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Tudge announces 10-year blueprint to get Australian schools back on top

By [EducationHQ News Team](#)

Federal Education Minister Alan Tudge has announced a 10-year plan to get Australia's education performance "back amongst the world's best".

Speaking at the Menzies Research Centre, Tudge said his Government will focus on three areas to reverse Australia's declining school performance: quality teaching, curriculum and assessment.

To boost the quality of teachers, the minister hinted at re-introducing one-year diplomas to attract talented mid-career professionals into teaching.

"We need a system that recognises that many professionals have deep expertise and relevant experience that would make them highly impactful teachers," Tudge said.

"I would love to see more engineers and accountants, for example, using their mathematical expertise to help us address our critical shortage of maths teachers.

"In addition, we have invested in Teach for Australia, a proven model that I helped found, that supports an accelerated pathway into the classroom for top graduates from non-teaching faculties.

“Moreover, some teachers are still graduating from their courses insufficiently prepared to teach in a classroom either because there has been too much focus on theory at the expense of practice, or because evidence-based teaching methods are not taught.”

Tudge said every initial teacher education course must be assessed and accredited.

He said he will initiate a review that will investigate where there is still further work to do to ensure that all ITE courses are high-quality and adequately prepare teachers to be effective from day one.

“I will also be looking for mechanisms to enable school principals and expert teachers to have a greater input over the content and delivery of teacher education courses in a similar way that practitioners and employers are in medicine and law.”

Teach for Australia welcomed the announcements to improve initial teacher education.

“We look forward to sharing the experiences and learnings Teach For Australia has gained in 12 years of designing and delivering programs aimed at recruiting top talent into the classrooms where they are most needed,” Teach For Australia CEO Melodie Potts Rosevear said.

“We know from our experiences that the length of time sitting in university lecture halls before getting hands on in the classroom can discourage skilled people from following traditional teacher pathways later in life.

“In the 2021 Cohort for our Leadership Development Program, for example, 73 per cent are career changers.

“They all have university degrees – 40 per cent with advanced degrees – and work experience, demonstrating skilled professionals can be attracted to teaching through alternate pathways.”

However, academics hit back at the minister’s comments on initial teacher education, saying it should not be used as a political football.

"All ITE programs go through rigorous accreditation processes assessed by panels of teachers, principals and academics. In addition, many practising teachers already contribute to ITE programs," Professor and Dean of Education at Macquarie University Mary Ryan said.

"New graduates have demonstrated through externally endorsed and moderated teaching performance assessments that they can use evidence to inform quality teaching that responds to students' needs."

Ryan said whilst major changes have occurred in ITE, changes in the structural inequities of the schooling system have not kept pace.

"Another reform of initial teacher education cannot focus on the same issues as the 100-plus reforms since the 1970s.

"A focus on how we ensure diversity in our profession and how we teach about, to and for diversity is paramount."

Associate Professor Victoria Whittington from the University of South Australia shared similar views, noting pre-service teachers are already provided a rich smorgasbord of strategies based in research.

"Initial teacher education university providers are very observant of research findings with regard to how they prepare their preservice teachers for their role as highly effective teachers in the field," she said.

"Providers are particularly interested in findings from research that employ accepted scientific methods and show clear learning outcomes for children.

"With regards to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, pre-service teachers are provided with a rich smorgasbord of strategies well based in research, not one, as the challenges children face in learning vary considerably. What will work with one child may not with another."

The second area of focus, according to Tudge, will be on streamlining the Australian Curriculum, which is currently under review by ACARA.

"Education Ministers have given ACARA the job of refining, updating and decluttering the content across the current curriculum," he said.

Within the national curriculum content, Tudge said he would like to see a greater focus put towards the fundamentals of reading, maths and civics and citizenship.

The third priority area will be assessment, Tudge said, which includes shifting NAPLAN to an online format by 2022.

In addition to NAPLAN, the Government will embed more formative assessment in classrooms, including the Online Formative Assessment trial.

“This trial has great potential to increase the effectiveness of classroom teaching by making robust assessment quick and easy for teachers to regularly complete,” Tudge said.

The minister’s announcements come following Australia’s dwindling international performance, despite increases in school funding over time.

Since 2000, Australia’s performance in reading has declined by 26 points, or the equivalent of nine months of schooling.

“In maths, we have fallen 33 points since 2003, or by 14 months of schooling,” Tudge said.

“In science, we have fallen 24 points since 2006, or by 11 months of schooling.

“If this was our economy, this decline would be a national topic of conversation.

“Perhaps the lack of attention is because the decline has been gradual rather than sudden.

“But when viewed over a twenty-year period, it is profound – and it will have consequences for our long-term productivity and competitiveness if we cannot lift our education performance.”

Tudge said while there is no consensus as to why Australia’s education performance has plunged over the last 20 years, he said it is “certainly not because of a decline in funding”.

Funding for schools has increased by 38 per cent in real per capita terms over the last decade.

Since 2013, the Australian Government's school funding has increased in nominal terms by 80 per cent to a record \$23.4 billion, and the Government has committed a further 40 per cent increase to reach \$32.8 billion by 2029.

From 2013 to 2029, government schools funding will increase the most by 193 per cent, catholic schools by 109 per cent and independent schools by 161 per cent.

"...with record funding to all schools, our focus is now on how to use the money not how much schools should get or the distribution between the sectors," Tudge said.

However, the Australian Education Union (AEU) said Tudge's announcement of another education review ignores the significant body of evidence that already exists about the failure of the Federal Government to address the school funding equity gap.

Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that 2011's Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling set out a clear framework to establish a truly needs-based school funding system to address the entrenched inequity in Australian schools and provide all students with a high quality education.

"We do not need another review to tell them what is blatantly obvious – that in order to improve student outcomes, the government must address the school funding inequity in our education system," Haythorpe said.