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Improve school student outcomes with the best available tools and resources

What (if anything) needs to be done to improve the use of edtech tools (including GenAI) in schools?

There needs to be consideration of structural education policy problems, rather than focus on use of digital materials and edtech tools, which are more often than not of completely unknown effectiveness.

Attaching hopes of redressing educational decline and strengthening educational outcomes on the basis of 'tools' is extremely shallow, superficial and not supported by a vast corpus of educational research which highlights the importance of other considerations, particularly support for teachers.

For example, a 2025 OECD report sets out to demystify high-quality teaching by focusing on five teaching goals and 20 associated practices, drawing on empirical research from around the globe and practitioner insight. These are:

1. Cognitive engagement
2. Quality subject content
3. Social-emotional support
4. Classroom interaction
5. Formative assessment and feedback

The suggestions for Pillar 2 are shallow, directly addressing only point 2. The feedback question here focuses even more narrowly on EdTech tools (like GenAI). No serious educational strategy should be put forward to address only one of the OECD's pillars of high-quality teaching. Yet, there are also many considerations beyond the OECD pillars. In Australia's case, the fact that this proposal for edtech tools also ignores systemic organisational factors, is particularly significant.

What is most desperately needed in Australian education is data that matches our national goals, strategy that addresses and chases those goals, and reporting against goals that monitors and informs political and public service leadership and the full policy cycle. Fact: we currently have very little of the above and organisational structures are misaligned and at cross-purposes.

What more (if anything) needs to be done to improve awareness and access to high quality lesson planning and curriculum materials in schools?

Again, this focus on lesson plans and curriculum materials, and edtech, is misguided. It suggests a view of education as a transmission process in which the tools, resources and lesson plans, are of utmost and self-evident importance. This view, which subjugates teachers to 'the right' curriculum and resources, is not founded in educational research or theory and is no match for our current educational challenges. Furthermore, it is an approach which may bring additional problems, potentially deskilling and de-professionalising teachers, who

according to a mass of research evidence are, unlike lesson plans, irrefutably central to quality education.

It doesn't take much to observe that introduction of national curriculum and digital resources around the globe since the 1990's has not heralded an era of educational progress. To the contrary, curriculum heavy frameworks and high levels of technology have been identified in international data as negative correlates of educational outcomes.

The single Grattan Institute study cited in support for the argument that "high quality lesson planning" is the answer, is inadequate evidence upon which to build PC recommendations for a national school education strategy. That study did not provide in-depth exploration nor high standards of evidence, it has not been replicated or confirmed.

A more thorough problem analysis is needed, one which steps out of the reflexive response to blame schools and teachers. The systemic nature of school education must be considered, system and organisational theory is needed to analyse current structural problems if we are ever to address them.

Looking to the system that provides for schools, system level failings are now being uncovered. Some system level problems have been repeatedly and unequivocally identified, including in OECD, national, state and independent reports on the uneven school playing field, increasing school segregation, inequitable funding and resourcing, and inadequate teacher workforce management. Structural systemic problems (inadequate data, funding mechanisms and reporting) are also reflected in the Commonwealth's 'enabling strategies' for the most recent national funding agreements and these sorts of considerations should be at the heart of any productivity strategy.

Systemic structural problems within the schooling system architecture are further analysed by Wilson & Kesidou (2025) revealing how Australia's national education system—despite its broad and inspiring goals—has failed to structurally align its goals with policy strategy, performance metrics, and reporting to achieve them. The structural misalignment in Australia's education, and consequent lack of monitoring or understanding of system performance, is a likely explanatory factor in stagnating performance, growing inequity, and workforce burnout. The productivity commission is not alone in recognising that education systems are among the most influential and economically critical institutions in any country, yet despite their economic importance they are rarely managed with the rigour applied to high-performing organisations. No other organisation would expect to thrive, without keeping their eyes on their prize goals. Some basic plans to align our broad and holistic educational goals with data, strategy and reporting will go a lot further in strengthening Australian education than the bright idea to give teachers lesson plans and more tech.

Is there anything more you would like to say about edtech, GenAI or lesson planning and curriculum materials?

This approach, by itself, will not achieve the desired outcomes in the case of school education. It is too narrow and ignores what is increasingly known about Australia's framework of schools and why – despite an ongoing focus on classroom teaching, similar suggested reforms have repeatedly failed to deliver on expectations. In particular, the suggested approach seems to ignore previous work done by the Commission itself in the review of the National School Reform Agreement, as well as the findings and recommendations of the Better & Fairer Schools review commissioned by the federal minister in 2023.

