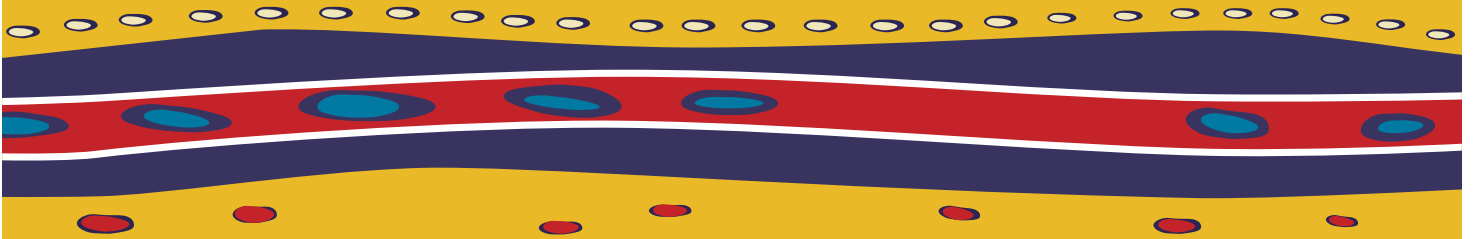# What Works.
The Work Program: CORE ISSUES 7

What Works. The Work Program is a set of resources designed to help schools and those who work in them improve outcomes for Indigenous students. In most of the 'Core issues' series we try to define some topic-based key directions for practical action. Editions to date have had a strongly Australian focus, however...

Indigenous education:
International perspectives

A seminar on indigenous education from international perspectives, with the theme 'Effective practice, mutual learning' and organised by DEST with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was held in Cairns on 14–15 May 2007. Education officials from Canada, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, the United States of America, Australia and the OECD met to share approaches that are improving the educational outcomes of indigenous peoples. The content of the Seminar provided an excellent opportunity to reflect on common issues and new ideas from across the globe.

This edition of *Core Issues* provides a chance to share some of what was contributed. The bulk of the paper is made up of excerpts from presentations and discussions. But it begins with relevant sections of the communiqué to provide an overview of the discussion.

Communiqué

OECD Seminar on Indigenous Education: 'Effective practice, mutual learning'

The Seminar provided government policy advisors and programme designers with further insights into how successful practices could be translated into other countries or contexts to support strong futures for indigenous peoples across the world.

The Seminar demonstrated the growing recognition of the value of sharing and expanding our knowledge of what effective practice is occurring in these countries and finding ways to enhance our mutual learning. There was a significant indigenous presence at the Seminar and this was considered a critical success factor in both the proceedings and in any future actions.

The Seminar examined a range of topics including:

- early childhood education,
- using data to drive performance,
- higher education,
- building student, parent and community demand for quality education and productive school community partnerships, and
- language and culture.

It also considered effective practice in: family and community information strategies; improving student engagement and outcomes through sport; building student success with Aboriginal parents; grade level achievement; working with teachers and effective teacher training programs; and overcoming poverty to attain postsecondary degrees.

Seminar considerations and outcomes

Participants identified a number of priorities where countries may continue their work together. These are outlined below.

- Building and investing in **early learning programmes** which are the foundation for achievement in later life. Representatives from New Zealand and Canada discussed quality early learning experiences in childcare settings. There was considerable interest in creating conditions for ongoing demand for learning through engaging families in early learning programmes. The Seminar participants believed that more work should be done to identify investment returns in the early years: 0–3 year olds and 4–5 year olds. This should be achieved by developing better formative evaluation processes and improved longitudinal data to demonstrate and better inform return on investment in early learning and education.

- Representatives from Canada, Australia and the United States of America discussed important considerations in developing and using **data as a driver to improving educational outcomes**. The Seminar participants supported evidence-based and data-informed policy development and discussed data strategies that were able to 'put a face to achievement' through personalising learning and mapping progress at the individual level. Data could be used to create conversations, build relationships, heighten expectations and could target relevant support to students, teachers and schools while at the same time recognising where success has been achieved.

When designing appropriate data models and their dimensions consideration needs to be given to ways in which the audiences will use this data to drive improvements. This may require some customising to indigenous contexts, particularly where quality measures, best defined by reference by indigenous people, are included. Future action in this area was to consider indicators of quality education as well as supporting more internationally comparable data sets.

- **Higher education** engagement by indigenous peoples is generally low across the participating countries. Innovative practices were required to engage and sustain indigenous participation in higher education and to close the relative participation gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people in higher education. A stronger collective responsibility between government, educational institutions, indigenous communities, businesses and employers was required to build postsecondary education pathways for indigenous peoples. A representative from Mexico presented the Seminar with information on Higher Education in Latin America for indigenous peoples. This presentation noted the value of separate indigenous institutions, inter-cultural universities as well as the need for mainstream universities to establish special programmes for indigenous peoples.

- Characteristics of effective practice for initiatives across the world were seen to depend on **schools and communities working together** towards shared objectives with high expectations of the outcomes. These objectives needed to recognise the purpose of education from indigenous perspectives but also needed to reach out to business and future employment opportunities in order to support strong indigenous futures.

