



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

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Submitting as a: Other (Retired Primary School Principal)
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Summary

SUMMARY

- School improvement requires a comprehensive approach in consultation with all members of the school community;
- Teacher's need to be valued for the role they play in society;
- The school curriculum needs to expand rather than narrow as it has done under a testing regime. This could be a contributor to a decline in student results;
- For governments and systems to provide strategies for schools to share successful strategies for large gains in student improvement;
- It is possible that technology has had an effect on student literacy standards;
- The constant change in curriculum documents puts an increase load on teachers with little consultancy support .
- The System should support professional development rather than relying on private suppliers that charge exorbitant fees. In the past the Disadvantaged Schools Program provided free courses and funding for casual teacher replacement. The takeup from schools showed that it was a successful model as it also included courses for parents in disadvantaged schools.
- Funding should be restored to ESL,Aboriginal and multicultural education.

Main submission

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?
- There needs to be a wider range for students at school such as the application of Literacy and Numeracy in other curriculum areas through a

greater use of cross curriculum approaches especially in the skills of persuasion, organization, economics and social skills. Philosophy of Education should be included in the curriculum which would be essential to improve cognitive skills.

- How should school quality and educational success be measured?
- Establishing a quality environment to learn entails good leadership that encourages and promotes a positive partnership with parents, teachers, students and the community in an aesthetically pleasing environment that is conducive to student learning. An evaluation framework should be set up establishing benchmarks, setting outcomes with linkages to the National Curriculum, timelines, strategies for improvement, monitoring, assessing, reporting and evaluation. Appropriate funding should be made available to undertake all of the above to avoid a shopping list mentality.

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?

A school community committee should be established to determine the immediate and long term needs of the school. A school community wide consultation should then be converted into a strategic school plan with appropriate strategies such as: raising awareness in the school community, possible strategies to meet these needs within a set time frame and the appropriate funding to meet the plan to avoid a “shopping list” mentality. Such mentality incurs wastage. Included in this plan should be regular reviews of progress and appropriate reporting mechanisms. This approach was tried and proven in the Commonwealth Disadvantaged Schools Program. The system needs to provide consultants to train the leaderships in schools in needs analysis, quality assessment and formative/summative evaluation.

- 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?

The system needs to realize that teaching should be a collegial professional experience. Competition undermines the sharing of ideas, the support of staff wellbeing, the establishment of synergy and destroying the notion that teaching is a solitary profession. Australian teachers are at the top of the amount of face to face teaching undertaken in schools and this inhibits professional growth. Finland has set

the model of allowing less face to face teaching that has resulted in world leading pedagogy.

- 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?

Reduce the administrative load on teachers. Train teachers to become action researchers in areas of their practice and how to share the outcomes of their research. Less face to face teaching.

- 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?

Teacher training should be reviewed with the return to more demonstration lessons in schools. The workload for teachers that have students' practicums is far too great and experienced teachers are refraining from giving their support. More funding and release time is required if practicums are to continue. Classroom management, knowledge of the national curriculum, assessment and evaluation is virtually non-existent. Systems need to better manage retired teachers to include them in mentoring programs for beginning teachers. The regulation and registration of casual teachers needs to be urgently addressed as experienced and highly qualified retired teachers will soon be unable to give their expertise to schools.

- Are there any new or emerging areas for action which could lead to large gains in student improvement that need further development or testing?

Philosophy of Education, Ethics, more cross curriculum approaches, computer coding.

- What are they and how could they be further developed?

Philosophy of Education and Ethics should be accessed by all students not just restricted to Non Scripture classes in schools.

Schools that have used this approach have student welfare improvements as students in the playground can negotiate difficulties.

Are there barriers to implementing these improvements?

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

NAPLAN has not shown improvement in results.

NAPLAN testing should be applied to a random sample of representative students across Australia and results can be extrapolated to the total student population. This

would allow for system planning, abolition of teaching to the test, less stress on teachers and staff, avoidance of an invalid outcome.

A recent OECD survey found that fewer than one in three Australian teachers reported that teaching is undervalued. Greater involvement of community in schools so that the important competent job that teachers do can be appreciated.

Positive attitudes of systems and governments should be enhanced, and promoted through media releases and advertising.

Increased privatization of curriculum, data collection and testing in our schools inhibits innovation, wider curriculum development and does not cater for school or individual differences and culture. Government decreasing their responsibility in these areas should be reversed.

There should be a comprehensive review of the impact technology has had on literacy skills. Technology affects reading rates, comprehension, the motivation to read and to encourage deeper understanding of context.

Funding cuts to ESL, Aboriginal and multicultural education places our most vulnerable students at risk.