



Name: Australian Education Union Federal Office

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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?

The Australian Education Union (AEU) believes that the development of and expanding use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies will continue to impact students, the teaching profession, public education and the broader community. However, the AEU also recognises that the positive use of technology has the potential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning processes, enrich educational activities and support communications between educational institutions, teachers, students, and parents/caregivers. Technology is an important part of the provision of quality public education, and its use in schools must always adhere to the principles of equity in access and in application.

The AEU recognises that the use of edtech and AI technologies within education settings is and will continue to expand exponentially, as will learning based on adaptive online courses and virtual reality applications. However, schools are unique settings, and as such, additional guardrails are required. A principles-based approach to Generative AI should allow principals and teachers to use their professional judgement to decide what best suits their school, class and student needs individually, whilst balancing safety, equity and access, pedagogical approaches and curriculum needs. The AEU determines that in order to do this the use of AI in public education must be human-centred, teacher-led and education department controlled, with a pedagogic focus and a diverse and inclusive social justice lens.

AI tools must support the needs of the teaching profession and students and therefore must be subject to the professional judgement of the teaching profession and based on sound educational principles, robust pedagogical practice and/or evidence-based education research.

Further, the AEU asserts that central to the development, implementation and use of technology is the relationship between teacher and learner which must remain the basis of the teaching and learning process, and while technology can certainly supplement this, its appropriate use must be under the supervision of qualified teachers and other educators with expertise in pedagogy and student learning.

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

The Australian Curriculum is due for review in the next year, and teachers must be involved in an iterative consultation process at every stage of that review. Likewise, all lesson planning and curriculum materials used in schools must be based on the Australian Curriculum, developed in collaboration with teachers and disseminated through government agencies. It is important that curriculum development take place in an environment which acknowledges the importance of deep and early engagement with the teaching profession, in a manner which

allows broad perspectives within a set of explicit principles. The contested nature of the curriculum is precisely why the teaching profession must play a key role in developing, implementing, and reviewing it.

The current proliferation of third-party organisations seeking influence over the curriculum - from thinktanks pushing their own off the shelf lesson plans, to edtech companies seeking to profit from the creation and sale of AI generated teaching and assessment materials, are a real danger to maintenance of a robust and broad curriculum that still allows teachers to exercise their own professional judgement.

Curriculum materials must ensure that the advantages of technological integration are equitably available to all students. While the integration of technology has the potential to enrich the teaching and learning process, it does not inherently have a positive impact on equity, inclusion, and quality in education. As technology becomes more prevalent in education, the digital divide is growing ever wider. Inequality in access to technology exacerbates existing inequalities in access to education.

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

Commonwealth and state departments must be wary of, and monitor closely, the increasing interest of large technology companies in education and in the application of Generative AI to teaching and learning in schools. The trend towards monopolisation of edtech in Australia, whether through the ubiquitous use of Google Classrooms and Compass for setting tasks and for school communications, or the homogenisation of learning and assessment platforms as demonstrated by the recent acquisition of Essential Assessment by Education Perfect (which puts nearly half of all schools in Australia on the same privately owned third party platform) means that schools, teachers and students are increasingly being presented with 'one size fits all' off the shelf solutions that limit teacher autonomy and risk disengaging students.

Further, advances in AI and its integration with education, and the elevation of the role of digital learning post the COVID-19 pandemic, have demonstrated that the business model of the major international technology companies involves entrenching their products in education systems and schools, with little concern about their educational value and without transparency about the pedagogical, curriculum, and assessment and reporting algorithms integral to them.

The increased use of Generative AI in public education settings requires suitable controls to ensure equitable provision and also needs to address ethical considerations, addressing privacy concerns, environmental considerations and legal protection for teachers.

