

Briefings

Thought leadership for the independent schooling sector

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MORE FUNDING CHANGES ON THE WAY

From the Executive Director

Independent schools have faced an unprecedented period of change and uncertainty in government funding arrangements over the past five years as the various versions of the Gonski model have been implemented at the federal level. There is more change on the way as the provisions of the *Australian Education Act 2013* are about to impact on the way the Queensland Government funds non-government schools.

Whilst funding from the Australian Government is the prime source of public funding for independent schools, Queensland Government funding is an important element of the partnership between governments and parents in terms of resourcing independent schools. In 2019/20, the Queensland Government has budgeted to provide \$705 million in recurrent funding for non-government schools¹. Independent schools will receive about \$278 million of this amount.

For decades, the total recurrent funding pool for non-government schools provided by the Queensland Government has been determined by the Basket Nexus mechanism. This process essentially provides non-government schools with recurrent funding as a proportion of the amount of State Government expenditure on public schools. The current nexus is 22.33% of the weighted cost of a state school student as a per capita rate to similarly weighted non-state students².

The Basket Nexus has served the independent sector well over many years ensuring that any increases in expenditure on state schools flows onto the non-government sector as well as accounting for enrolment growth and cost increases.

The Basket Nexus will no longer operate in Queensland from 2021. It will be replaced by the requirements of the *Australian Education Act* which provides that State Governments provide 20% of the public funding entitlement

of independent schools. The public entitlement is based on each school's loaded Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) as determined by the Gonski funding formula.

The change in the method of determining the total recurrent funding pool for non-government schools will be consistent with Queensland's current Bilateral Agreement with the Commonwealth under the National School Reform Agreement³. As outlined in the Bilateral Agreement, the Queensland Government is already providing non-government schools with more than the 20% of SRS as required under the *Australian Education Act* (the actual percentage for 2018 was estimated to be 23.18%).

As a result, the total recurrent funding for non-government schools in Queensland will transition down towards 20% during the period 2019 to 2023 (the estimated percentage in 2023 is to be 20.61%). My article in the April 2019 *Briefings* (Vol 23 Issue 3)⁴ provided a detailed account of the obligations under the *Australian Education Act* of the Federal and State Governments in their funding of schools.

The decision by the Queensland Government to replace the Basket Nexus mechanism appears to be good public policy, however, it has one significant downside for the government. It effectively means that Queensland Government expenditure on non-state schools is now dictated by Federal Government legislation and

1 See 2019/20 Service Delivery Statement (Budget Paper 5) available at <https://budget.qld.gov.au/budget-papers/>

2 Students are weighted at 1 for primary and 1.5 for secondary to reflect sector cost differentials for both state and non-state school students.

3 See <https://www.education.gov.au/national-school-reform-agreement-0> for details of the agreements.

4 Available at https://rms.isq.qld.edu.au/files/Weblive_Briefings/ISQ%20Briefings%2023-3.pdf

MORE FUNDING CHANGES ON THE WAY

Despite the complexities of Commonwealth-State relations, every child, no matter what school they attend is entitled to public funding.

policy on schools funding. Generally, State Governments resist such controls imposed by Federal Governments. The 20% funding requirement is a minimum and a future Queensland Government could decide to fund non-state schools at a rate higher than 20% of their loaded SRS.

There is further protection for the State Government in that the Bilateral Agreement specifies that the funding contribution shares by the State can be amended in the event of a change to the SRS methodology or accounting standards. In other words, should the Commonwealth change the SRS formulas (for example, by increasing the loadings), the State Government would be able to amend its contribution shares to limit the impact.

The Queensland Bilateral Agreement makes the statement “Queensland has in place a long-standing history of providing fair and consistent funding to non-government schools”. Independent schools have always acknowledged and appreciated that long-standing commitment.

The current complexity of schools funding arrangements between the Commonwealth and State Governments again raises the issue of whether in a public policy context, one level of government should take full

responsibility for the funding of non-government schools.

In recent years, two attempts have been made to consider this issue. Following the National Commission of Audit in 2013, the Abbott Government undertook considerable work on Commonwealth-State financial responsibilities including consulting on several options in schooling. This included that State Governments be the sole funder of all schools.

