Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2009-2010

Outcome 2 - Schools

DEEWR Question No.EW0935_10

Senator Mason provided in writing.

Question

PRINCIPAL AUTONOMY PROJECT

When was the "Principal Autonomy Project" produced by "educational transformations" delivered to the government? When was it publicly released? What are its general conclusions? Has the Government responded to the report?

Answer

The *Principal Autonomy Research Project Report* produced by *Educational Transformations* was delivered to the government in January 2008.

The *Principal Autonomy Research Project Report* was publicly released and placed on the Departmental website on 27 October 2009.

The *Principal Autonomy Research Project Report* concluded that an effective model of principal autonomy should comprise a number of considerations. These are at ATTACHMENT A.

The Australian Government has noted the *Principal Autonomy Research Project Report* and included principal autonomy in the broader school leadership education reform policy agenda through the Teacher Quality National Partnership (TQNP). Initiatives to increase principle autonomy are being introduced across the states and territories. In particular, there is a Reward Element in the Teacher Quality National Partnership for 'increased school-based decision-making about recruitment, staffing mix and budget'.

Effective Model of Autonomy – *Principal Autonomy Research Project Report*[1]

An effective model for the practice of principal autonomy should comprise the following considerations:

- Flexibility:
  - School settings are varied, and guidelines or regulations setting parameters for principal autonomy should allow flexibility in autonomy practices to meet individual school and student needs.
  - A 'one-size-fits-all' approach within a jurisdiction or within a school system is unlikely to be successful.
  - Principal responsibilities include both administrative management and educational leadership activities. The scope of a principal for autonomous action may vary between these two areas of activity.

- Training:
  - The unique role of principal requires that aspirants to the position receive appropriate and adequate pre-service training.
  - This may include formal training in financial management, human resource management, and pedagogical leadership.
  - It may also include, where possible, practical pre-service experience of the role, for example through working alongside experienced principals.

- On-going Support:
  - Following initial training, appropriate and adequate on-going support must be available to all practicing principals. This could include:
    - Periodic training in all aspects of the principalship, including financial management and educational leadership; and,
    - In-service support as required, including for example, mentoring from experienced principals.

- Transparency and Accountability:
  - All Australian schools receive some public funding. As such, absolute and unaccountable independence is not possible. Autonomy must operate with reference to transparent legal and procedural norms.
  - There must be clear and mutually accepted methods for communication and accountability between schools/principals and funding providers.

Principal autonomy will be most successful where the principal has the full support of the school community, including the parent body and the school board or council. Effective communication between all groups is important in this regard.

Principal autonomy should be framed in individual school contexts with the explicit aim of furthering student learning and development.

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[1] Caldwell, B., *Principal Autonomy Research Project Report*, Educational Transformations, 2007, pp8,9.