



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

Submitter: Australian College of Educators  
Submitting as a: Peak body  
State: Vic.

### Summary

ACE is ideally placed to be a central repository of information, connection and advancement to drive excellence in the profession and provide strong and effective linkages between the Government, government agencies, regulatory authorities and all sectors, systems and levels within the profession to ensure educational excellence;

ACE supports an education framework that is research based, relevant and applicable to the Australian context;

What students learn and how they learn must be based on individual circumstances rather than a prescriptive approach that values only what can be easily measured.

Measuring success cannot be solely focused on the 'things' that are easiest to quantify that then force educators to teach to the test. Rather, what is learnt and how it is learnt must allow educators the flexibility to innovate and adapt teaching methods to the specific needs of their students;

Any improvements to be achieved in school quality and educational success will be intrinsically linked to strategies that ensure higher quality teaching;

Excellence in teaching must be universally recognised, harnessed and promoted to assist in driving school and community wide excellence;

The establishment of a centralised independent national entity that actively facilitates quality professional learning and development programs from various service providers and promotes cross sectorial collaboration and the establishment of localised Quality Professional Learning networks;

Facilitating professional learning and development must be focused on not removing expert educators from the classroom in order to advance;

National promotion must be undertaken that highlights the on-going professional and personal benefits to educators of achieving excellence in their profession and

facilitating ways in which their expertise can be harnessed and promoted throughout the wider school community and professional learning networks.

## Main submission

Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools | Response

Date: 01 November 2017

The Australian College of Educators welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Federal Government's Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools. ACE believes that this review is a genuine opportunity to shine a bigger spotlight on Australian Education in its entirety based on the fundamental and universal principals of equity and access as well as achieving excellence.

As a leading professional association for the education profession, ACE is committed to achieving the best possible education outcomes across all sectors, systems and subjects. The College is focused on representing the interests of all educators, elevating the status of the education profession and recognizing the importance of a strong, well resourced, highly qualified teaching profession throughout Australia that is fundamental to ensuring educational excellence in Australian Schools.

The Australian College of Educators - Background

The Australian College of Educators (ACE) is the national professional association for the education profession. ACE is a unique and united movement for the teaching profession representing educators from across all levels, sectors, systems and subjects. The College is also the longest running peak professional education association in Australia having been established in 1959.

From the very beginning, College Presidents were drawn from the ranks of Director Generals of Education, senior educators in schools and universities, and from national organisations such as the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Sir James Darling was followed as National President by Sir Harold Wyndham (NSW) and then by Professor Charles Moorhouse (Victoria). Dr Eve Eden (Victoria) was the first female President.

The strength of the College has always been its involvement of educators from all sectors and all levels of education, thus prompting a founder member, Dr A W Jones, to focus his writings on the collegial aspect of the College as 'bridging the gaps' by bringing together state, independent and catholic teachers from early childhood to tertiary level.

The Australian College of Educators –

Role in achieving educational excellence

Education is a complex profession. It is also an essential driving component of Australian society and the economy. To this end, educators play an intrinsic role in

the success of Australia. This is the primary reason the Australian College of Educators was established nearly 60 years ago. The founders recognised the need for a truly united, collaborative, focused and effective peak professional association for all educators across all sectors and all systems.

ACE is truly unique in our position and influence as a national representative association for ALL educators. The College and our members are committed to excellence in the profession and the delivery of educational excellence for the benefit of all Australian students.

The College aims to play a pivotal role in the implementation and long-term success of Australian education policy, development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation and is ideally positioned to work with the Federal Government and all State and Territory Governments to drive significant educational change at a strategic as well as operational level.

To this end, the College contends that it is a logical, effective and efficient conduit through which State, Territory and Federal Governments can work directly with the entire education profession. Further to this, ACE is ideally placed to be a central repository of information, connection and advancement to drive excellence in the profession and provide strong and effective linkages between the Government, government agencies, regulatory authorities and all sectors, systems and levels within the profession to ensure educational excellence.

What Students learn and how they learn

It is well documented that Australia continues to experience a downwards trend in terms of international test results. As was noted in the Commonwealth government's announcement of this review, it is essential that what initiatives determined as part of a forward action plan are 'proven to make a difference to student outcomes'.

What students learn and how they learn must, in this rapidly changing social, economic and global environment in which we all operate, be nimble and innovative. It is agreed, and the research supports the assertion, that spending more money does not necessarily result in better educational outcomes but rather a focus on how money is spent to achieve excellence in education is essential.

To this end, ACE supports an education framework that is research based, relevant and applicable to the Australian context and not based on fads derived from other jurisdictions that have little to no relevance within the Australian environment. Forcing schools and educators to adopt a one-size fits-all model regarding curriculum and classroom practice fails to acknowledge the expertise of the individual educators responsible for having a significant influence on student achievement and education outcomes.

Curriculum development, implementation and evaluation must be reflective of the changing learning and teaching practices that are constantly evolving as the education profession evolves and grows. Curriculum must have essential learning components but must also incorporate the teaching of what are commonly defined as 'soft skills' in ways that future proof students not only for the now, but well into the future.

