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# Primary Education in Australia

Through education we create new leaders, scientists, doctors, engineers, businessmen, financial analyst and quality education can secure the future of the country. Children start their schooling journey from their primary education, Australia ranked 35th in the OECD (organization for economic cooperation and development) countries in pre-school attendance out of only 40. Australian children are said to be lagging behind in comparison to other countries. (Press, 2018)

The article “Report revealing Australia's educational decline a 'real worry', says Birmingham” published on 25th February, 2018 reveals the facts behind the lagging of pre-school students in recent times. The article states that 3 of 4 students do not meet minimum standards of mathematics, 1 in 4 students lag in science and even 1 out of 5 children are not at the required reading level. Simon Birmingham, education minister, said “If a child is behind by year 3 in terms of developing basic skills, it’s really hard for them to catch up.” Although 15 year old Australian are doing well in comparison to other countries, one of 5 of them also lag in mathematics, reading and science standards. Apart from the direct results of the students, the Aracy report shows that the children immunization rates are falling and they are more prone to mental illnesses now. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is a bigger victim of these low immunization rates. Mr. Birmingham has stated that his administration will not sit back while the education system suffers instead he intends to work to eradicate such problems from the education system, especially focusing on the early education of students.

## Analysis of the article

Looking at the report the most alarming concern is the primary student’s results and the fact that they are falling below minimum standards. As it is said that education is a passport for future and these children carry this passport with them, it is necessary to act quickly and work to get to the root cause of these lags that the children face. Is it because of lack qualified teachers, parents disinterest in children’s education or the curriculum? All these possibilities are to be tested in order to firstly find the problem and then eradicate it. In 2004 it was recorded that Australia invested only 0.1% of the GDP in primary education while the average investment in primary education amongst the member countries of OECD was 0.5% of GDP. The variability of the standards of pre-school education has been recognized to be one of the major factors in the results we see today (Harrington, 2008). Although these problems have been catered for by increasing the percentage of GDP invested in the primary education sector, there is a lot of concerns still in this sector. As of 2017 Australia ranks 4th amongst the OECD countries in the list of public expenditure on preschools (Kate Torii, 2017). This shows the importance Australia has given to the preschool education sector. The main problem of primary education still remains to be the lag that students face that can be very difficult to cover in the later years. There are several possible problems that could be the cause of this including:

* Variability in the standards of education around the country
* Lack of qualified teachers

A study shows that half of the teachers teaching in early childhood schools have a bachelor’s degree and one-third are still working towards one out of which many are expected to drop out which would create a potential problem of large number of unqualified teachers. (O'Connell, 2019)

* Mental illnesses including some kind of deficiency and hence the lack of facility to discover such illnesses

To get to the real problems the education Minister requires to carry out a research that would provide facts against these hypotheses. Without knowing the cause efforts may be made to a lost cause.

## Resources

The education ministry is directly responsible to solve such problems but can seek help from other networks that could help gather data regarding the problem and seek experience based solutions. As stated in the article Mr. Birmingham, the then education minister, called upon a business man’s, David Gonski, panel to learn how to effectively spend in the education sector. The following could help solve the preschool student’s problems:

* The government itself
* The OECD could be used to extract relevant data
* Teacher training through professors that have experience in the field
* Social media awareness campaigns for parents and for teachers
* Annual evaluations through data centers

# School Inequality

Disadvantaged students lag behind better financially equipped students. Although there have been many attempts to work through this disparity but the fact is that scholarships are limited and the situation some of these children live in makes it very difficult for them to focus on their studies. More than a third of these children end up short of high school education and only 1 in 4 of these disadvantaged students make it to universities. (Tovey, 2019)