Malcolm Turnbull, as Prime Minister, also floated a proposal in March 2016 that State and Territory Governments take responsibility for funding state schools whilst the Federal Government take responsibility for funding non-state schools (this was in association with giving states the ability to impose income taxes).

Despite the complexities of Commonwealth-State relations, every child, no matter what school they attend is entitled to public funding. Both the Commonwealth and State Governments should contribute to this entitlement.

There is a very strong case as to why State Governments should make a significant contribution to the public funding of students in non-state schools. It is state legislation that

requires parents to enrol and send their children to school⁵.

Importantly, every student enrolled in a non-state school represents a significant saving to the Queensland Budget. Provisional figures for 2019 have the SRS per student in state schools at \$17,447 compared to \$11,646 per student for independent schools. Based on the 80/20 requirements of the federal Act, this means the State Government would contribute \$13,957 for each state school student compared to \$2,329 for each student in an independent school – a saving of \$11,628 per student. There is an annual \$1.4 billion saving to the State Budget.

With the methodology for the determination of the total amount of Queensland Government funding for non-government schools from 2021 now settled, a further issue arises that will be of importance to schools. This is how the total funding available is allocated to individual schools.

At the current time, a complex formula is used to determine individual school funding (known as the state recurrent grant). This formula is a combination of a per capita rate (60% of the total funding amount is utilised for this purpose) and a needs-based component (40% of the total funding amount) which is based on school and student characteristics.

Given the determination of total funding by the Gonski formula, it would seem appropriate that individual school amounts would also be determined by the Gonski formula. If this was the case, each school would receive from the State Government 20% of its loaded SRS.

The difficulty in this approach is it would require a significant re-allocation of funding within the non-state schooling sectors – never an easy process given potential “winners and losers”. Based on the long-standing allocation formula for individual

5 In Queensland, this requirement is contained in the *Education (General Provisions) Act*.

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schools, it is fact that some schools are receiving more than 20% of their loaded SRS from the State Government whilst others are receiving less.

Any change in the individual school allocation formula is likely to require a transition period of some length in order to minimise disruption to individual schools. A change in the formula during a period when there will be low indexation of state funding can be particularly difficult.

There are also several technical issues that would need to be addressed if the Queensland Government were to adopt the Gonski model for individual school allocations. For example, the current state model is based on February Census data whereas the Gonski model is based on August Census data.

It is over 10 years since the funding allocation model for non-government schools has been reviewed. Whilst there have been some changes to the model in the past decade, it has been a stable and certain process.

With the implementation of the Gonski funding model at the national level, it is timely that the state funding arrangements be reviewed and any changes that align funding responsibilities at the national and state levels be implemented.

However, potential changes to funding models for schools bring with them uncertainty. Independent schools need to be prepared for yet another period of uncertainty around government funding – this time at the state level.



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SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND IT REFORM – LEADING INNOVATION, IDEATION AND PEOPLE



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The digital environment around schools is changing faster than ever before. At the most fundamental level, schools' interactions between families, students, teachers and leaders must reflect the ways that Australians access other basic needs. Shopping for food, clothing and shelter can be completed online. Loving relationships and social/cultural belonging are mediated within an increasingly universal and ubiquitous digital environment. These experiences are becoming seamless, beautifully designed and constantly adapting to feedback from the user.

Most private sector organisations are struggling to establish and maintain appropriate ICT infrastructure, architecture and policies for secure and adaptive general operations, let alone addressing the challenges that schools face as they establish new pedagogical principles, redesign learning spaces, and communicate with parents/carers in ways that can improve learning and

advance each school's standing in the community.

Perhaps an even more critical challenge for schools is ensuring they are continuously developing an agile and confident workforce, and able to adapt quickly enough to leverage new IT solutions to improve working conditions and most importantly benefit learners.

Whilst some schools have embraced IT reform, there are other schools where the bandwidth, budget or the belief system has slowed progress. This paper will highlight the role facing independent school leaders in ensuring their schools can address complex digital changes and meet community expectations over the next 3-5 years.

The challenge

Greg Whitby describes the challenge for schools in his article, *Leading in a Digital Environment*:

"Technology has democratised our access to information, knowledge and the capacity for lifelong learning in ways never seen before. Thus, old models of delivering schooling and the ways in which leaders strategically plan have been found to be wanting. The industrial toolkits

How do school leaders ensure the digital reform does not leave staff or students behind, unable to access new ways of learning and teaching and disenfranchised because they cannot adapt to new teaching practise enabled by IT?

