

CHARTING AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION RESEARCH PRIORITIES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1. What are the key areas or issues for future research in each field or sector?

- Primary and secondary school
 - Engagement, student voice, parent voice. Gifted education for example is underrepresented in research and policy, despite those students being significantly negatively impacted by the current state of our education system.
 - The gaps between policy and practice in schools (see first point for Q2).
 - Research into alternative schooling frameworks and their impacts on teaching, learning, and outcomes.
- Higher education, specifically Initial Teacher Education (ITE) - how to balance academic rigour and depth of thinking and learning with equitable and flexible access to programs, especially if primary and secondary schools aren't currently preparing underrepresented groups for successful university experiences. Research into alternative models for ITE.

2. What steps should we take to drive short-term gains and long-term advancement in these areas?

- Public schools need to be accessible to conduct research in; they are currently almost impossible to get ethics approval for due to highly risk-averse Department policies and therefore most school-based research is happening in Catholic and Independent schools. Given that most young people attend government schools, that is where the bulk of research should be happening.
- More funding for education research that prioritises engagement, student voice, parent voice, creative/novel piloting of teaching and learning programs.
- More funding for university staffing so that the system isn't relying on casual staff to teach (quality of ITE education is impacted by this reliance on casual staff).
- Ideally - reshaping the entire primary and secondary system to become more flexible, responsive to student needs, and shaped by teachers as autonomous and knowledgeable professionals and the community in which the school is situated (i.e. throwing out the whole industrial model and starting again). Curiosity and responsiveness should underpin all educational frameworks (as opposed to moving through disconnected curriculum topics, standardised testing, teaching from commercial programs, etc.). Many 'good' primary schools (or at least individual teachers) for example are still attached to out-dated and arbitrary practices that minimise engagement and love of learning over time,

simply because it's is 'how they've always done it' (e.g., reproducible homework sheets, home reading logs, compulsory participation in sports carnivals and swimming lessons, isolated spelling tests, etc etc.). More funded research and collaboration between universities and government schools would help greatly bridge the gap between current theory and practice.

- Also, government funding (such as NDIS) could be going towards creating school-based support hubs of psychologists, OTs, speech therapists, etc., so that teachers can focus on teaching and learning and not on providing support services within their classrooms for which they aren't trained. There should be clear policy statements about what classroom behaviours are appropriate for teachers to respond to, and which are not.
- Reshaping engagement and assessment in ITE – anecdotally engagement with lectures, tutorials and readings are declining, and assessments remain quite traditional e.g., written essays, which is problematic given the rise of GenAI. ITE programs should more closely resemble apprenticeships, relying on close partnerships between the university and the school systems, and therefore include more authentic assessment of students' knowledge and skills.

3.What mechanisms are most effective for addressing the aims of the Decadal Plan?

- 'Proactive responses' means people need to be willing to take risks and make changes – the system is currently inherently flawed and does not reflect modern challenges or what we now know about young people and learning. To garner support for a truly proactive approach, **collaborative consultations** with parents, classrooms teachers, school leaders and academics should be the first step to collate what is currently happening 'on the ground' and set a pathway forwards.