Representatives from Australia and Canada outlined some of the key elements to building productive school and community partnerships. A further Canadian presentation outlined effective practice in supporting indigenous people to complete training and take up positions in the education workforce as well as the economic benefits of this involvement. Future actions included sharing information on ways to facilitate community engagement and develop indigenous leadership from the grass roots to the elite political level as well as the professional development for school leaders and teachers. The multiple impacts, both in indigenous communities and the wider community of developing the capacity of the indigenous educator workforce was also noted by Seminar participants.

- The **revitalisation and preservation of indigenous languages** was seen as a pressing issue for community and educational partnerships. The Seminar observed that indigenous languages were in varying states of use, but that indigenous languages were the first languages of many people. A Latin American expert analysed the importance of indigenous cultural and language issues in the region. He noted that indigenous languages were linked to the world view of indigenous peoples and that these languages provide the impetus for new terms of collaboration between indigenous communities and educationalists. There was particular interest in initiatives that improved proficiency in indigenous languages.

Some facts and figures

It is estimated that of the world's current population of 6.6 billion, 300 million are indigenous.

They are inhabitants of land where their forebears have lived for hundreds of generations, 'first peoples' as they are sometimes described, distinguished by heritage, culture and language. They have also been colonised by other groups, often but not always European. In Southern China, for example, there are more than 70 groups with distinctive non-Han identities (Han being the majority group in China). This fact is also a reminder that the term 'indigenous' applied to peoples within a nation is very often an umbrella term used to apply to many distinctively different peoples. Australia provides an excellent example of this. Often but not always they are minority groups. Bolivia, Ecuador and Guatemala, with more than 60 percent of their populations indigenous, provide examples to the contrary. But even in these cases, despite being numerical majorities in their own country, indigenous peoples are frequently marginalised in terms of power and wealth.

Populations

Participants in the Seminar provided the following population information about indigenous peoples in their countries. Most figures are approximate.

	Total population	Indigenous population	Indigenous school age population
Australia	20.9 million	458,500 (2.2%)	135,666 (4% of total)
Canada	33.4 million	976,305 (3.3%)	324,500 (5.6% of total)
Chile	15 million	700,000 (4.6%, mainly Mapuche)	245,000 (7% of total)
Mexico	100 million	10 million (10%)	1.3 million (16.4% do not attend school)
New Zealand	4.14 million	635,000 (15%)	162,685 (21.6% of total)

Small bites

- Indigenous peoples in Chile have twice the level of illiteracy as the rest of the population. These rates are higher in rural environments.

- The are 67 distinct linguistic groups in Mexico. Just under 10 percent of the indigenous population is illiterate. In some areas this is as high as 60 percent and more so among females than males.

- In Mexico primary education began to be provided in 1979 to indigenous students in their own language. Because there were very few professional teachers who spoke an indigenous language, it was considered more important for a person who acted as teacher to speak the language of the child than for him or her to have a professional teacher education. At present one-third of indigenous students who commence primary education do not complete it. There are no indigenous secondary schools.

- Many indigenous peoples have higher proportions of their members living in rural and remote areas. However, in the mid '90s, 80 percent of New Zealand's Māori population lived in urban areas. Māori (the language) is spoken by about 25 percent of Māori.

- The three formally-defined indigenous groups in Canada are North American Indians (of many tribal groups, also called 'First Nations' peoples, about 60 percent of the total), Métis (people of mixed race who have forged a distinct identity with a defining language, about 30 percent) and Inuit.

- About half of the Canada's Aboriginal population lives in urban areas, with 25 percent living in just 10 of the major cities. The proportion living on Indian reserves and settlements (31 percent) and in rural non-reserve areas (19.5 percent) has declined slightly.

- According to the 2001 Census, just over 20 percent of Canada's Aboriginal people stated that they had an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue. However, only 16 percent of Aboriginal children under 14 years of age could speak an Aboriginal language.

And …

In every case, the birth rate among indigenous peoples is considerably higher than that of the rest of the population; in every case they are more likely to be poor; and in every case access to and success with education is seen as critical to improvements in the circumstances of their lives.

Two short histories

'The return of the Indian'

— An abstract of the contribution of Luis Enrique López from the Universidad Mayor de San Simón, Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Of the estimated 300 million indigenous persons that currently survive in the world, between 40 and 50 million live in Latin America. With the exception of Uruguay, there are indigenous people in each of its counties. In Bolivia and Guatemala they are numerical majorities: 62 percent of the total population and 50 percent, respectively.

Over 700 different indigenous languages are spoken in the region, some with a small number of speakers and others with millions, as Quechua and Aymara. Brazil is the country with the greatest linguistic diversity (with about 180) and Nicaragua the country with the least (three indigenous languages and Creole English).

Since the 1970s increasingly powerful indigenous organisations and leaders and the resurgence of ethnicity — described as 'the return of the Indian' — have pushed governments into reconsidering their positions with respect to indigenous populations. During the '80s and '90s most countries underwent constitutional reforms acknowledging the multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual nature of their societies as well as the right of indigenous peoples to education in their mother tongue, and in certain situations (in Colombia for example) for communities to management and control education.