(e.g. processes, structures and mindsets) that have been relied upon in the past to manage the linear and the predictable are no longer relevant in a non-linear and unpredictable world... (schools) are moving from a “new-old” model of schooling (prescriptive, one-size-fits-all, delivers to the masses, reinforces routine) to a “new-new” model (adaptive, personalised, promotes learning frameworks, diverse learners)” (Whitby, 2019, p. 9).

Whitby argues that to make the changes required to genuinely transform at the same pace as society, and to lead this transformation for the greater cultural good, school leadership is essential. However, many approaches to educational leadership still need to evolve to meet these new challenges. He believes that it is “the interaction between learning and enterprise – between the work and the enablers” (2019, p. 10) that will guide transformation. Whitby quotes Alvin Toffler’s warning that “the illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn” (2019, p. 10). Whilst the need to read and write will continue to be the greatest liberator for young people, how these fundamentals are taught, learned and applied cannot be divorced from the current context if they are to enable citizens to address the immediate and future challenges of participatory, egalitarian and inclusive societies in a globalised and environmentally dynamic environment.

Schools are not alone in the effort to define the impact of a rapidly reforming IT environment. Universities are actively considering the impact of the changing IT on their educational delivery. Higher education analysis of the challenges helps independent schools to consider their own strategy with regards to the same rapid evolution. The most recent EDUCAUSE Horizon Report defines future IT challenges as “solvable, difficult and wicked” (Alexander et al., 2019).

Figure 1: Higher Education Technology Adoption & Development

Source: Alexander et al., 2019



Solutions to wicked, or complex, problems may be of interest to school leaders. How do school leaders ensure the digital reform does not leave staff or students behind, unable to access new ways of learning and teaching and disenfranchised because they cannot adapt to new teaching practise enabled by IT? How do they ensure staff or students don’t become disenfranchised because through disadvantage or disability, they are unable to participate fully in the opportunities presented by IT reform?

It is also useful for school leaders to consider the timeline that higher education is considering for dealing with the most pressing digital changes, particularly the engagement of mixed

reality and artificial intelligence. For students of independent schools to lead their communities, they will need to engage with the cognitive and practical impacts of new ways of collaborating in global teams and lead work that is inclusive, engaging and interculturally appropriate. (See Figure 1).

Leading innovation

What do leaders need to do differently in order to navigate this current world order? Jonathan Vehar (2015) from the Centre of Creative Leadership outlined five approaches critical to effective educational leadership. These ways of thinking are essential if leaders are to successfully manage the innovation

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND IT REFORM – LEADING INNOVATION, IDEATION AND PEOPLE CONTINUED

Figure 2: Educational Leadership Approaches

1. Realise that roles and capabilities needed for innovation vary by level

Successful innovation involves every level on the organisational chart, from the individuals who identify novel ideas, to the middle managers who champion them, to the senior executives who shape the overall culture. Understanding the different skills required to drive innovation by level focuses leaders on their responsibilities and helps target training and development.

2. Focus on an innovation process

Innovation in organisations cannot be a random or unstructured activity. It requires people with innovation mindsets who work together to explore, ideate, craft and implement ground-breaking ideas. When leaders understand how this process works, they can spot gaps and develop a strategy for filling them.

3. Identify and leverage different contributions

Since innovation is a process with different steps and stages, varying skills, perspectives and contributions are needed along the way – which means tapping talent across the

organisation. It's the role of leaders to ensure that the innovation process involves a wide diversity of thought and experience.

4. Work across boundaries

Innovation requires leaders to influence, connect and collaborate with people who have different innovation styles. Without these capabilities, boundaries and bureaucracy can easily kill innovation. It's critical to work across organisational boundaries, whether they are vertical, horizontal, geographic, demographic, or stakeholder-related.

5. Embrace polarities

Paradoxes and conflicting priorities must be approached from a stance of Polarity Thinking (as developed by Barry Johnson), which helps leaders determine how to understand and respond to issues that don't have fixed solutions. For example, from this mindset, there isn't a clear answer for a first-level manager weighing whether to deliver immediate results or champion a new process. Making a good call requires skill at navigating conflicting viewpoints.

