



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

Submitter: Boston Consulting Group
Submitting as a: Other (Boston Consulting Group)
State: Vic.

Summary

The Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (the Review) is likely to come up with a number of recommendations to improve teacher quality and teacher effectiveness that would need to be implemented across schools.

The bigger challenge, however, is not coming up with the best measures, many of which are well known—effective induction and mentoring for all new teachers; constructive feedback for teachers; differentiated teaching; professional development more closely linked to the classroom; professional learning circles; effective use of outcomes data in schools—but how these can be effectively rolled out across the entire school system.

We would like to propose that by 2023 all schools in Australia should become accredited as “Schools of Teaching Excellence”.

To become accredited schools would need to demonstrate that they have effectively deployed the elements that the Review identifies as being relevant to all schools (for example, some of those described above or others).

This is based on a model that was successfully rolled out in Victoria in the 2000's.

Main submission

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To become accredited schools would need to demonstrate that they have effectively deployed the elements that the Review identifies as being relevant to all schools (for example, some of those described above or others).

This model was effectively deployed across Victorian schools in the years 2005–2009 in the Performance and Development Culture (P&DC) Accreditation initiative that was a part of the Government’s 2003 Blueprint for Government Schools.

During this period, 96% of Victorian schools were accredited as having a performance and development culture. More than two thirds of teachers agreed that the quality of their school had improved across a number of dimensions and more than 80% agreed that their school had a performance and development culture.

The initiative was independently evaluated by Professor Karen Starr of Deakin University in 2009. In the opening paragraph of her executive summary Professor Starr observed:

Through the conduct of this evaluation exercise it is possible to conclude that the great majority of regional and school-based personnel believe the P&DC Initiative has been one of the most successful policies to emerge centrally for implementation in Victorian schools. The survey results and commentaries from interviews were overwhelmingly positive. Although the impact differed across schools, there is a general belief that there has been a noticeable systemic improvement in schools due largely to the P&DC Initiative and its capacity to enhance, and be used in conjunction with, other initiatives and policies that have appeared as a result of the Blueprint for Government Schools (2003). The P&DC Initiative received majority endorsement as an excellent example of a central school improvement initiative which has been adopted state-wide. There is near consensus that the P&DC Initiative is one that should be retained and further developed in the future.

Sadly, the recommendation in the last sentence was not followed. After the completion of accreditation of 96% of Victorian schools, there was no continuation of the program with consequent loss of momentum. This was in part due to the change of Government in 2010.

Further evidence that the accreditation process was instrumental in driving culture change was captured through the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development annual culture survey. The results showed that in the year that a school became accredited, staff survey results spiked upwards relative to other schools.

Key elements of the P&DC Accreditation model were:

- A small number of elements (five) that schools would need to demonstrate were occurring (for example, effective induction and mentoring for all new teachers and multiple sources of feedback for teachers).
- A “light touch but rigorous” accreditation process that was neither too demanding on schools nor too expensive to administer. The accreditation approach was designed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and involved two steps. The first was an online survey for teachers on a set of questions related to the five elements. Only when 80% of teachers had responded to the survey, and 80% of those on average responded positively to the questions, could the school proceed to the next stage, which was to write a submission outlining how they had met each of the elements. These submissions were then reviewed by the accrediting body.
- A respected independent third party as the accrediting body. For the P&DC initiative this was the Melbourne Graduate School of Education who won a tender to be the accreditor.
- Schools that were not successful in meeting accreditation requirements, either in the online survey or the MGSE assessment, would get feedback on where they fell short and could apply again.
- Public recognition of schools that were accredited. In the P&DC initiative these were quarterly ceremonies where the principal and school president would receive their accreditation certificate from the Minister of Education.
- A number of schools that were accredited early in the process became “reference schools”, which other schools seeking accreditation were encouraged to visit. This drove an unprecedented amount of school staff visiting to learn from other schools.
- Percentage of schools that had been accredited in their region, became an important KPI for Regional Directors, which resulted in them leveraging regional resources to support accreditation.

It is our contention that this model could be effectively deployed to support the implementation of key recommendations of the Review that need to be implemented on a school-by-school basis.

It would require the agreement of all States, including agreement on the elements and the accreditation approach, but we believe that this could be achieved.