Responding to social and economic exclusion, Latin American indigenous national and international movements are highly political. It is difficult to separate education and literacy from the struggle for rights and self-determination. The political mobilisation of indigenous organisations leads to educational reforms and intercultural bilingual approaches (for example in Bolivia and Ecuador). And, in turn, bilingual education has contributed to increased political awareness and organisational processes among indigenous people.

Across Latin America the terms intercultural bilingual education, bilingual intercultural education, ethno-education and indigenous education are used interchangeably to refer to educational models designed to cater the needs and expectations of indigenous organisations and leaders, in their search for greater visibility, legal recognition and political participation. Although the degree of indigenous political participation and of social control over the educational system varies from one country to another, there is no doubt that over at least the past three decades ministries of education, universities and also non-government organisations have attempted to intervene in processes of curriculum transformation in order to respond to cultural and linguistic diversity in Latin America, inspired by the notion of interculturalism and intercultural education.

'Indigenous people are modern people living in the contemporary world. Forget the indigenous people who live in your imaginations. Work with real indigenous people and their realities.'

Aboriginal education in British Columbia (BC)

Aboriginal students have been part of BC's education system from its inception in the mid-1800s.

BC's first school opened in partnership with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1849. The early schools were run either by the British colonial administration, or by the major churches. It is likely that some of the students in the 'colonial' schools were Aboriginal, as many of the Hudson Bay company officials had Aboriginal spouses and their children would have become students.

In 1867, the *British North America Act*, which established Canada as an independent state, made education of Aboriginal children a federal responsibility. When BC entered Confederation in 1871, Aboriginal children were not part of the provincial public education system. The Federal Government entered into partnerships with major churches to provide for the education of Aboriginal students. By and large these were residential schools with the major goal of assimilating Aboriginal students into the mainstream culture. These schools lasted until the 1960s and left a legacy of profound mistrust among many Aboriginal people. Because of that mistrust, most Aboriginal parents did not participate in school or see themselves in that role.

From about 1960 on, Aboriginal students had the choice of attending public schools or federally-funded band (meaning 'tribal group') schools on the reserves. Their performance as a group was not tracked, or discussed. There was generally little communication between parents and schools. The Aboriginal community was rarely consulted about educational policy or considered in any way a partner in the education system. This situation lasted until the mid-90s, when the Ministry of Education began reporting Aboriginal performance data to make Aboriginal students 'visible'.

In December 2006 the Federal Government passed the *First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education in British Columbia Act*. This Act recognises First Nations jurisdiction over the education of First Nations on-reserve students in British Columbia.

BC is the first province in Canada to establish this kind of relationship. The agreement means that First Nations people will be able to set up their own school boards to operate their schools, develop curriculum and exam standards, and certify First Nations teachers.

Early childhood education

Belinda Woodman, a senior manager in the NZ Ministry of Education, gave a presentation on early childhood education which drew its impetus from general considerations about the education of indigenous peoples — in her case, the Māori people of New Zealand.

After inviting participants to think about the unique elements of their culture and their families, she introduced the concept of '*manaakitanga*', the unconditional respect and caring for people. 'It's about acknowledging the importance of others; it's not about asking a visitor if they would like a cup of tea, it's about just giving them one; it's about listening, it's about just being. When you honour '*manaakitanga*' to its true sense, to its true essence, it makes you think very carefully about what you may be doing in your work that may have a key impact on other people.'

She quoted four goals developed by Dr Mason Durie widely accepted in the Māori community.

- Māori to live as Māori.
- Māori to enjoy good health and a high standard of living.
- Māori to participate positively in *Te Ao Māori* (The 'Māori world').
- Māori to participate positively in wider society and the world.

It is important, she said, to recognise the critical value of having policy makers listening to indigenous peoples and also the need to link all policy development to the lived realities of the peoples who will be effected by the policies as they are implemented. Many policies are developed as a result of an identified gap or problem, or a political push on a particular path. These ways of forming policy are top-down and reinforce a deficit approach, positioning those who will receive the 'intervention' as those with the problem.

Even the best of intentions are unsatisfactory if you haven't taken the time to listen, to experience or just to be with the people. In some cases, best intentions have stereotyped, labelled and reduced

the aspirations of peoples in ways that could not be justified as anyone's intention. Policy needs to be taken and moulded to the needs and aspirations of the families with whom you are working. But above all it's the way in which programmes are delivered that is absolutely critical. Operational policy and programme implementation are the sites for making a difference to the lives people live, and implementation **can** ensure that the *mana*, the autonomy, dignity and self-respect, of peoples is supported and retained.

Māori aspirations will not find expression by rhetoric alone. If they are to be converted to practice, sound conceptual foundations, clarity of purpose, and a capacity for measuring both progress and impact must underpin them.

Atawhaingia te Pa Harakeke (Nurture the Family) (ATPH) is an example of these challenges being addressed in practice.

