



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, Inc.
Submitting as a: Peak body
State: WA

Summary

Summary of key points

Teacher quality is key to school improvement –

- through targeted professional learning,
- access to evidence that really leads to improvement,
- a relook at teacher time in the classroom and engaged in classroom observation and professional conversations
- increased support for new graduate teachers through mentors etc.
- follow through with some of the TEMAG recommendations regarding selection of teaching students and pre service training

Access to research and evidence – a clearinghouse of good educational research and evidence with summaries of key points and links to full articles

Efforts at schools to relieve teachers and school leadership of some compliance and administrative processes so they can focus on good education practices and student improvement

A broader range of students' outcomes be assessed, not just academic but vocational, extra curricula and many of the non-cognitive skills found in the General Capabilities and called 21st Century Skills such as critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and global competencies.

School autonomy can lead to school improvement but some leaders need additional support to ensure this is the result.

A focus on engagement through deep learning and redesigning the business model of schooling.

Main submission

DRAFT Submission to the Review of Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

What should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?

- What capabilities, skills and knowledge should students learn at school to prepare them for the future?

Foundational skills: Foundational skills include literacy, language, numeracy, and digital literacies/skills.

Technical skills: Technical skills are often specific to a particular task, role or industry and can include qualifications such as licenses or certificates.

Many technical skills currently being delivered will be of limited value, hence training on the job could replace upfront training so the capacity to learn and acquire knowledge and skills in situ is very important

Enterprise skills: Enterprise skills are transferable skills such as problem solving, problem-seeking, communication, collaboration/ teamwork, analytical skills and creativity.

Personal dispositions: Mindfulness, curiosity, courage, leadership, ethics, resilience as reference by Charles Fadel: Centre for Curriculum Redesign

<http://www.all-learning.org.au/charles-fadel-leading-way-21st-century-skills>

Ethics/spirituality/morality, wisdom/discernment, and character building are key to future national success. History continues to demonstrate that education needs to be tempered with such things for human flourishing. A sense of collectivism or community be added to his list. The latter is not only essential to ongoing relationships with Asia but to counter Australia's increasing tendency to individualism and isolation.

Social Responsibility: Being reflective about one's actions, forming intentions about how to act in an appropriate way based on a set of values, and holding oneself accountable for the outcomes of those actions (OECD Education 2030 Framework). The willingness to be informed, responsible, ethical and active participants in society at a local, national and global scale (SCSA, 2017)

Active citizenship through provision of professional learning to promote school based activities.

Global Competencies: which provided students with the ability to mobilise knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, alongside a reflective approach to the processes of learning, in order to engage with and act in the world (OECD Education 2030 Framework)

Many of these skills are found in the Australian Curriculum Learning Areas, the General Capabilities and the Cross Curriculum Priorities.

- How should school quality and educational success be measured?

The development of school based assessment that measure emerging new skill sets are needed for young Australians. These would be formative and look at value added not point in time summative assessment. A 'stage not age' approach to skills acquisition and understanding is preferred as this can result in a true measure of growth. Equally, different skills require different metrics and thus the measures and assessments must suit the skill. New measures must also take into account levels of maturity and cognitive development as these have an impact on what can be measured.

School strategic plans could articulate holistic success beyond traditional academic measures and be supportive of deep learning and high levels of student engagement.

The provision of teacher professional development in the form of demonstrable evidence based practice, to promote the teaching, facilitating and development of the skills and disposition stated above. The practice required to assist students develop these skills will be very different from that found in some very traditional classrooms.

Students need more opportunities to develop skills and understandings of how to move from school to work. Schools should try to provide a range of experiences for young people to aid practical skill development and practice and include this as part of their assessment regime. This would also entail working parents and communities to increase their awareness and understanding of the value of these skills and dispositions. School leaders may need to be supported in making a case for change.

