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Overview of the evaluation of the Performance and Development Culture initiative 2005-2008

This overview summarises a report on the findings of an evaluation of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s (DEECD) Performance and Development Culture (P&D Culture) initiative from 2005 to 2008 by Professor Karen Starr, Chair, School Development and Leadership Centre, Deakin University.

The evaluation methodology involved:
- a statewide survey with responses from 517 school leaders and 436 teachers
- interviews with central, regional and school-based personnel conducted over a five month period from May to September 2009.

"The P&D Culture initiative was generally considered by teachers, school leaders and regional personnel to have facilitated a significant shift towards a more consistent approach to teaching practice and collective responsibility for student learning across Victorian government schools. Respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of the accreditation process and felt that the initiative provided them with clear strategies for building a culture amongst staff of greater openness, the sharing of ideas and practices and support for one another. Of particular note:
- The great majority of respondents believed that the P&D Culture initiative had contributed towards a school culture based on continuous improvement.
- 74% of respondents believed that, as a result of the P&D Culture initiative, teachers were engaging more in collaborative planning and 81% felt teachers were more involved in professional reflection and learning.
- 76% of respondents felt that the P&D Culture initiative led, to a medium or great extent, to:
  - a greater sense of collective responsibility for student learning
  - higher expectations for student learning.
- The great majority of respondents believed that the P&D Culture initiative had contributed towards a school culture based on continuous improvement.
- 74% of teachers and 61% of school leaders believed that the development of a P&D Culture in their school had enabled or made it easier to improve student outcomes.

Key findings (continued)
- 91% of respondents felt that the Self Assessment Framework was an effective structure for assessing the school in preparation for accreditation.
- 74% of respondents believed that, to a great or medium extent, there was evidence of improved instructional practice across their school as a result of creating and building on their P&D Culture.
- The great majority of respondents felt that the P&D Culture initiative was making it easier to improve instructional practice (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Extent to which the P&D Culture initiative is enabling or making it easier to improve instructional practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent to which the P&amp;D Initiative is enabling or making it easier to improve instructional practice</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>To a small extent</th>
<th>To a medium extent</th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increasing the consistency of instructional practice across classrooms</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognising and responding to diverse student needs</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using data to improve student learning</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using technology to enhance teaching practice</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting on student achievement</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key findings
- 83% of respondents felt the Department’s requirement for all schools to achieve P&D Culture accreditation was a significant driver in the development of their school’s P&D Culture.
- 95% of respondents believed the P&D Culture accreditation process provided a catalyst for discussing and reviewing their school’s structures, policies and processes.

"We had schools that completely changed their timetables to provide more time without interruption. Others wanted to change their architecture or knock down walls. In just about every case, schools changed their documentation and teachers adopted new practices. If it was done well, it was revolutionary." (Regional representative)

"Teachers are much more prepared to try new things without fearing failure... They also see that they’re valued and appreciated – we share the load and celebrate achievements. So now when I say there’s something new on the horizon they don’t cringe. Now people are more prepared to embrace change, not fear it, because we do it together." (Principal)

"The most effective outcome of the P&D Culture initiative was that it made people think about how to become a better teacher. It didn’t just send you off to a workshop – it led you to a whole range of tools that were right there on your doorstep. We learnt to focus on our own data and our documentation improved to become more user-friendly. We could focus on individualisation learning." (Teacher)