Departments of Education, ACARA and state curriculum bodies must engage deeply with the teaching profession to develop and maintain the national policy framework to address the use of technology and AI in teaching and learning to consider the rapidly expanding use of Generative AI in educational settings and the potential negative impact that the unfettered use of AI by edtech companies claiming to streamline curriculum, lesson planning assessments could have on teachers' pedagogical practice and professionalism and ultimately the quality of education that students receive.

All policies and intervention related to AI use in public schools must:

- consider the ethics, curriculum and pedagogical issues
- address occupational, health, welfare and safety issues
- ensure that the implementation of AI is equitable, accessible and inclusive

- ensure that AI tools and their implementation is free of cultural, racial and gender biases and that they should not perpetuate or amplify existing biases or discrimination
- ensure that private for-profit operators are prevented from exerting inappropriate influence via platforms and products, on the processes of teaching and learning in educational settings and systems
- ensure that a digital equity audit is undertaken to ascertain the extent of digital inequality experienced by students and educational settings
- consider the issues of data sovereignty and copyright and that the use of AI in public education must be transparent, including its applications, what data is collected and how that data is used
- ensure that the teaching profession is provided with high quality professional development, systemic support and professional autonomy
- ensure that the teaching profession and students are provided with guidance and training on the ethical use of AI tools
- ensure equitable and fair resourcing for all students, including digital access; and
- undertake ongoing evaluation of AI implementation to ensure that it supports the needs of students and the teaching profession and aligns with the appropriate ethical standards and guidelines that govern teaching and learning practices.

Which of the following best describes you?

Federal Union for public school teachers

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

The participant did not respond to this question.

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

The participant did not respond to this question.

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?

The participant did not respond to this question.

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?

The participant did not respond to this question.

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 AEU holds major concerns around the current credit transfer and recognition of prior learning system in Australia. As it currently stands, Australia's system of recognition of prior learning (RPL) is highly opaque for potential students, with most providers offering no certainty or clear information around cost, study length, required competencies, and eligibility for RPL. For students, further uncertainty is added due to the history of ASQA regulatory actions against RPL providers that in reality, were operating as a for-profit 'tick-and-flick' service, approving certification without ever assessing if the student was qualified.

These issues remain prevalent due to the extensive private-sector presence in the RPL area, which is currently underregulated and driven primarily by profit rather than providing a quality vocational education. Additionally, many employees for these providers are certified by their employer, allowing unqualified supervisors to further damage trust in the system.

Changes to credit transfer or recognition of prior learning should not come at the cost of the quality of Australia's vocational system but instead be done in consultation with educational professionals to ensure quality and clarity for students, which will ensure a system that can be trusted to maintain high-quality skills in Australia's workforce.

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

Federal Union for public vocational education workers

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 AEU respects the primacy of state and territory-specific occupational entry requirements and supports state and territory-based teacher registration alongside the maintenance of the current system of mutual recognition of qualifications and registration. Jurisdiction-specific registration aligns well with and complements the responsibility of states and territories for the provision of school education, delivery of curriculum, the employment of teachers, the regulation of entry into the teaching profession, and the complex and specific legislation operating in each jurisdiction and respects the importance of the close relationships between the teaching profession, the curriculum and the registration process.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards) provide the necessary foundation for the teaching profession. At the core of the professional standing of teachers and registration requirements, alongside the Standards, is the qualification that registered teachers must have. The AEU supports high standards at all levels of the profession, including at point of entry.

The AEU has always held the qualifications of teachers to high standards and is steadfast in its position that there must not be any weakening of either the content or entry requirements to ITE programs. The AEU is committed to a minimum four-year undergraduate degree qualification for teachers, with a move to a five-year equivalent qualification requirement for post-graduate teaching qualifications and will oppose any lowering of qualification benchmarks from Initial Teacher Education providers or a registration authority.

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 AEU believes that the current robust entry regulations for school teaching are proportionate considering the fundamental importance of school education and does not endorse any attempts to “streamline” or otherwise skirt teacher qualification and registration requirements.

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

Trade Union

Which state or territory are you predominantly based in?

Victoria