Educational Evaluation and Assessment in Australia
Strengths, Challenges and Policy Pointers

STRENGTHS

The Evaluation and Assessment Framework
- There are clear national goals for education in Australia which gather wide support
- The overall evaluation and assessment framework is sophisticated and well-conceptualised
- The principle of evidence-based policy is well established
- There are good bases for sound knowledge management within the overall evaluation and assessment framework

Student Assessment
- A coherent framework for the assessment of student learning is in place
- There is evidence that NAPLAN is technically sound and results are credible among school agents
- Summative student assessment is adequately supported by moderation processes and dedicated tools
- Assessment for secondary school qualifications is well established
- There are good practices of formative assessment and there is good reliance on teacher-based summative assessment

Teacher Appraisal
- Teaching standards are instituted and their establishment at the national level is a major development
- Teacher registration processes are in place
- Performance management processes provide a good basis for developmental teacher appraisal
- Advanced Skills Teaching positions grant opportunities for recognition of skills and competencies
- Teachers are trusted professionals with a high degree of autonomy and are open to professional feedback

School Evaluation
- Accountability and transparency are well embedded as national principles guiding school evaluation
- The use of performance data and survey results is well integrated into school evaluation processes
- The principle of publishing performance data at the school level is established
- The key role of school self-evaluation is recognised and there are clear rules for school reporting
- External school reviews are well established

System Evaluation
- Common reporting frameworks are well established and the set of national monitoring tools has been strengthened
- There are strong procedures for system monitoring at the state and territory level
- There is transparency in reporting results of national monitoring, which are used extensively

CHALLENGES

The Evaluation and Assessment Framework
- The links to classroom practice are less clearly articulated
- Some articulations within the overall evaluation and assessment framework are not sufficiently developed
- Striking the right balance between nationally-dictated policies and ability to meet local needs is a challenge
- There is room to improve the integration of the non-governmental sector in the overall framework
- Building capacity for evaluation and assessment remains a priority

Student Assessment
- NAPLAN has certain limitations in its alignment with student learning objectives
- There are some challenges in ensuring NAPLAN is a fair test for some subgroups and results are delivered timely
- There are some inadequacies in teachers’ skills for assessment and to use assessment data
- The consistency of secondary certificates across jurisdictions is not ensured
- There are risks the emphasis on NAPLAN may “narrow” teacher-based assessment

Teacher Appraisal
- Regular teacher appraisal is not systematic across the system and is not perceived as meaningful
- Teachers have few opportunities for feedback and the extent of externality in teacher appraisal is limited
- There are missing links between teacher appraisal, professional development and school development
- There is little alignment between teaching standards, registration processes and career structures
- There are some challenges to the implementation of teacher registration processes
- Advanced Skills Teaching positions are an incipient approach to career diversification and the reward of teachers
School Evaluation
- There is little national direction on the role and nature of school reviews
- The too great reliance on measuring and publicising student outcomes can have undesired effects
- There is a need to improve the scope of the information provided by the My School website
- Clarity is needed about the nature of externality and the focus of school review needs to be better defined
- The degree of follow-up to school reviews is variable

System Evaluation
- There are some gaps in the national monitoring system
- Further steps are needed in monitoring the new Australian Curriculum
- There is room to improve the use of results from the national monitoring system
- There are varied practices among states and territories in monitoring schools across different sectors and in systems of data collection

POINTERS FOR FUTURE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Evaluation and Assessment Framework
- Establish national strategies for strengthening the linkages to classroom practice within the overall framework
- Promote greater national consistency while giving room for local diversity
- Improve the integration of the non-governmental sector in the overall evaluation and assessment framework
- Further develop some articulations within the overall evaluation and assessment framework
- Sustain efforts to improve capacity for evaluation and assessment

Student Assessment
- Develop national consistency while respecting state and territory assessment strengths and cultures
- Reinforce the assessment validity of NAPLAN and ensure that it is a fair test to all subgroups
- Establish safeguards against overemphasis on NAPLAN
- Strengthen teachers’ capacity to assess student performance against the Australian Curriculum
- Build teachers’ competence to use student assessment data
- Maintain the centrality of teacher-based assessment while ensuring the diversity of assessment formats
- Increase the visibility of the Australian Government’s goals for formative assessment

Teacher Appraisal
- Align teaching standards with a competency-based career structure for teachers
- Conceive teacher registration as career-progression evaluation
- Perform developmental evaluation through teacher appraisal as part of performance management processes
- Ensure links between developmental evaluation and career-progression evaluation
- Reinforce the linkages between teacher appraisal, professional development and school development
- Strengthen competencies for teacher appraisal

School Evaluation
- Develop a set of national principles and protocols for school evaluation
- Clearly establish the fundamental purpose of school evaluation and define the nature of externality
- Strengthen the alignment between self-evaluation and external evaluation
- Ensure a broad scope for external school evaluation and place greater emphasis on follow-up
- Ensure a focus on the quality of teaching and learning in both internal and external school evaluation
- Build expertise among evaluators and improve data handling skills of school agents
- Publish externally validated school evaluation reports to complement the publication of national test data

System Evaluation
- Continue and prioritise efforts to meet information needs for national monitoring
- Clarify the role of the National Assessment Program in relation to the Australian Curriculum
- Further exploit results from jurisdiction and national monitoring systems for systemic school improvement
- Support and promote greater monitoring in the non-governmental sector

FURTHER READING
This summary of strengths, challenges and recommendations is drawn from OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Australia, published in August 2011.
The full Country Review report and further information about the OECD Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes are available on the project’s website: www.oecd.org/edu/evaluationpolicy.