Students need to be given opportunities to demonstrate learning in a range of contexts, and in a range of modes. Some of these might include viva voces/interviews, demonstrations, projects, products, process journals, timed problem- solving activities, team challenges, general ability tests, written responses about known topics (rather than NAPLAN style tests which are generalised pieces) and listening tasks. Some national testing is appropriate in terms of accountability although the nature of the tests might change over time.

There is no appetite for increased external testing, rather improved formative assessment that is school based and uses clear state/national progressions for comparability. Consistency in Year 12 assessment and calculation of ATAR scores would be a more equitable approach than is currently the case.

What can we do to improve and how can we support ongoing improvement over time?

- How could schools funding be used more effectively and efficiently (at the classroom, school or system level) to have a significant impact on learning outcomes for all students including disadvantaged and vulnerable students and academically advanced students?
- What actions can be taken to improve practice and outcomes? What evidence is there to support taking these actions?

What works best for whom and in what circumstances?

Ensure all teachers both pre-service and in-service teachers are provided opportunities to develop confidence in the delivery of the Australian Curriculum (in WA there is a West Australian version) and the General Capabilities. More often than not teachers require more than the “what to do”, requiring guidance in the “how to”. Therefore funding could be used to facilitate the upskilling of teachers to foster and develop the skills and dispositions which students require to meet the diverse and productive futures that stand before young people today FYA, 2017 New Work Smarts; National Education Evidence Base, 2016).

In doing so there needs to be an acknowledgement and understanding that the culture and context of schools is very important Therefore the upskilling and facilitation of school staff needs to meet the needs of the individual students, schools and communities; one solution or pathway will not suit all schools

Student agency and voice plays a major role in engagement and self-reflection, therefore it is imperative student agency and a voice in learning and assessment is recognised. At the same time schools should look at the actual engagement of their students in learning. Research suggests large numbers of students not engaged in learning, and while compliant, certainly not meeting what should be high expectations. This for some schools would require further upskilling for all stakeholders.

Given that collective teacher efficacy has a very high impact on learning (1.47 effect size according to Hattie), part of the additional funding could used to:

- reduce teacher classroom time to spend more time collaborating with other teachers and participate in classroom observations,
- develop common understandings of what data tells teachers and how to use that information to improve student learning. Schools could be encouraged to make resources available to employ a person with the expertise in collection, analysis of data to work alongside teachers to share this expertise.

A very large amount of any school’s professional learning time and its budget is spent on things other than learning. Such things as first aid, asthma training, child protection and things of a similar ilk are crucial but cannot improve results. This may require in further research by ACARA to follow these links to learning.

An Australian register of participation and accreditation in mandatory courses such as these could be established and linked to teacher registration. Schools wishing to add in contextual factors, such as faith based schools, could supplement Australian courses at a local or school level. Moving from a school/local/system/state level for mandatory courses to a centralised national one has the potential for huge changes.

Since literacy is key to academic success, which in turn affects work, productivity, longevity, health and a raft of other social factors – early intervention is critical. Funding could be used for personalised learning, individual and small group tuition intervention and similar as required, especially in K-3. Specialist literacy assistants could form a variation of teacher/educational assistants.

The provision of wrap around services to school communities such as Integrated public health, housing and educational systems for vulnerable young people could be instituted putting a child at the centre of all provisions, rather than disparate resources being the driver.

Teachers would benefit by having access to pre-developed modules that have been put together to provide opportunities for students to develop the 21st Century skills and global competences we are trying to inculcate. Whilst it is all very well for teachers to know that these are the skills they should be developing in young people, teachers are time poor to create targeted units of work to develop and assess these competencies.

- What institutional or governance arrangements could be put in place to ensure ongoing identification, sharing and implementation of evidence-based good practice to grow and sustain improved student outcomes over time?

There is a need for tried and tested, evidence-base practice which is easily accessible to school. This could be through a register of educational data and metadata, refereed educational research and examples of best practice that have resulted in significant improvements in student outcomes. This would allow schools to match the desired practice to their school culture.