(Vehar, 2015)

needed in an iterative, unknown and rapidly evolving context being both driven and supported by IT. (See Figure 2).

This model challenges centralised leadership and decision-making structures by devolving decision making to users, including teachers, students and families. The tension for school leaders lies in maintaining safe and sustainable IT infrastructure as the educational process and community expectations of delivery evolves.

Sourcing and developing expertise at all levels of the school is essential to enabling devolved and expert decision making. If expertise only sits with an expert few, the opportunities to genuinely transform schooling are weakened.

Traditional notions of innovation being managed in a linear and controlled process have already been thoroughly challenged. However, school leaders do bring clear, strategic oversight and a sustained focus on

what matters. It is school leaders who can guide relevant innovation within a schooling community to ensure it is advancing the educational mission. They can also challenge and manage teacher and community expectations. A good example of this is establishing platforms that will enable universal design, a philosophy that is increasingly central to new IT solutions.

“Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design” (NDA, 2019).

Unless a workforce understands the emerging IT opportunities that exist for learners, resistance to innovation will be based on concerns about the impact of change rather than the impact on learners' outcomes.

Aurick, Anscombe and Jonk state that managing IT innovation “requires a substantial reframing of leadership, away from leadership teams at the top of pyramids, dishing out instructions, and toward a form of leadership-on-demand or leadership-as-a-service. Technology empowers integrated leadership systems that blend human qualities throughout the organization into a single resource, focused on what matters most” (2018, para. 11).

They have developed a matrix to define or categorise IT impact on task execution. It is useful for school leaders in defining the purpose or benefit of implementing reform. (See Figure 3).

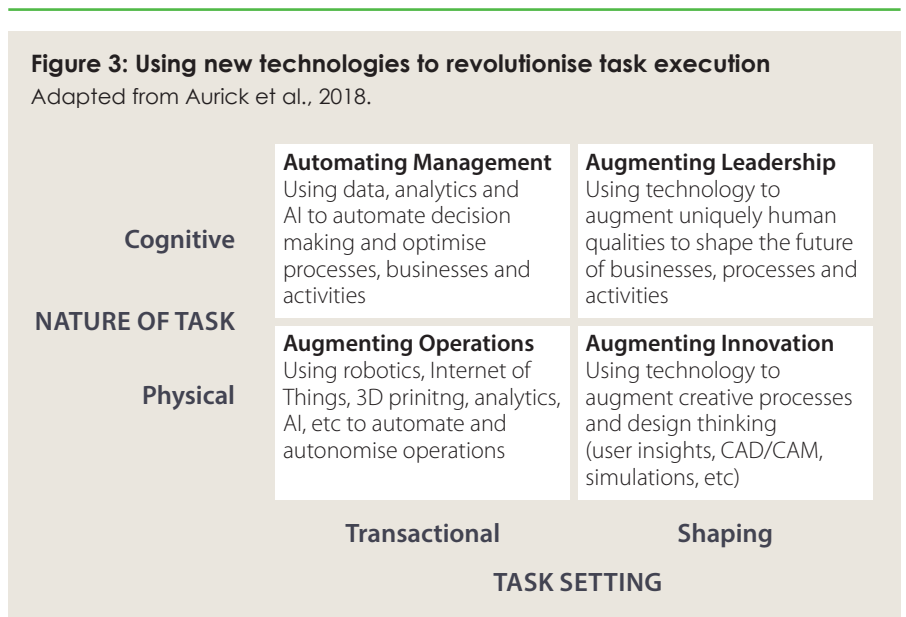
The challenge for school leaders is to enable a clear definition of IT project scope and to be clear about the impact on teaching and learning with regards to how IT will automate or

augment processes within teaching or school leadership. Their philosophy of IT reform is that it must be clear about its intended impact, then the operationalising of that reform will be easier to communicate and implement. They also see that this is more likely to lead to reform that results in clear benefits to all stakeholders.

Leading ideation

Gary Stager (2019) speaks directly to how easily distracted school leadership can become by ideation cycles, to the detriment of the core purpose of schooling. He states, “if you feel you have more to learn from a start-up culture than John Dewey, you might consider a career change. There is no shame in that, pretending that schools are entrepreneurial enterprises with customers, products and profits is where restless leaders get into trouble”.