ATPH is a programme that works with providers and agencies working with Māori families. The metaphor that underpins the vision of the programme is *Te Pa Harakeke*, which is used in Māori to describe the family and *whanau* (extended family). The way the *harakeke*, the flax plant grows is a system of inter-connecting and inter-relating foliage and roots system that has been used by my people to describe how members of a family depend on one another.

In all facets of its implementation, the programme:
- pays tribute to ancestors who forged a way of life that continually echoed the importance of people,
- recognises that in the past, daily life reinforced that all things contributed in one way or another to the care and well-being of people,
- acknowledges that the inter-dependency of relationships within a society of tribal units places emphasis on ensuring, not only the well-being of individuals, but also the well-being of the groups and the society as a whole,
- asserts that the ways of old are valid now and into the future, and
- seeks to rekindle positive *mauri*, life-force, by reasserting Māori values related to the nurturing of babies and young children.

These key points were not in the policy but were intrinsic to practice and making the programme work.

Do we really look at the expected impact on families when developing policy? Do we take the opportunity to work collaboratively with other agencies to co-write policy? Māori do not live in sectors of government; they live across the lot, so congruence would make sense. How do we view Māori? One size does **not** fit all and this is so for all other indigenous peoples as well. For Māori, the faces are many, we are as diverse a people as any other ethnic grouping.

Dr Rangimarie Rose Pere asks us to tend to diversity. "Much has been said about the Māori people since the early *Māori – Pakeha* (non-Māori) contact period… So much of it has endeavoured to categorise and fit the Māori people into 'closed' models with definite boundaries, models that do not have the structure or the capacity to deal with the diversity that exists within proud tribal cultures.' In her presentation of a living and flexible model for understanding all life's inter-relatedness, Aunty Rose uses '*Te Wheke*' as a living representation of the complexities of life, and a model that speaks to all peoples.

This indigenous model of living, learning and being, provides a framework for thinking about policy in more authentic ways. Its elements [expressed in an interactive non-linear fashion in the original]:

TAMAITI TAMARIKI (for children)

Aroha (love, caring and sharing)

Manaaki, whakawhanaungatanga (dignity, tolerance, relationships)

Wairuatanga (karakia), marae, tangihanga, reo (spirituality, respect, language)

Take-a-Iwi, mahinga-a-ringa, kawa, taonga (leadership, security, self-esteem, resources (arts and crafts))

Mauri, mana, wairua, tapu (life principles, charisma (power, authority), spirit, sanctity of life)

Look at the features of what works, the evidence about what makes the most difference — then get on, plan and do it!

In the round table discussion which followed the strongest area of agreement was that early childhood education should support the development of a secure and assured sense of culture and identity in the very young people it targets. It was suggested by a number of participants that this included the presence and development of the use of children's indigenous language. Other participants suggested that this period was a time to build skills in the various mainstream languages.

There was agreement also that programmes that are sensitive and inclusive must be culturally acceptable to local indigenous people as well as policy makers. This entails increased indigenous involvement in their preparation and delivery, and that families and their communities should be engaged in this process 'from the ground up' to make such programmes 'community-based and community-paced'. This led one group to wonder if it was 'the job of government "to get out the job" '.

There was considerable discussion about ways in which pre-school education should be arranged. Should you start, for example, with birth to 3 year olds with family services supporting learning and language acquisition; or should you consolidate available services and effort for 4 and 5 year olds? Evidence from Canada shows age preschool experience for 4 and 5 year olds is closing the gap with mainstream performance but only in Grade 3 reading. Levels of numeracy have not improved.

This introduced the question of the need for more evidence about the impact of early childhood programs. How do we use the data we have more effectively? Is it the right sort? How do we track change over time both in terms of the impact of programmes and in terms of the support of individual young people in their development? 'We need to learn from what doesn't work — and set this aside.'
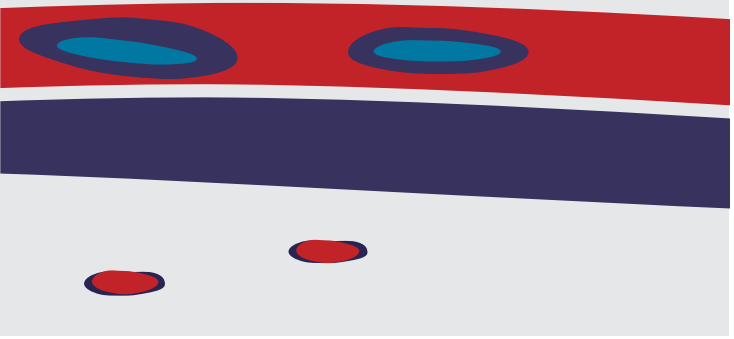
What Works: Canada

— This is an excerpt from a paper 'State of Aboriginal Learning' for the Canadian Council on Learning by Dr Marie Battiste, Director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre at the University of Saskatchewan. The similarity with 'what works' in Australia is striking.