A focus on edtech also ignores the growing evidence on unintended consequences from technology, in particular screentime. That evidence has been enough to convince some countries to cut back on technology in schools. Highly research literate Sweden, for example, started an almost complete tech ban in 2024 – the world is watching with great interest to see

how that pans out. The rising mental health challenges in schools mean we should be particularly cautious with technology.

Which of the following best describes you?

Education researcher and Professor

Are you currently using any edtech tools (including learning games and GenAI) to support teaching and learning in the classroom?

Yes

If yes, what has been your experience with using these tools?

Deeply worrying! AI is riddled with hallucinations, errors and biases, but also rapidly developing and increasingly influential. The existence and availability of AI appears to have sapped all sense of classroom engagement from substantial proportions of university student cohorts, who can rely on them for shortcuts to study, and much assessment work (detectability of AI is nothing but a tech arms race) and are noticeably absent or disengaged in classes.

Are there things you would like to do with GenAI or edtech tools that you can't do currently? What's stopping you from doing these things?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you tell us why you are not using any edtech tools?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Do you access lesson planning and curriculum materials online?

No

If yes, what has been your experience with using these tools?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you tell us why you are not using online lesson planning and curriculum materials?

Good teachers can develop their own materials, with greater consideration of the needs of their individual students.

What rationale, and research evidence, is there to support the use of pre-prepared, cookie cutter lesson plans? One study, from Grattan where they explored the issue of lesson planning in relation to workload and found teachers were time poor, and leapt to the conclusion that providing lesson plans would help, yet they did not explore other dimensions and tasks that were not core but added to teachers' workload?

More substantive evidence from a range of other studies suggests that teachers highly value the process of lesson planning and selection of teaching resources. More comprehensive studies of teachers work activities suggest that teachers consider 'lesson planning' as core professional work, of high value and central to professional practice. When teachers are asked what would help workload, providing lesson plans was not in the top rated categories. When asked what contributes to workload intensification they suggest policies, administrative work and data work – all of which they rate as of much lower value to educational processes and progress.

Previous national initiatives to lift provision of lesson plans and resources, including by ESA, have not addressed current challenges with workload, nor educational outcomes and productivity more generally. Please don't recommend more of the same.

I could say a lot more here. The argument that lesson plans, resources and AI are a salve for our current educational woes is positively laughable. Ask any teacher, school leader or educational researcher – they know the problem is more complex and wicked than this 'solution' suggests.

Support the workforce through a flexible post-secondary education and training sector

Credit transfer and recognition of prior learning

In your experience, how well does the credit transfer and recognition of prior learning system operate in Australia? Does it adequately support students to move between courses or have their work experience recognised as part of a qualification? Are there ways it could be improved?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which of the following best describes you? Please select all that apply.

The participant did not respond to this question.

In the past 3 years, have you applied for credit recognition or recognition of prior learning (RPL)?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, what was your experience in applying for credit recognition or RPL like?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you elaborate on why you didn't apply?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Work related training

What are the main reasons individuals and/or businesses do or do not participate in work-related training?

The participant did not respond to this question.

What role, if any, should businesses be playing to address any barriers and better support the offer of work-related training to employees?

The participant did not respond to this question.

What, if anything, could government do to address barriers and better support the offer of work-related training to employees?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which of the following best describes you? Please select all that apply.

The participant did not respond to this question.

For business owners, managers and sole traders, how many employees do you have?

The participant did not respond to this question.

For employees/individuals, have you participated in any work-related training in the last 12 months that did not relate to general compliance (such as WHS)?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, can you elaborate on the reasons for the training and any benefits you received from doing it?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you elaborate on any challenges or barriers you faced in attempting to undertake work-related training?

The participant did not respond to this question.

For business owners, managers or sole traders, have you provided or supported your employees to participate in work-related training in the past 12 months?

The participant did not respond to this question.

If yes, can you elaborate on the reasons for the training and any benefits you or your employees received from doing it?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Can you describe whether you accessed any government assistance, what type, and the amount received? If you didn't access any financial assistance, please tell us the reasons why.

The participant did not respond to this question.

If no, can you elaborate on any challenges or barriers you faced in attempting to provide or support your employees to undertake work-related training, such as the time or cost, availability of relevant or high-quality courses, and level of interest from your employees?

The participant did not respond to this question.

Balance service availability and quality through fit-for-purpose occupational entry regulations

What are the effects of occupational entry regulations? Please describe your experience and name the specific occupations you are referring to.

The participant did not respond to this question.

Do you believe current occupational entry regulations are proportionate to the level of risk associated with different professions? Why or why not? If not, do you have any suggested improvements to regulations to better reflect risks? Please name the specific occupations you are referring to.

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which of the following best describes your connection to occupational entry regulations? Please select all that apply.

The participant did not respond to this question.

Which state or territory are you predominantly based in?

The participant did not respond to this question.