



QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Independent Education Union of Australia believes that one of the key factors in ensuring the quality of education provision is the maintenance of a highly skilled teaching force.

Teachers are constantly engaged in a wide variety of professional learning activities, including professional reading, collegial discussion and team work, professional reflection on students' learning, assessment and reporting, conference participation, staff presentations, in service seminars, action research projects, and formal university studies.

The IEUA believes that in service training and quality professional learning are the cornerstones of innovation in any organisation. Schools, as organisations, must place significant budgetary and policy importance on the provision of high quality training and professional learning.

Importance of Quality Professional Learning

The IEUA believes that high quality professional learning is essential in order to:

- Ensure that teachers can respond professionally to economic, social, cultural, technological and scientific change through the learning of personal and intellectual qualities;
- Respond to the demand for increased quality of educational outcomes by improving teachers' classroom capabilities, knowledge base and professional judgements;
- Support teachers in meeting their responsibilities for learning in schools through their own pursuit of learning and excellence;
- Provide enabling conditions for teachers, employing authorities and other agencies to initiate creative

approaches to emerging educational issues;

- Recognise the professional status of teachers and the consequent career long nature of the professional learning process;
- Sustain the motivation, commitment and enthusiasm of teachers and to enhance their self-esteem and sense of control over their professional lives by providing opportunities for teachers to reflect on, analyse and improve their own performance; and
- Allow teachers to develop new competencies and skills as they move from classroom positions to administrative or specialist positions, or to new environments.

Elements of Quality Professional Learning

Quality professional learning activities should be guided by best practice elements of effective adult learning, including :

- Participation is voluntary;
- Builds on individual's skills and experiences;
- Encourages "learner collaboration";
- Recognises the interdependence of individuals and their institutional settings;
- Addresses "social" as well as "material" realities;
- Includes adequate follow-up and support to participants at the end of the course;
- Allows participants to proceed at their own pace;
- Includes people in leadership positions;
- Mentoring or a "buddy system"

Provision of Quality Professional Learning

Quality professional learning should be viewed as significant and integral part of the school yearly plan and as such professional learning opportunities should be:

- Relevant to the specific needs of the individual teacher, as well as the needs of the school or system
- Delivered in a variety of models including individual skill and knowledge development, teacher research, school focus activities, school cluster activities.
- Accessible to all teachers should be through equitable and transparent processes.
- Accessible to teachers in regional and remote regions with support provided for accommodation, childcare and expenses incurred.
- Made available during ordinary hours of work.

Equity of Access to Quality Professional Learning

Teachers in regional and rural locations must have access to quality professional learning opportunities, which, as far as possible, should be delivered in their geographical area. The school employing authority must provide a suitable replacement teacher and time for the teacher to travel, if necessary, for professional learning purposes, as well as fund accommodation, child care and out of pocket expenses on a reasonable basis.

Similarly, teachers working in part time and job share positions must have access to quality professional learning opportunities which as far as possible should be delivered in their working hours or upon agreement as paid time.

Resources for Quality Professional Learning

State and federal governments must adequately resource teacher professional learning programs. In particular, government must include funded professional learning for both government and non-government teachers in the implementation of any government education initiatives.

School employing authorities should be committed to resourcing, over a given cycle (e.g. three year period) sufficient professional learning opportunities in school time, so that all employees, including administrators, experience a number of in-service opportunities adequate to both their needs and that of the school/system.