- Direct involvement of the community in the design, delivery, and assessment of education for Aboriginal students.
- Recruitment of Aboriginal teachers.
- Inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives, culture, history, languages, and values in the curriculum for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.
- Implementing early childhood education programs that are culturally appropriate.
- Providing support services designed for Aboriginal students in postsecondary education.
- Using data collection as a tool for tracking and improving Aboriginal education.
- Expanding the choice of courses available to Aboriginal students in remote communities through distance learning, so that they are able to complete secondary school in their home communities.
- Providing teachers with training, support, and resources for culturally sensitive teaching and content.
- Designing technical and vocational programs that are linked to employment in the industrial development in the communities.
- Family literacy programs that seek to involve the whole family in learning.
- Designing special education programs and supports for Aboriginal students.
- Providing financial programs for Aboriginal learners, and
- Bringing Elders and other Aboriginal role models into the classroom.

SUNTEP

— There is a related story of success from Saskatchewan which was offered at the Seminar by Michael Relland, the Coordinator of the province's Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP).

This program, not unlike Queensland's Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP), began in 1980 in response to the comparative absence of Aboriginal teachers (see point 2 at left). There are three programs like this operating in Saskatchewan which graduate somewhere between 70 and 120 new teachers each year. Since their inception 2300 Aboriginal teachers have qualified. Most are women who are older than the average tertiary student. One-third are single mothers and most are from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

These students are people with limited experience of dealing with the requirements of student life. They are supported through orientation programs, academic and pastoral counselling and support, special tutorials, assistance with childcare and housing while studying and career counselling.

However this is a good news story. Around 60 percent of those who begin finish the course and, of those who graduate, 90 percent are employed. It has been noted that people who participate in these courses manage to effectively break the cycle of poverty and dependence which afflicts many Aboriginal people. Employed graduates earn more than $100 million Canadian annually, money which goes back into the economies of Aboriginal communities, and Michael pointed out that the tax they pay ($11.3 million Canadian annually) far more than offsets the costs of these programs. His conclusion was that graduates of these courses 'have helped change the educational landscape of the province of Saskatchewan, serving as role models for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth.

The success rate of the program is put down to students' commitment to their communities reinforced by the nature of their study programs, local leadership and input, the inclusion of participatory research, the involvement of Elders, concern for spiritual harmony, and attention to and use of Aboriginal languages and ways of knowing.

Hey everyone! Think learning

Te Mana (meaning respect, authority, rights) is part of the *Whakaaro Matauranga* (Think Learning) project aimed at raising expectations of Māori achievement amongst Māori, the community, and education providers.

Te Mana uses television, mainstream and *iwi* (clan or tribe) radio and Māori media to communicate its key message — *Te Mana: Ki te taumata* (Get there with learning). Te Mana has produced information to assist Māori adolescents and their families, teachers and people returning to education. This information complements the work of *Pouwhakataki* (Māori community liaison officers). (See *Te Mana* online at www.taiohi.co.nz)

The *Te Mana Kārero* video series has been developed by the Ministry of Education to help teachers focus on quality teaching practices that can better engage Māori students in learning and improving academic and social outcomes.

The key messages? A strong belief in high expectations, Māori students do and can achieve; and, you make the difference, and these are some of the ways. Teachers and other school staff need to:

- engage students meaningfully in the learning process and share with them the responsibility for setting learning goals,
- form positive and mutually respectful relationships with students and their families,
- make teaching and learning decisions based on data from a wide range of sources,
- use student's prior knowledge and local community expertise within the delivery of the curriculum and the learning process,
- develop close relationships with families to support learning, and
- use ICTs innovatively to promote learning.

Underpinning the improvement process are important Māori concepts or principles. 'Attending to these principles is essential if Māori students are to feel truly valued and therefore meaningfully engaged in classroom learning activities.'

Some of these principles are:

- *Manaakingitanga*: the care for students as culturally-located human beings above all else,
- *Mana motuhake*: the care by teachers for the academic success and performance of their students,
- *Whakawhanaungatanga*: the nurturing of mutually respectful and collaborative relationships between all parties around student learning, and
- *Ako*: the promotion of effective and reciprocal teaching and learning relationships where everyone is a learner and a teacher.

Building student, parent and community demand for quality education

— Notes from Noel Pearson's keynote address. Noel is the Director of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership.

Educational underachievement is a wastage of life and potential.

Successive waves of governments have tried to address this issue. I have spent seven years in Cape York trying to reorient policy thinking, but every day is Ground Hog Day. In Queensland we have had 'Partners for Success', and now 'Bound for Success'. I envisage another cycle of reform announcements in four to five years time.

I think of the *Black Deaths in Custody* report — a massive report with more than 300 recommendations. Its principal insight has gone almost unnoticed. Aboriginal people do not die in custody more than non-Indigenous people. It's just that there are so many more, such a larger proportion, of them in gaol. That's why death rates are high. At the time of the report there were about 1800 Indigenous people in gaol. Now after 15 years of policy there are 5000 in custody. Five years ago the Queensland Government said its target was to decrease the number in custody by 50 percent by 2012. We are half way there and there has been a 70 percent increase in numbers in gaol. The evaluation of this process says 'keep plugging away'. It doesn't even attempt to say what's working or what's not.

I am extremely prejudiced and sceptical about policy that claims to be the 'blueprint'.

