



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: Australian Publishers Association
Submitting as a: Peak body
State: NSW

Summary

Position Summary

Education publishers are not just publishers of books, but experts in effective learning. Value of Australian Educational Publishing Exports, Final Report, Sapere Research Group, in Association with Copyright Agency, November 2016.

The educational publishing sector has a critical but often under-appreciated role in supporting and improving learning outcomes in Australia. The insights, experience and evidence that educational publishers have is often overlooked in education policy discussion. That underused resource represents a significant opportunity for improving the quality of education in Australia.

Main submission

Dear Mr Gonski,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence issues paper.

The APA is the peak national body for Australian book, journal and electronic publishers. Established in 1948, the Association is an advocate for all Australian publishers - large and small; commercial and non-profit; academic and popular; locally and overseas owned. The Association has approximately 210 members and, based on turnover, represents over 90% of the industry. Our members include publishers from all sectors of the publishing industry - trade and children's, schools and academic publishing.

What should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?

- What capabilities, skills and knowledge should students learn at school to prepare them for the future?

There are many factors to consider when preparing students for the future. We know Artificial Intelligence is going to replace many 'traditional' jobs. (40% of the

Australian workforce is at risk (CEDA 2015)). Computers are good at the jobs we find hard, but they are less good at the jobs we find easy. Work of the future is likely to be collaborative, empathetic, and human-centred.

Schools need to prepare students to learn continuously, to learn for life, to constantly be up-skilling. School needs to become less about the dissemination of knowledge and more about learning to learn, learning to access learning. A focus on high stakes assessment, international and national standards, will do nothing to encourage learning for life.

Australia cannot rely on a future as an exporter of coal and minerals. But it could become a net exporter of education and health services.

Publishers build formative assessment into their resources. With the digital resource options available to schools, formative assessment data could play a much more important role in determining success. If student IDs could be linked to the reporting that is available from these resources it would be possible to generate a national picture of what works well and what works less well. This is one example of where publishers can support evidenced-based educational policy and curriculum development.

- How should school quality and educational success be measured?

The APA would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with government, schools, and examination boards on educational metrics and to better integrate measuring student learning outcomes into content development and assessment.

Are there barriers to implementing improvements?

- If yes, what are they and how could these be overcome?

The following five challenges can become barriers to improving the quality of education in Australia.

- Delays in releasing syllabus

Publishers serve the teaching community and student population, but changes to syllabuses often do not allow reasonable times for the creation or amendment of learning resources. Expecting teachers to implement changes with little time to prepare and only a limited opportunity for publishers to produce new learning resources is likely to compromise their capacity to deliver the syllabus effectively. The educational publishing sector is always interested in collaborating with government to help facilitate successful, timely delivery of learning resources to implement changes effectively.

- Curriculum differences

Developing resources for many different variations to curriculum is costly and time consuming. Despite having a national curriculum that has been heavily invested in,

there remain differences from one State jurisdiction to another. That adds costs and reduces the amount that can be invested in developing high quality resources. Decisions to create differences in curriculum should assess the costs and benefits carefully and specifically take into account the implications for the creation of learning resources.

- Curriculum costs

Practices vary across jurisdictions, but some Australian states have historically charged publishers very high prices for using or quoting syllabus materials. Clearly connecting teaching and learning resources to curriculum advantages teachers and serves both efficiency and effectiveness in teaching. Pricing the use of curriculum materials at a premium adds unnecessary disincentive on using them and diverts resources from creating more value in curriculum materials. Pricing decisions by curriculum authorities should be made on the basis of a fuller evaluation of costs and benefits.

- Siloed Curriculum Development

When subject curriculums are developed narrowly opportunities to teach skills across subjects are missed. For example, technology, including coding, provides an opportunity to teach a set of skills across subjects. Core skills such as numeracy and literacy cross into every subject. With more flexibility, educational publishers can deliver learning resources that support richer learning experiences.

- Accessibility for the vision-impaired and disabled student

Teachers have always had to deal with mixed abilities and disadvantaged students. Digital resources are often configured to allow teachers to manage multi-speed classrooms providing pathways through content to suit students' abilities and preferences. The APA is working with the print disability sector on improving accessibility. There is a lack of uniform standards across educational bodies about accessibility requirements. This inconsistency adds to the costs and inefficiencies in producing accessible content in an affordable and timely way.

Educational publishers and the APA are keen to collaborate with governments to help deliver and improve transformative education practices, to better support teachers and to prepare students for their futures.