Submission National Education Evidence Base

The submission includes the following recommendations:

- establishing a single national measure for emotional health and wellbeing
- a single unique identifier for students and teachers
- collecting data on the education workforce – number of Certified Practicing
- Principals , staff turnover (Principal, teachers and non-teaching staff), staff emotional health and wellbeing and employee engagement
- development of Australian School Governance Principles

Principals Australia Institute

Headquartered in Adelaide, Principals Australia Institute (PAI) has a history of achievement and continues to be the only education based organisation able to deliver programs and services, such as KidsMatter Primary and MindMatters, to Australia's 9,500 schools across all states, territories and systems.

PAI provides leadership development programs and professional assistance to school principals. PAI is leading the process for principals of all Australian schools to develop Principal Certification that recognises and strengthens the unique contribution that school principals make to the quality of the learning of all students.

Introduction

Diversity of community needs and a long evolution of funding and policy settings have resulted in an Australian education sector that is so fragmented that some commenters describe it as "atomised"[1]. A consequence of the fragmentation and siloing of sectors is limited recognition that the "diversity of schools within each sector is greater than the differences between the sectors"[2]. PAI supports the establishment of a national data set to guide education policy, research and benchmarking that leads to improved school leadership and education outcomes for all children in all Australian schools.

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[1] The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey 2015, Philip Riley
[2] 'One school does not fit all', J Buckingham & T Jha, January 2016, The Centre for Independent Studies

National Initiatives / Australian Principal Certification Program / KidsMatter Primary / MindMatters / Online Learning / School Leadership

www.pai.edu.au

> What data are needed?"As data have become more available to principals over the last quarter century, there has been a transition from reliance on principal's own knowledge in making decisions to making choices informed by the use of more readily available data. This transition has been accompanied by increased demands for accountability. Today more than at any time in the past, principals are responsible for the development of the school's educational goals and programs…" [3]

Increasingly high performing systems are focusing in on both students' outcomes and their wellbeing. The data presented in Table 1 shows a need for Australia to move in line with high performing systems' emphasis on the importance of social and emotional well-being. Shanghai is the top performer in the Program for Student Achievement (PISA) and has the highest proportion of resilient students (19%). Resilient students are defined by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED) as disadvantaged students that perform among the top 25% of students. [4] In contrast Australia has 6% of resilient students.[5] Over 80% of schools in Shanghai value wellbeing as important as academic achievement, in comparison to 65% of schools in Australia.[6]

Table 1: Key measures of achievement and wellbeing

Country/city	Resilient students (percentage)	Schools where wellbeing is as important as academic achievement (percentage)	Students who report being happy at school (percentage)	Mean mathematics performance
Australia	6	65	80	504
OECD average	6	71	80	494
Shanghai-China	19	92	85	613
Hong Kong - China	18	80	86	561
Singapore	15	92	88	573
Canada	8	64	81	518

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[3] TALIS 2013 Results: An international Perspective on Teaching and Learning, OECD 2014
[4] 'How Shanghai Does it: Insights and Lessons from the Highest-Ranking Education System in the World, 2016 Liang, H Kidwai, and M Zhang.
[5] OECD, PISA 2012 Database, Tables II.2.1
[6] Do teacher-student relations affect students' well-being at school. OECD 2015

Source: Adapted from OECD 2013, PISA 2012 Results: Ready to Learn, Students' Engagement, Drive and Self-Beliefs Figures III.1.1 and III.1.2, OECD, PISA 2012 Results: Excellence through Equity Table II.a

Ontario, Canada is considered to be exemplary in their development of school leaders. The education policy focus in Ontario includes promoting well-being as one of four goals for education. This is defined as "all children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices." Ontario has a principal certification program, the Principal Qualification Program which influences the successful development of school leaders. Ontario is a useful model for Australia as they have successfully increased their students' literacy and numeracy and graduation rates over the past 12 years within a highly diverse and large student population. [7]

The vital role schools play in supporting student mental health and wellbeing is increasingly being recognized in education policy frameworks. The 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, the Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders (2012) and National Health and Physical Education Draft Curriculum (2012) all identify student wellbeing as an important focus for schools.