Resources could be made available for teachers to collect evidence, interpret the evidence and inform their teaching based on the analysis of student learning and engagement in the areas of creativity and innovation with a view to sharing with the wider education community. Facilitating cross sectoral sharing of practice so teachers learn from observation and accessing other classroom practitioners

A clearing house for educational research and evidence that is easily accessible to classroom practitioners as well as school leadership would mean greater sharing of this evidence. The teachers in their 'increased' non-contact time could discuss and analyse how these proven approaches could be used in their schools.

- How can system enablers such as targets and standards, qualifications and accreditation, regulation and registration, quality assurance measures and transparency and accountability provisions be improved to help drive educational achievement and success and support effective monitoring, reporting and application of investment?

All educators would want young people to thrive but regulations and compliance vary across the country so often good educators are consumed by compliance requirements. These must be thought out carefully and just not added to existing regimes.

Targets and standards which relate to real improvements in student outcomes (value added and growth) and which inform future practice would be good.

- Are there any new or emerging areas for action which could lead to large gains in student improvement that need further development or testing?
 - What are they and how could they be further developed?

Freeing school leaders to become educational leaders – reduce the burden of compliance

The sharing of rigorously tested evidence based practice which is available to all through the clearinghouse referred to above.

Raise status of teachers – other countries have done this through higher entry standards to teacher education courses, pay structures that reward more than time serve, the establishment of highly effective classroom teachers that stay in the classroom and work alongside other teachers.

Engage in collaboration with business and industry in the creativity and innovation space to both engage students and identify the skills and dispositions that are required for young people to progress.

Increase practical elements of pre-service training for teachers including mentoring programs and training programs that take place in a school. This would mean upskilling the school based teacher educators and freeing up mentors in the school for the trainee teachers.

Are there barriers to implementing these improvements?

- If yes, what are they and how could these be overcome?

While there is a lot of educational research undertaken this is often not well disseminated and it is not always useful research – perhaps all research in the area should be put to an evaluation board to decide if it should go ahead and once finalised made available to all practitioners in a format that is accessible and useful on the ground. While there is evidence that teachers that engage in research is effective in improving their practice, there is also an expectation from parents that

teachers will be teaching not studying for a higher degree or engaging in time consuming research. School based action research is a good solution to this with a mentor and with links to university.

The current model of schooling works against excellence so perhaps that needs a significant rethink. That 'rethink' is happening in places but the experience should be shared more widely.

Many teachers spend a lot of time handling behaviour management issues so work to provide them the skills to develop a culture of learning in their classroom would alleviate some of these. A learning culture in the school must be driven by the school leadership and be adopted by all educators in the school and by the students – give the students a role in developing this culture. Getting and retaining quality teachers and developing teacher resilience

Many schools focus only on academic outcomes and this often alienates, or at least disengages, many students from the learning process. Need to rethink schooling and cater for where the students can all excel. Maybe a summit to consider 'redesigning how schools work' could be a useful starting point.

There are no quick fix options but a strong improvement plan to which all members of the school community agree can gradually make a difference.

Teacher burnout is high especially in the first five years of teaching. Unless there is explicit and mandated agreement about the above, in order to release teachers to participate in ongoing, systematic and rigorous professional learning, then improvement will neither be sustained or consistent.

Australian teachers are aging. Expert/retired teachers could be employed as peer mentors/team teachers for novice teachers. This could provide a pathway to retirement, keep expert teachers in the classroom part time (even two half days per week) and provide a way for our elderly to contribute to Australia's productivity into the future. Older expert teachers could also work alongside researchers to generate online or other professional learning materials.

School principals need to be released from the burden of compliance in order to lead learning – since school leaders, especially principals can have up to a 30% effect on school improvement. Change at state government level is critical.

Parents are increasingly outsourcing part of their role to schools. High profile and affordable public health programs, parenting courses and similar would alleviate some of parental/societal expectations on schools so that schools can (re)focus on learning.

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