**

A comment box was provided for respondents to share any further information about CMM 2.0 or Full Portfolio Model and seven participants offered feedback. Several themes were identified from the responses.

#### **Regarding the 2.0 Modular Model (Suggestions and Critiques):**

Four respondents (of n=7) stated that they prefer CMM 2.0 explaining “The Modular Model is what convinced me to apply. Having it in three sections means you can complete some and if you are not successful you have not lost the full fee and timeframe” (RP 5); “The Modular Model is a much better way to break down the barriers of completing HALT for time poor, busy teachers” (RP 4) and “I think the modular approach is good because after the first module you will know if you wish to continue and not have to pay the full cost or spend time” (RP 6). Another participant pointed out that “there is more feedback, support and less risk financially and professionally” with CMM 2.0 (RP 3).

Respondents pointed out that undertaking one module at a time saves time and money. It is also important to mention that this preference involves consideration of factors such as feedback and support.

There is a concern about the ‘time requirement’ (mentioned by RP 5) and using one piece of evidence for many outcomes in the CMM 2.0 (stated by RP 7) can be also considered a factor that relates to time saving, as providing multiple samples of evidence can be considered as added workload that requires more time.

#### **Time and Effort Required for HALT Certification Process.**

Several respondents explained that the HALT certification process “requires way too much time and effort” (RP 2 RP 4 RP 5 & RP 7).

In summary, it is evident from these comments that the respondents were concerned about the time and effort required for both HALT certification models and financial cost.

#### **Discussion of the Survey Data Conducted for Prospective HALT Applicants**

The following descriptions are organised using three of the three categories included in the research question.

##### **Attractive**

The opportunity to improve student learning was considered an important incentive by prospective applicants, some also wanting recognition for their knowledge and capacity as educators. Beyond recognition some prospective applicants saw the potential in the CMM 2.0 for enhancement of knowledge and capacity leading to promotion opportunities which could also lead to an increase in salary and status. An increase in leadership opportunities or capacity was not a significant incentive for prospective applicants.

Another common reason given to undertake certification was the financial support and support from the school which were both seen as important. Many teachers indicated it was desirable to have colleagues in their school undertaking certification and they would be more inclined to undertake certification if this was the case.

A few participants expressed a preference for the Modular Model above the Full Portfolio Model if they were given a choice.

##### **Sustainable**

In terms of recruitment and generating interest in the CMM 2.0 HALT the survey data suggests the main way staff were informed about certification opportunities was within the school via their colleagues and recommendations from the leadership of the school. This finding also aligns with the findings from the survey data with the current participants and HALT certified staff (see next survey). The findings suggest that to achieve broader outreach methods other than emails to promote certification need to be implemented, more networking in schools would build more interest and awareness in certification. These factors contribute to the sustainability of the certification.

As with the survey data for the current participants and HALT certified staff (see next survey) there appears to be no competing agenda with other postgraduate qualifications as many respondents already have a masters level degree.

The cost of certification was not generally considered as a major barrier to participation, although there is some evidence to suggest that teachers who are supported (financially) by their schools are more likely to undertake HALT certification.

More flexibility in TQI workshop offerings was a consideration arising out of the data comments as the workshops, sometimes clashed with other professional commitments. Key challenges identified included the time and effort involved in completing certification, especially regarding the amount of evidence and documentation required. This finding aligns with the data from the survey with the current and HALT certified staff participants (see next survey). The challenge involved in the level of complexity and difficulty in the content of the certification modules was also a common perception.

Overall, there were mixed views about the functionality and viability of doing the different certification models, CMM 2.0 and the Full Portfolio Model.

### **Developmental**

The survey data reveals that prospective applicants were interested in the potential of the certification that could improve their teaching practices, professional capacity and leading to improved student learning outcomes. A small minority did not share this view. The data also suggests that participants in this survey did not see an advancement in teacher capacity, knowledge or skill level as a major incentive or focus for them to undertake HALT certification. They were generally of the view that other forms of PL were more effective in increasing their teaching / leadership capacity. This view stands in contrast to those who are currently undertaking HALT certification and those who have completed it (see next survey).

### **Discussion of the Survey Conducted for the Current & Former HALT Applicants** **Attractive**

There was a clear recognition of that the participants were drawn to participate in certification by having their professional expertise recognised and the potential to enhance their professional knowledge and capacity. It is noteworthy that the opportunity to engage with the APSTs was highly valued. Increments in pay levels was also seen as being attractive to several participants.

Participants were also attracted by the potential to improve their professional expertise and contribution as educators by enhancing their professional capacity as teachers, which they identified as leading to improving student outcomes and learning. This finding was somewhat different to the prospective applicants who did not see this as a significant benefit arising from undertaking HALT certification and may be a result of current and HALT certified applicants being in a position of hindsight to reflect on the benefits to their professional growth. Encouragement and recommendations from colleagues within the school context was the way most teachers found about the certification and communication from TQI was the second most important means of doing this.

Most of the participants said they would recommend certification to colleagues due to the positive experiences they have had. Positive promotion of the HALT certification is an important way of attracting interest from prospective applicants.

### **Sustainable**

The increased number of teachers in the ACT region who have post-graduate qualifications is not seen as an impediment to the growth of and sustainability of certification. Teachers see the advantages and opportunities afforded by undertaking certification as being distinct and not in competition with other postgraduate qualifications such as a Master of Education degree.