Ideation should be occurring in classrooms, staff rooms and Parents & Friends meetings only if the absolute purpose or outcome is clear, i.e. how do we make teaching and learning better for specific students, and how will we know we are making a difference? Schools already experiment with pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, but how much of this is integrated in decision making around IT? How often is the new IT solution assessed regarding the impact on teacher and learner? It is the school leader who sets the culture with regards to what matters and ensures that IT solutions are assessed at any level from the perspective of how can, or does, IT assist.



Ideation projects may make for great infographics, but do they make a difference to teachers and learners? How are they improving the ways parents/carers can support learning? How will a school know if introducing a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) program, or excluding mobile phones, or introducing Virtual Reality or online assessment will improve teaching and outcomes for students? Educational leaders need the confidence to encourage and enable experimentation, and to manage some inevitable failure, but also be willing to set the benchmarks for evidence before taking ideation to wider implementation. Dr Richard Fulford of Edith Cowan University states that IT projects often fail because the focus is on delivery, on time and to budget, rather than on the intended impact. “An information system provider often sees project

success as the implementation of IT on time and on budget. The client sees the project as a matter of business or process improvement. And almost all contracts relate to IT specifics rather than business specifics” (Fulford, 2013, para. 18).

What can be forgotten in an ideation mindset is all that already works in schools. Industry strives for personalised relationships and meeting ‘customer needs’ but great schools already prioritise multiple pathways for individual students, create meaningful relationships with ‘customers’ (parents and students) and understand deeply impactful pedagogy. Before ideation activity associated with IT takes place, the fundamental purpose must be paramount and clear. Spending time on exploring new ways of delivering education must not take time away from valuing what already works. Ideation is best used to face wicked or challenging problems that schools’ current practice is clearly struggling to address.

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Leading people

School leaders know that IT change can irritate, distract and create dissonance. As the IT/digital environment creates opportunities for both students and families to have

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND IT REFORM – LEADING INNOVATION, IDEATION AND PEOPLE CONTINUED

Figure 4: Perception of changes that make them first or second order for stakeholders

Source: Whitby. (2019).

A change is first order when it is perceived as:	A change is second order when it is perceived as:
• an extension of the past	• a break with the past
• within existing paradigms	• outside of existing paradigms
• consistent with prevailing values and norms	• conflicted with prevailing values and norms
• incremental	• complex
• implemented with existing knowledge and skills	• requiring new knowledge and skills to implement
• implemented by experts.	• implemented by stakeholders.

ensure the effectiveness of educational institutions in preparing students for the future. The horizon changes in IT will require a workforce who understand and willingly engage with IT reform. They are more likely to do so if they understand how change will support improved teaching and learning.

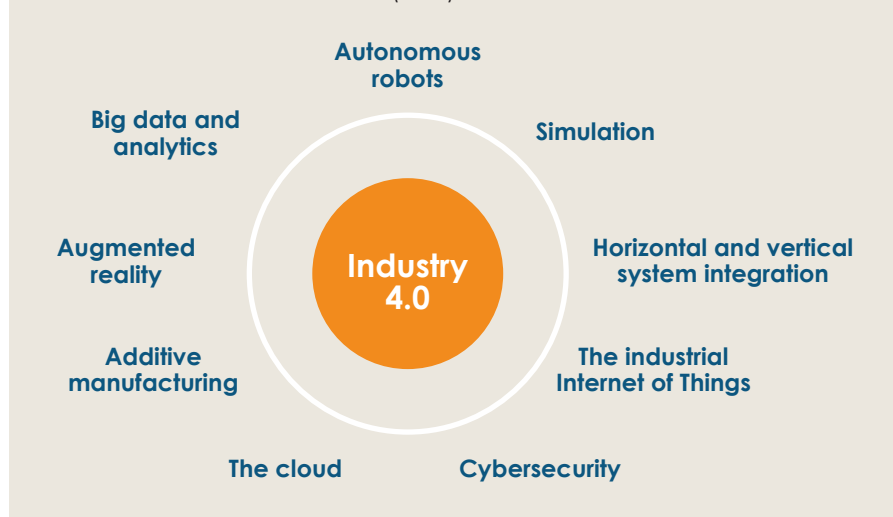
The challenge for school leaders is understanding, communicating and managing IT implementation with a recognition of how the changes may be perceived. Whitby has described IT change as first or second order. (See Figure 4).