Curriculum must be developed, implemented and evaluated with significant input from the educators themselves, who are at the coal face of teaching as well as academics, researchers and education leaders (principals).

What students learn and how they learn must be based on individual circumstances rather than a prescriptive approach that values only what can be easily measured. Measuring success cannot be solely focussed on the 'things' that are easiest to quantify that then force educators to teach to the test. Rather, what is learnt and how it is learnt must allow educators the flexibility to innovate and adapt teaching methods to the specific needs of their students whilst delivering on a range of key outcomes including academically based curriculum focused on essential learning.

Systemic Improvement to achieve educational excellence

Extensive research has been published into the positive and long-term impacts of excellence in teaching and teaching practices as being a major contributor to educational excellence and student outcomes. In his 2003 paper *Teachers Make a Difference, What is the research evidence?* John Hattie notes, 'the greatest source of variance that can make the difference (in student achievement) – the teacher'.

Any improvements to be achieved in school quality and educational success will be intrinsically linked to strategies that ensure higher quality teaching. 'Excellence in teaching is the single most powerful influence on achievement,' (Hattie, 2003).

The Australian College of Educators supports initiatives and actions that proactively support educators to achieve excellence in their profession and as a consequence significantly improve student learning and outcomes. More need to be done around promoting and recognising professional excellence. The introduction of Australian Professional Standards for Teachers by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) laid the foundation for significant improvements in professional learning and development. However, the ad-hoc manner in which these standards, particularly relating to highly accomplished and lead teachers highlight the on-going struggle the education profession has to 'identify excellence for the fear that the others could be deemed not-excellent,' (Hattie, 2003).

The education profession has, over time, evolved and recognised that, as with all professions, there are variations in teaching expertise. Excellence in teaching must be recognised, harnessed and promoted to assist in driving school and community wide excellence.

In order to promote professional excellence, educators must be afforded the opportunity to engage in best practice professional learning and development. In the highly complex education system, there is no centralised point through which educators can, with confidence, compare and access professional learning and support that adequately consolidates all information available from all sectors and systems.

The Australian College of Educators recommends utilising ACE's existing networks and national presence to work with state and federal governments for the establishment of a centralised independent national entity. Cross sector and cross system, the purpose of such an entity will be to actively facilitate quality professional learning and development programs from various service providers and promote cross sectorial collaboration and the establishment of localised Quality Professional Learning networks.

Facilitating professional learning and development must be focused on not removing expert educators from the classroom in order to advance. Programs must encourage and promote education excellence within the classroom where quality teaching has its greatest impact. Working with all levels of government, it is essential that national promotion be undertaken that highlights the on-going professional and personal benefits to educators of achieving excellence in their profession and facilitating ways in which their expertise can be harnessed and promoted throughout the wider school community and professional learning networks.

#### ACE Recommendations

- The College will play a pivotal role in the implementation and long-term success of Australian education policy, development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation;
- ACE is ideally positioned to work with the Federal Government and all State and Territory Governments to drive significant educational change at a strategic as well as operational level;
- The College is an effective and efficient conduit through which State, Territory and Federal Governments can work directly with the entire education profession;
- ACE is ideally placed to be a central repository of information, connection and advancement to drive excellence in the profession and provide strong and effective linkages between the Government, government agencies, regulatory authorities and all sectors, systems and levels within the profession to ensure educational excellence;
- What students learn and how they learn must, be nimble and innovative;

- ACE supports an education framework that is research based, relevant and applicable to the Australian context and not based on fads derived from other jurisdictions that have little to no relevance within the Australian environment;
- ACE holds that forcing schools and educators to adopt a one-size fits-all model regarding curriculum and classroom practice fails to acknowledge the expertise of the individual educators responsible for having a significant influence on student achievement and education outcomes;
- Curriculum must be developed, implemented and evaluated with significant input from the educators themselves, who are at the coal face of teaching as well as academics, researchers and education leaders (principals);
- What students learn and how they learn must be based on individual circumstances rather than a prescriptive approach that values only what can be easily measured.
- Measuring success cannot be solely focused on the 'things' that are easiest to quantify that then force educators to teach to the test. Rather, what is learnt and how it is learnt must allow educators the flexibility to innovate and adapt teaching methods to the specific needs of their students;
- Any improvements to be achieved in school quality and educational success will be intrinsically linked to strategies that ensure higher quality teaching;
- More need to be done around promoting and recognising professional excellence;
- Excellence in teaching must be universally recognised, harnessed and promoted to assist in driving school and community wide excellence;
- The establishment of a centralised independent national entity that actively facilitates quality professional learning and development programs from various service providers and promotes cross sectorial collaboration and the establishment of localised Quality Professional Learning networks;
- Facilitating professional learning and development must be focussed on not removing expert educators from the classroom in order to advance;
- National promotion must be undertaken that highlights the on-going professional and personal benefits to educators of achieving excellence in their profession and facilitating ways in which their expertise can be harnessed and promoted throughout the wider school community and professional learning networks.