The gulf between policies that are right and those that are wrong is often very thin. The ways in which the same policy is administered can also make huge differences in outcomes. If you don't get implementation right whole policy can degenerate.

The tendency to think in polar opposites binds us to unintended consequences. Take the issue of restoring social order in distressed communities. There is a fine line between vigilant restoration and what is clearly 'broken windows' policy. Privileges accrue to advantaged classes in their neighbourhoods. In Cairns, for example, no one would put up with a stereo blaring out at 1.00 am. Why is it tolerated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods? They need restoration of social order in order to have functional communities. This perpetuation of refusal to restore social order undermines education and health policy.

There is another fine line between vigilant policing and police violence and harassment. Zero tolerance, for example, can easily degenerate into something unacceptable. Even finely calibrated policy can slide into deleterious negative consequences. We live in dynamic times — positive initiatives at one time can become wrong at another. I give you legal aid as an example. It was progressive when it first came out — crucial, important and just. But what has happened when wrong doers are defended as victims, and the victims themselves are placed in a situation of guilt? There are terrible effects on maintenance of social order.

Another example is sending kids away to boarding schools. This might sound like deleterious policy, but it is a part of our solution to poor educational outcomes. We started by sending two kids away from the Cape [York] to Brisbane Grammar. They were swept along with the expectations that apply to all the other students, and now we are seeking to ensure that many if not all of our kids have those opportunities.

There are critical differences between the use of boarding schools and residential policies of the past. Now jealous mothers are backing their children for a better shot at life by sending their kids away for these opportunities. Too often we don't search for real solutions. We have to be continually vigilant that policy doesn't have unintended consequences.

What's the purpose of education? I like Amartya Sen's formulation: 'People choose lives they have reason to value'.

We need to arm children with real capability to choose through rigorous education. Some will choose mobility. That mobility need not mean losing identity. I am talking about a concept of mobility that is bi-cultural and multilingual. We have to build a capability to live in both worlds.

It is absolutely critical to hammer out the purpose of education. There is so much confusion about cultural and social relevance in the strong ideological currents that run in this country. I believe cultural appropriateness as it is mostly defined is rubbish — all about sensitivity and respect, but not about fair dinkum worthwhile achievement. Why shouldn't an Indigenous child in Cape York pursue high level maths or be fascinated with Russian literature?

This is another example of a right idea applied badly. We get fixated by ideas that end up as anti-intellectual in the long run and which become an alibi for low expectations and less grand ambition. There is a huge intellectual limitation we are seeking absolutely to lift — for example, nonsense about whether a poet's literature is Aboriginal or not. Indigenous people in the future should not be constrained in any way. It's up to them to choose, and they have to have the capacity to do so.

Educational demand is about students who are hungry to learn, parents who are jealous about their children's education, and community values that support educational success.

How do we develop demand? The key is an approach to family that doesn't perpetuate passive welfare. It has four essential ingredients.

First, manage money. You can show low-income families the power that can come from owning a fridge, having curtains, lunch money, proper mattresses and so on. There are ways of achieving this.

Second, support children's education. Among other ways, power comes to families from children who are being clothed and fed. Once money is managed you can buy your Vitabrits and your Vegemite, and you start having the ingredients for children fronting up to school every day.

Third, engage the family in the health of each family member. There is not a lack of health services in Australia; there is a need to engage families in follow-up on treatment and their responsibilities as diligent parents. There is too much focus on service side. Medicine is easily available; what we need to do is to sort out engagement with those services and to get the best from them. We can get on top of health problems.

Fourth, home. We need safe, happy homes that people own and are proud of. The financial situation is such that governments need to provide enabling support, but instead governments have provided funding to respond to secondary problems.

We now have a structural issue. There is now a service industry for taking responsibility for matters that should be the responsibility of families. In Australia we are moving very decisively to welfare. Government and NGO [non-goverment organisation] providers have displaced responsibilities; they work on passive welfare and passive service delivery. There is no sunset clause on intervention. The 'interveners' develop a permanent role and the 'intervenees' become passive and just take it. We are still deferring the day when Indigenous people take responsibility for their own futures.

The arguments used for this passive welfare paradigm are that Indigenous people have a right to these, and they don't have the capacity to manage any other way. I say that 100 percent of the solution is in jealous parents taking back responsibility for what has been taken off them and to stop others taking charge of their problems.

There **is** a crisis. The government **does** need to step in. The first step should be to extinguish all secondary programs. Income support should move from being unconditional to conditional, respecting the obligation to children and to behaviour in relation to those children. Focus on and develop solid primary programs for income, education, health, housing. Develop financial literacy, be able to organise a budget that improves your own life and that of your children.

One of the problems is that we have shied away from because we don't want to confront it are behaviour problems and wrong choices people make. This is partly ideological, that is whether we should, whether we are allowed, to look at and react to other people's behaviour. I have no hesitation in saying that this behaviour is contributing to poverty, and that poverty and malnutrition are consequences of that behaviour. I want to arm people with idea that if they get act together, when people take charge of their own lives they can overcome even the most obdurate structural problem.