This emphasis is well supported by research showing student wellbeing issues significantly impacting on school core business. Students with good mental health and wellbeing are better equipped to cope with the everyday demands of school life such as attending in class, forming and maintaining supportive peer relationships, completing assignments and achieving academic success. Conversely, students experiencing ongoing mental health difficulties tend to have poorer records of school attendance, behaviour and academic performance and are more likely to drop out of school early[8].

Increasingly there is a focus on the development of skills that are crucial to solving the complex problems of the 21st Century. Leading researcher in assessment Professor Patrick Griffin identifies that collaborative problem solving is an important skill for students to gain. Key to collaborative problem solving are social skills including perspective taking and social regulation.[9] The skills of perspective taking and social regulation are measured by tools that focus on emotional health and wellbeing, such as the social-emotional wellbeing survey (SEW) developed and validated by the Australian Council for Educational Research.[10]

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[7] Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario, 2014, Queen's Printer for Ontario

[8] http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/docs/default-source/fact-sheets/mindmatters---background-framework-and-rationale.pdf?sfvrsn=12

[9] Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills: Methods and Approach. 2011 P Griffin and E Care. Springer: Dordrecht.

[10] https://www.acer.edu.au/sew

It is recommended to establish a single national measure for emotional health and wellbeing. We are aware that some sectors and States are in the process of selecting such tools. If differing measurement tools are chosen this would significantly limit long term research such as measuring the impact of improved student emotional health and well-being on student outcomes.

It is also recommended to establish a single unique student identifier so that data can follow the student. For example, as they progress from primary to secondary school and also for the small number of students who switch schools. Alongside this consideration also needs to be given to a single identifier for teaching staff "Teachers - who account for about 30% of the variance (*in student's achievement*). It is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation."[11]

Australia is facing a potential school workforce crisis.

'Teachers are fleeing the profession in droves, with 40% leaving in their first year. Students need continuity and a predictable environment to optimise their learning. It is often connected with increased behavioural issues in student populations." However, it's not just the kids that are affected — the economy also takes a blow, with replacement costs having been estimated at 0.2% of annual GDP. "That is a lot of money that could be put to much better use," [12] Advice from an insurer suggests that 60% of teacher health and wellbeing claims are due to interpersonal conflict. Benchmarking employee engagement would provide schools and school leaders with valuable insights into the culture of their schools. As an example of such an approach consider the Victorian Public Sector 'People Matter Survey' http://vpsc.vic.gov.au/ethics-behaviours-culture/people-matter-survey/ [13].

There is concerning evidence of deteriorating health and well-being of Principals.

"All negative measures are higher than the general population (burnout-1.6 times the population; stress-1.7 times; sleeping troubles-2.2 times; depressive symptoms-1.3 times; somatic stress symptoms-1.3 times; cognitive stress symptoms-1.6 times). In 2015 'red flag' responses (thoughts of self-harm...) were double the rate of previous years: 3% for self-harm and 8% for poor quality of life responses. [1]"

It is recommended to collect data on the education workforce –number of qualified principals including principals recognised through Australian Principal Certification soon to be introduced by PAI

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[11] https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/docs/pdf/qt_hattie.pdf

[12] Dr Phillip Riley, Director of the Australian Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey at Monash University, *Why are so many teachers fleeing the classroom? October 8, 201512:35pm, News Limited Copyright ©*

[13] For example, Victorian Public Sector 'People Matter Survey' http://vpsc.vic.gov.au/ethics-behaviours-culture/people-matter-survey/

[14], staff turnover (Principal, teachers and non-teaching staff), staff emotional health and wellbeing and employee engagement.

What are the associated costs and benefits?

It is easy to oppose data collection on the basis of extra workload but there is a broader question of measuring the regulatory and compliance burden at schools. Measuring compliance burden would put new or additional data items into context and enable a focus on reducing overall school compliance burden rather than specifically focusing on national education evidence data.

Measuring school regulatory and compliance burden supports two other policy areas. It is aligned with broader government policy on reducing the economic impact of regulatory burden and supports education policy initiatives on increasing school autonomy by demonstrating that autonomy is not being restricted or controlled by system enforced compliance.