The scope of the change needs specific and deliberate professional learning and support to ensure that it is considered as relevant, and the purpose and impact of the change is supported and understood.

To address teaching workforce engagement in IT reform, it may be useful to reflect on how other industries, like manufacturing, evaluate their own approach to addressing IT reform in the context of Industry 4.0 (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Nine technologies are transforming industrial production

Source: Aurick, Anscombe & Jonk. (2018).



Neil Lewin is a Learning and Development Consultant in global giant Festo, a company that is a worldwide supplier of automation technology and the performance leader in industrial training and education programs. Lewin (2018) is clear that unless all the people are engaged with Industry 4.0, transformation will fail. He has identified three dimensions of employee engagement that will determine the professional support or development that is required to achieve successful innovation.

“Personal Satisfaction is where an individual is satisfied in his or her role. The secondary axis is Needs Alignment, where the needs of the organisation and the individual are aligned. The third is Drive... A disengaged employee with low drive will be less of a disruptive influence than one with high drive who is keen

personalised educational delivery, school leaders need a framework for recognising and managing the change, especially for teachers. Teachers are expected to be autonomous subject matter experts. Unless they, or their needs and expertise are clearly considered as part of IT change, they

will struggle to prioritise the work needed to embed the IT reform that will be expected by students and their families.

Whitby (2019) states that teachers’ knowledge of new digital environments will not be enough to

to convert others to his or her own set of beliefs and opinions” (Lewin, 2018, para. 15).

As school leaders drive digital reform, ascertaining the personal satisfaction, the needs, and harnessing the disruptive influencers will assist in determining the right professional learning and support to underpin effective IT reform. Without considering the current state and expertise of the workforce, IT reform will be stalled.

The EDUCAUSE Horizon Report is clear that the major challenges facing leaders of IT reform in a higher education context is arming the workforce with the digital literacy required to engage. This can be transferred to school leaders working with teachers in independent schools. The report focuses on the need for digital fluency in the workforce and states that:

“Digital fluency is the ability to leverage digital tools and platforms to communicate critically, design creatively, make informed decisions, and solve wicked problems while anticipating new ones. Merely maintaining the basic literacies by which students and instructors, access and evaluate information is no longer sufficient to support the complex needs of a digitally mediated society.... Digital fluency requires a rich understanding of the digital environment, enabling co-creation of content and the ability to adapt to new contexts. Institutions must not only support the uses of digital tools and resources by all members of the organization but also leverage their strategic technologies in ways that support critical thinking and complex problem solving” (Alexander et al., 2019, p. 14).

Key to school leadership in this analysis are the constructs around co-creation and delivering IT reform that enables, not encumbers, the complex work of teaching and learning.

Parents and carers will be expecting schools to be able to deliver more personalised, micro-credentialed pathways for all students. They will be expecting Artificial Intelligence interfaces on school websites to answer immediate questions (in their preferred languages) and even assist with subject selection, work experience placement and to provide advice about how best to assist their students to succeed when they transition at different phases in schooling. They will be expecting to enjoy seamless transactions for payments, permissions and to be able to set automated notifications about relevant school activities. Current technology in schools fails to provide all of this.

More importantly school leaders need to consider how IT reform will augment the core business of teaching and learning and ensure that pedagogical expertise remains central. How will teachers see themselves being valued in solution design and supported to participate in reforms? How will IT reform improve universal educational delivery? How do current IT strategies enable teachers to more easily share quality pedagogy and practice? How will the IT systems ensure effective data management to meet increasing demands for accountability about school funding, use of funds to schools to meet student need?

ISQ supports schools to determine the best ways to understand their current IT provision through school ICT reviews and can offer guidance regarding the use and management of school data. ISQ’s professional learning hub, *Connect&Learn* also provides just-in-time online professional development for staff. In the long term, independent school leaders and governors need to include IT reform as key to their strategic planning, and recognise that to remain the educational provision of choice, it cannot be left to an expert few but embedded in the work of all.

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