We are on the cusp of new regime of welfare in Cape York where we say welfare is not an entitlement — proper participation in a boom economy is a right. But rights are not delivered on a plate. They come with all the responsibilities that building a proper future for our children entails.

Postsecondary education

Some challenging issues

— From Dr Sean W. Mulvenon, Policy Adviser, US Department of Education.

There are three essential elements for success at tertiary level. Students need to:

- be well-prepared academically,
- have financial stability, and
- have cultural support.

What does it mean to be well-prepared academically?

- How should this be defined?
- Should it be degree-specific or institution-specific?
- Are university remediation programs effective? Or the best option? (Over 50 percent of Arkansas Secondary Seniors require remediation at tertiary level.)
- Should there be performance expectations for the student?
- Should this be the same for all degrees?

What does financial stability mean?

- What is it reasonable to expect?
- What are the best funding programs? Full scholarships? 50 percent funding and 50 percent work study? Student loan programs?
- Should all scholarships be funded at the same levels? Should we, for example, provide higher levels of support for engineering as opposed to education?

What does cultural support mean?

- Is this 'cultural' in terms of race/ethnicity, poverty, or where you are from?
- Is this 'cultural' in terms of the university environment?
- Are cultural support issues more significant than financial support issues?

Are we really interested in improving outcomes or opportunities?

- What qualifications strengthen the economy?
- Is this an appropriate expectation?
- Indigenous enrolments are low in math-based courses. Should priority be given to indigenous students who want to study, for example, engineering, medicine and physics?

New style tertiary education emerging in Latin America

— From a paper presented by Mindahi Muñoz, co-authored with Sylvia Schmelkes, Intercultural University of Mexico State.

There are very few indigenous tertiary students or graduates in Latin America — perhaps 1 percent of the population. Latin America has adopted an intercultural and bilingual approach to education, but only for the primary years (1–6). Since not even primary education is universal, education for indigenous peoples has not extended beyond this point. The result is very few indigenous professionals and intellectuals interested in working towards the development of their cultures, regions and languages.

Recently, however, interest in accessing and providing higher education for indigenous peoples has risen. There are many different schemes not all of which share the same objectives.

Many are preoccupied with equality of educational opportunities in mainstream institutions and in mainstream versions of education. Such schemes include scholarship provision, lower levels of achievement required for access, other forms of special admission, provision of intensive tutoring programs, additional dedicated support during enrolment and new specialist course and programs.

A second approach has also been widely adopted, and that is setting up new indigenous or intercultural universities. Some, mainly with an intercultural focus, operate under the aegis of older institutions. Others, 'indigenous universities', have been more specifically provided for the local population. Sometimes their purposes are very specifically related to local economic development as well as the preservation and strengthening of culture and language. In 2003, 47 projects devoted to the development of indigenous tertiary education across Latin America were noted.

Partly in response to the negative results of segregated indigenous schooling, Mexico has chosen to pursue intercultural education. The work of institutions is directed towards indigenous peoples, however entry is open to anyone. The model is intercultural because we believe in the importance of cultural exchange and dialogue and in the development of equal relationships.

There are six such universities now in operation, with three more to open in September 2007. About 3000 students are enrolled in total, 63 percent female and more than 75 percent indigenous. The programs offered are: Sustainable development, Language and culture, Intercultural communication, Ecotourism, Municipal management and development.

They share the following principles of operation.

- Their mission is to produce professionals committed to the development of their peoples and their regions.
- The dimensions of teaching, research and community relationships are integrated in practice so that research and community relationships are part of every course.
- Students are not selected on academic results. The process is unsuitable for students who have a limited background in formal education. If selection is necessary it is based on quotas — gender, ethnic and geographic area. All of the first year is devoted to the development of language and higher order thinking skills. Results from this process are good.
- Indigenous languages and cultures are studied, used and researched.
- Relationships with the community are strong. Representatives of communities are members of governing boards and there is a body which has the task of monitoring needs and opportunities for course work.
- The labour market for graduates is not conventional in most cases, students are encouraged to be entrepreneurs with the capacity of creating their own employment based on the needs and potential of their home region.

Using data to drive performance

in British Columbia (BC)

— These are some excerpts from the presentation of Dr Emery Dosdall, Deputy Minister for Education (meaning most senior public servant) in British Columbia, Canada.

A number of international assessments show British Columbia's students perform very well in comparison to those of other jurisdictions. For example, in the 2003 Programme for International Student Assessments (PISA), no jurisdictions performed statistically better than BC in reading or maths. In science, only two countries performed better than British Columbia.

The major problem confronting the BC education system is that the high achievement of BC students does not extend to Aboriginal students.

Fewer than 50 percent of Aboriginal students graduate, compared to over 80 percent for non-Aboriginal students. In many districts fewer than 40 percent of Aboriginal students graduate. Aboriginal students fare no better in other measures: they consistently underperform the general population in standardised assessments and provincial examinations; they represent a disproportionately high percentage of students with special needs, and a disproportionately low number of students who transition to postsecondary education.

There is no simple answer to why this disparity exists, but a strong candidate for consideration must include the fact that until relatively recently, Aboriginal students and communities were fundamentally disconnected from the public school system. They were not considered in the dialogue about education and were certainly not part of decision-making processes in public schools.