Some challenges to the sustainability of the certification process identified by the participants were the time and effort involved (major challenge) for them to complete certification, the financial cost, and level of support within the school. These are factors which could limit further uptake and completion of certification. Access to information and resources and the level of difficulty and complexity of content in certification were also factors though not as significant.

A large number of participants believed it was important to have colleagues to share the certification experience with at the same school, as this can sustain the interest and engagement of participants in the certification process. Many participants displayed a preference for CMM 2.0 compared to the Full Portfolio Model, due to its flexibility, lower stakes fail or pass outcomes, better distribution of content, more regular feedback (Willis et al., 2022) and a more graduated workload. Respondents pointed out that undertaking one module at a time saves time and money. It is also important to mention that this preference involves consideration of factors such as feedback and support.

A sizeable minority of participants saw merit in the Full Portfolio Model with the advantage of using a piece of evidence for multiple purposes, enabling time-efficient use of artefacts and evidence.

### **Developmental**

There is clear evidence from the survey that both forms of certification can make an improvement to teaching and enhance professional understanding and skill levels. The level of professional and intellectual rigor was rated highly by participants.

Many participants indicated CMM 2.0 enhanced their capacity as educators and believed the level of enhancement was profound; a very few were not of this view which may be attributed to a range of factors.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This research has sought to address the question *In what ways does the modular approach achieve the objectives of making certification more attractive, sustainable, and developmental?* The findings need to be set in the context of the impact of Covid-19 during the data collection period (2020-2021), when schools teachers, school leaders and the TQI had considerable demands placed on them to continue their professional work.

From the survey data analysed it is evident that modular certification provides opportunities to reflect on and improve teaching and validate the practices of teachers. King (2022) points out the importance of agency and leadership in PL and its potential ability to empower teachers to make a difference. However, there is a need for consistent recognition process across education sectors, states and territories of Australia. Ingvarson and Hattie (2008) suggest that the industrial recognition of HALT certification needs to be clarified and regulated more effectively across different sectors, especially when the AITSL claims that

*“the way in which certified teachers may be recognised or rewarded is an employment matter”* (AITSL, 2018, p.6). From the AITSL (2018) recommendation it is possible to understand that the process of regulating recognition of all levels of teacher certification across school sectors (including states and territories in Australia) is a complicated task even though it has been considered as a ‘national certification process’ (Willis et al., 2021). Furthermore, Willis et al. (2021) urge for providing clear professional pathways post certification to participants and this highlights the need for responsible parties to act upon recognition of HALT certified teachers.

Many of the participants have indicated positive views about CMM 2.0 and provided reasons for this in the data presented. Even though several participants in this study have direct experience of only one model of certification (CMM 2.0 or Full Portfolio Model) many of the current participants explained the benefits of undertaking/offering CMM 2.0 for teachers drawing on their knowledge and experience. This indicates a clear dimension of developmental learning acquisition which contributes to a form of PD. Participants also highlighted the benefits such as cost and time saving, can result from dividing the certification process into modules which suggest the CMM 2.0 is sustainable beyond its pilot phase, but will need to be further evaluated to both gauge and further enhance its attractiveness and implementation.

The TQI strive to promote greater levels of consistency in relation to recognition of HALT certified teachers in schools. One way of working toward this objective is by engaging in further dialogue with the leadership of the school sectors and other key stakeholders, focused on fostering a shared understanding of the benefits of the recognition of HALT teachers. Willis et al. (2022) recommends to “Articulate the value of the HALT process to applicants and school leaders” and to “Create collegial networks and approaches that empower colleagues” (p.32).

Sustainability will be contingent on the growth and expansion of the CMM 2.0. To attract more participants to undertake this model would need to be more effectively promoted alongside ongoing communication with school systems and schools. The time and cost involved in completing certification were both raised by current and former participants and were rated as challenging and difficult aspects of completing HALT certification. Willis et al. (2022) suggests to “reduce the time demand and increase the accessibility of the application process” (p.32). One way could be for the TQI to negotiate with school systems and the ACT Government to help with the cost of completing HALT certification

It is important that the participants be credited with some time for their yearly hours of mandated PL per module completed. Rather than reduce the scope and amount of work required for certification which would potentially diminish the depth and rigor of the CMM 2.0.

Based on the evidence from the surveys, having a current or former participants inform and motivate others in their school is a powerful way to attract more participants. It would be advantageous to have current and former CMM 2.0 participants to share the benefits of the CMM 2.0 with others. However, it is a model that has certain limitations and does not suit the needs of all the potential applicants. Some current and former HALT participants saw the benefits of the Full Portfolio Model, especially the more holistic way in which the APSTs could be addressed. The level of participation in HALT certification is very low across all Australian states and territories. Cole (2021) pointed out that an average of only one hundred teachers become a “nationally certified teacher” (p.147) from six jurisdictions each year. To improve interest and participation further, investigation is required to identify why this is the case and what can be done to address the situation. On the national level further research needs to be conducted in other states and territories which explores the implementation and nature of different types of HALT certification models. The New South

Wales Education Standards Authority has recently started offering a three modules approach (with similar elements to CMM 2.0) for HALT accreditation/certification (NESA, 2022) in the state of New South Wales.

The ACT's CMM 2.0 is a model worthy of consideration by other jurisdictions and has the potential to be influential nationally and internationally as it continues to develop and expand. However, its adoption needs to be carefully planned and contextualised to each school jurisdiction to maximise its viability and appeal to school teachers.

#### Biographical note

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