Lastly, given the strong evidence that workload demands are impacting Principal health and wellbeing[15] measuring and reducing regulatory and compliance burden could be regarded as an essential OH&S duty of care measure.

It is recommended to include a measure of school regulatory and compliance burden in the national education evidence base.

Measures that would improve institutional accountability

Shanghai achieves high outcomes for students within a policy environment of established autonomy and accountability as defined by the World Bank's Systems Approach for Better Education Results. School autonomy is a "form of school-based management in which schools are given decision-making authority over all or some aspects of their operations…' School accountability is the acceptance of responsibility and being answerable for ones' actions." Five indicators measure the extent that education policies enable school autonomy and accountability:

1) School autonomy in budget planning and approval
2) School autonomy in personnel management
3) Participation of the school council in school finance
4) Assessment of school and student performance and
5) School accountability

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[14] Australian Government, Quality Schools Quality Outcomes, May 2016

[15] Riley

In all but one of the above measures Shanghai is rated as established. For participation of school council in school finance it is rated as emerging. Principals in Shanghai exercise significant autonomy over various school-level decisions. [16]

In the Australian policy landscape there is a movement towards increasing autonomy within our schools, through the national Independent Public Schools initiative. [17] Independent Public Schools now account for 70% of public schools in Western Australia[18] and 15% in Queensland (20% planned for 2017). [19] Victorian schools are working within a model of high autonomy present since the early 1990s with control of more than 94% of the budget available for decision making at the school level.[20] Independent and Catholic schools experience relatively high levels of autonomy.

In an environment of high autonomy decision making is increasingly occurring at the school level, driven by the data available to the school leader. School based decision making is important in the progression of a system from good to great.[21] The role of school councils and boards are crucial in this environment.

School councils and boards are often the forgotten element in school change management with most projects and programs failing to provide them with information and the support they require to initiate, lead, facilitate and support change. Risks increase in a rapidly changing environment when the skills are not in place and the buck stops in the school boardroom. These risks will become increasingly apparent when education systems and schools must address improvements in performance or regulatory change such as the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

With the development of Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals there is an opportunity to develop a set of aligned uniform governance principles for Australian schools. Good governance is an essential element in improving school leadership and performance.

Data governance is a subset of corporate governance it cannot be addressed in isolation from school governance and to be effectively implemented must be embedded within a school governance framework. Accountability is enhanced when school boards and Councils recognise that data governance is part of their remit and, importantly, utilise the national education evidence data to benchmark their school's performance. McKinsey recommend where there is 'where the historical

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[16] 'How Shanghai Does it: Insights and Lessons from the Highest-Ranking Education System in the World, 2016 Liang, H Kidwai, and M Zhang

[17] Independent Public Schools https://www.education.gov.au/independent-public-schools

[18] Independent Public Schools http://www.education.wa.edu.au/home/detcms/navigation/about-us/programs-and-initiatives/independent-public-schools/

[19] Independent Public Schools http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/independent-public-schools/

[20] Accountability and Assessment Measures, 2011 B Caldwell and T Vaughan, in Changing Schools in an Era of Globalization Routledge: New York

[21] How the world's most improved systems keep getting better. 2010 McKinsey & Company http://mckinseyonsociety.com/how-the-worlds-most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better/

legacy of the nation makes enforcing top down decisions difficult' then persuading (rather than mandating) by sharing "performance data with individual schools, engaging them in a private dialogue about how to improve" [22]. Engaging school leaders and school boards or Councils is pivotal if data is to be meaningfully utilised for school improvement.

PAI has put a proposal to the Australian Government Department of Education and Training to fund the "Development of Australian School Governance Principles".

Conclusion

The recommended data sets would enable longitudinal research and measurement of the impact of students' emotional health and wellbeing, principal certification, staff turnover, staff emotional health and wellbeing and employee engagement on student outcomes. This evidence would support the development of education policy, research and benchmarking to underpin efforts to improve school leadership and education outcomes for all children in all Australian schools.

The recommendations include:

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Yours sincerely,

Paul Geyer
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[22] How the world's most improved systems keep getting better. 2010 McKinsey & Company
http://mckinseyonsociety.com/how-the-worlds-most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better/