The article “Students going without the basics: 'I was heartbroken when I missed school” was published on the Guardian’s website on 12th May, 2019. The article brings forward the issues faced by less privileged children and the tough situations they face at home that effects their school work by sharing individual stories of such students. Due to lack of resources these students cannot find finances that would provide for all their educational needs. Even the scholarships offered are limited in number and hence are unable to cater for all the underprivileged children. Even when these children get a chance they find it difficult to perform as their peers and are researched to have been 3 years behind in basic skills development than a more privileged child. The mental issues come with their family situation as one example states that a Torres Strait Islander boy’s mother left him at an early age and his father committed suicide which led the boy to face depression and chronic pain. The mental toll that these kids go through their lives cannot be understated. Parents and guardians in such a situation find it very difficult to even feed their children and to ask them to provide good education to these children is an almost impossible task. Although the scholarship programs are created to cater for these underprivileged children it is a fact that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are living without these basic needs. Of these children only two third end up completing high school and only 1 in four go to universities. This shows that the scholarship programs lags in its distribution and effectiveness. The aim of these scholarships is to bridge the gap of inequality in the education system even if it is for a selected group of children. Even when these children are provided with these opportunities they might not go through with it due the situations in their houses which adversely effects their mental and physical health which leads to low performances.

## Analysis of the School Inequality

The inequality in the education system has to be decreased but to this the public schools need to gather more funds, these funds have to managed properly to make sure that they are being used the right way, this is where the Australia Education Regulation Act of 2013 come in, thus act lays down the regulations of the funding framework and requires check and balance at all stages of the funds being transferred (Government, 2013). Equal opportunity is a necessity in all education environments, one of the major reasons for this is so that there is no resentment between the different social classes of the country. A more prosperous nation would emerge as a result of equal opportunity in the education sector. Apart from this the more number of children learning the right way would create more professionals and secure a better future for the nation.

## Funding for the public schools

It is quite clear that funding has to increase in order to provide all the underprivileged students with scholarships that cater to their basic needs. The management of the funds should be enhanced which would make these funds more effective. The situation, as explained in the article, cannot only be fixed by non-profit organizations and charities alone, the government needs to generate funds under the basis of need according to Australian Education Act of 2013. Investment in education is the sole solution for this inequality but the quality of education has to be up to the standard to deliver results. States and territories have been responsible for the funding of public schools but after the Australian Education Act of 2013 the government shares the funding responsibilities. Although still the states and territories are responsible for the major funding of the public schools and the government acts as a minor funding institution. Commonwealth funding has grown gradually in Australia (Government, n.d.). All these funding and still there is a lot inequality in the educational sector is a proof that the management of these funds is the main problems that has to be dealt with. The list for responsible authorities is as follows:

* States and territories
* The Australian Government
* Charities
* Non-profit organizations

All these institutes work to eliminate the imbalances in the education sector and have worked effectively for a long time but still there are areas that require some attention which include the management of the funds, the quality of curriculum, the qualification and training of teachers. There should be regular surveys that would work to research whether the public schools effectively use their funding or not.

## Ethical and Legal concerns

The Australian law states that the all children from the age to 6-16 have to go through primary and secondary education (Government, n.d.). The Australian Education Act 2013 laid out the framework for the funding of schools for quality education at all levels. The act emphasized the need of transparency across the funding framework and the funding was approved on basis of needs. The Australian Education Regulation Act 2013 provides the details of the financial requirements for the funding and act as a guard against any frauds in the system. To receive funding from the government schools have to get approved by authorities recognized by the government as legitimate. (Government, 2013)

Ethical knowledge should be a part of a teacher’s knowledge arsenal not only to conduct themselves in a morally correct manner but also to teach the students ethics that would dictate their lives. Teachers should lookout of ethical hot spots which can be summarized as:

1. Conduct

This includes the overall behavior of the teacher in a school or any other environment of teaching. Teachers need to be cautious of sarcasm and cynicism that might affect student’s confidence. The way teachers behave directly effects the thinking of the child.

1. Assessment

Teachers should be aware that falsification of data violates the laws of ethics. Even to make a student better a teacher should never give good grades out of sympathy.

1. Planning

To avoid any ethical misconduct teacher should plan their lectures and understand the implications of what they are to teach the students. (Support, n.d.)

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