



## Queensland University of Technology

### Submission on the Department of Education's Strategic Plan (2019-2023) consultation draft

The QUT Faculty of Education welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Department of Education's Strategic Plan, 2019-2023 consultation draft. Overall, the Department of Education is to be commended on a relevant and student-focused Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

The following comments on aspects of the Strategic Plan acknowledge the priorities and objectives identified by the Department of Education.

#### Trauma-informed schooling

Through the Strategic Plan there is strong evidence of:

- a helpful and growing understanding of the complexity and worth of "inclusion",
- acknowledgement that enhancing student well-being is vital to enhancing student academic outcomes,
- acknowledgement of the importance of addressing disadvantage, and
- acknowledgement of providing for diversity.

It is commendable that the Department has now acknowledged Trauma-Informed Practice as a recommended whole-school framework "for responding systematically to the needs of students, including those who are most at risk of disengaging" (Everybody's business: Re-engaging young Queenslanders in education, p. 12).

QUT is leading national and international work in trauma-informed schooling to support:

- students who are living with the outcomes of trauma, abuse and neglect, and
- schools and educators working hard to teach them.

To support this growing work in Queensland, QUT continues to collaborate with Department of Education leaders and end-users and is developing a growing suite of pre-service and post-graduate training options for educators. Trauma-informed schooling is increasingly of interest to rural and remote educators throughout Queensland.

#### Promoting criticality and creativity: a focus on teachers and learners

The Department of Education Strategic Plan (2019-2023) provides a clear road map for promoting innovation and creativity, an important 21<sup>st</sup> century skill for both teachers and students. However, the Strategic Plan needs to acknowledge that innovation requires a focus on both creative and critical thinking. This is relevant to student learning and success in all education contexts (e.g. early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education), integral to quality teaching and a key focus for ongoing professional development of the teaching workforce.

As part of the Strategic Plan, the *Advancing Education* strategy has a clear and explicit link to critical and creative thinking: "Becoming entrepreneurs of tomorrow students will need to become problem solvers, critical and creative thinkers and innovators." We also note that two strategies *Advancing Education – Every student succeeding: state schools strategy* and *Teaching*

*Queensland's Future* refer to what we can do to improve students' learning and to build the capacity of teachers respectively, but neither strategy makes explicit connections to critical and creative thinking. We argue the importance of adding "creative and critical thinking" to the Strategic Plan under the section "embracing opportunities to innovate through" (p. 1 of document). This will foreground this important teaching and learning 21<sup>st</sup> century focus and strengthen the link between the overarching Strategic Plan and these related strategies. Our rationale for this approach is detailed below.

The world is rapidly changing, where the success of young people relies upon innovation and adaptability to respond to changes, critically and creatively, across various sectors and industries. Innovation engages a continuous process of creation and change, through critical thinking and creative thinking. The pedagogical practices of teachers are fundamental components in effectively teaching young people (Knight & Collins, 2014) to be both critical and creative and to engage in innovation (Moyle, 2010).

The Australian educational curriculum documents advocate for the teaching of both critical thinking and creative thinking (ACARA, 2011) as one of seven general capabilities (ACARA, 2015). Creative thinking is the generation of ideas or possibilities that can solve problems or provide an alternative view on a topic or context (Im, Hokanson, & Johnson, 2015). The Strategic Plan identifies creative thinking as essential to innovation however there is no discussion of critical thinking. Critical thinking is systematic, logical and evaluative thinking, with a view to improve the process of thinking itself and continue to ask questions on a particular subject or topic (Paul & Elder, 2008). To be critical requires an individual to actively engage in discussion and debate based on questioning, knowledge and evidence, whether or not there is agreement on a particular topic, with others (Hayes, 2014). This supports an overall goal of education in which "citizens, and the social groups in which they participate, ... better align their beliefs with evidence, that they will insist on evidence when making judgments, and that they will be more successful at attaining knowledge and spreading that knowledge" (Barzilai & Chinn, 2018, 362). Critical thinking and criticality are clearly at the heart of what it means to be an active citizen.

## References

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