A new approach

In 2001 a newly elected government chose to focus on improving the achievement of all students in British Columbia. The government's key messages discussed increasing achievement through improved accountability for results, increased autonomy for school boards and schools, more choice for students, and increased parental involvement with schools. The entire school system was challenged to improve achievement, to be accountable for results, to provide a variety of choices for students and to engage parents in the process.

Giving life to this political aspiration entailed a huge shift in the mental pictures that unconsciously guide many bureaucrats, school board members, school administrators, teachers, students and parents.

Using data to improve student achievement: Our data system

Data becomes operational when it is connected to questions that have real and immediate interest to people working in the system. The basic set of questions that underlie all improvement efforts are:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want and need to go?
- How are we going to get there?
- How will we know if we are there?
- How will we make sure we have made a difference?

The Ministry's approach is to track achievement of each individual student every year they are in the K–12 system. This is done by assigning each student a Personal Education Number (PEN) when they first enrol in the school system, and attaching all relevant information to that number.

For each student we collect up to 300 data elements annually. The elements include performance on individual items from the Foundation Skills Assessment, information about whether the student has a special needs designation, standard demographic elements such as age and gender, and geographical location.

Because each student's data is connected to the PEN, we can track their progress from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and are now beginning to track students into postsecondary education. We are also working to establish ways of sharing our respective student level data. All this is done in strict compliance with BC's protection of privacy legislation.

We store our data in a way that allows us to answer questions quickly, and to develop reports that inform Ministry policy, school district concerns, and school and student level issues.

The Ministry, with the support of the Aboriginal communities, breaks out the data to show the differences in achievement between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal students. The presentations of the data are carefully designed to focus on improving the system, not blaming the students.

Over the past several years the Ministry has been increasingly focused on using data to support continuous improvement. For example the Ministry of Education provides schools with analyses of how Aboriginal students perform on different questions from our Foundation Skills Assessment — helping schools pinpoint problem areas. The data also shows which schools and districts have the most difficulty with Aboriginal student achievements, and which ones have had greatest success.

The data is provided to schools, which incorporate it into their annual improvement plans. They can use it to identify areas for improvement, set targets for improvement, and measure the success of their strategies.

A key set of clients for data on Aboriginal performance are the Aboriginal communities, chiefs, elders, parents and students. The data is a tool for them to demand attention and action — and to assess whether current strategies are working. The data tells us how we are doing as a system and helps find ways to better meet student needs.

Accountability framework

The data is also the foundation of the Ministry's Accountability Framework, which focused provincial attention on student achievement.

This Framework is a set of processes intended to generate conversation about student achievement. Also, it is intended to create a bottom-up planning process by building district level plans from the plans of individual schools. The schools, in turn, would build their plans on the needs of individual students. The process itself is evaluated and refined each year.

(For more information about School Growth Plans go to www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc)

Each school is required to have a School Planning Council. The councils are composed of three parents, a teacher, the principal, and, in schools that have Grades 10 to 12, a student. School Planning Councils create annual plans to improve the achievement of students in their schools. They are required to consider classroom, school, district and provincial evidence and to share their plan with the school community. In doing so, they are expected to consider the performance of Aboriginal students, and the values and perspectives of the Aboriginal community. Each year, results are compared to the previous year's plan so that ineffective strategies can be improved and effective strategies enhanced.

Enhancement Agreements (EAs) are made by school boards, their Aboriginal communities and the Ministry of Education. Enhancement Agreements are designed to enhance the educational achievement of Aboriginal students through a collaborative partnership between Aboriginal communities and school districts. The partnership involves dialogue, shared decision-making and specific goal setting to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal students.

These plans include reference to achievement targets and the data that will be used to measure the achievements. EAs highlight the importance of academic performance and stress the integral nature of Aboriginal traditional culture and languages to Aboriginal student development and success. Enhancement Agreements are integrated with the school board's Accountability Contract so that progress can be monitored. Thirty-one of 60 school districts have these agreements in place, and the rest of the districts are expected to do so (see www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements).

Signs of progress

The Accountability Framework is helping shift the conversation about education to results. Aboriginal communities and their students have become visible at the school, district, and provincial levels. The completion rates of Aboriginal students, who languished without attention for many, many years, have risen from 32 percent to 48 percent. Even those students who do not complete school are staying in longer. We also see more widespread conversation about the outcomes our schools attain.

Over half the school districts have now signed Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements. Encouragingly, recent research shows that school districts which have had Enhancement Agreements in place since 2001 show significant improvement in student completion rates.

Because the Accountability Framework consists of connected parts, we are beginning to see linkages being made from the performance of students to that of schools and school districts. The existence of different outcomes for schools and districts of otherwise similar composition is known and understood to be a problem requiring solution.

Emery's list

Here are ten things I recommend to those tasked with improving educational quality.

1. Create an ongoing conversation about student achievement.

2. Build on a sound, high quality core curriculum.

3. Provide teachers with assessment tools that help them understand how well each student meets the learning outcomes of the curriculum.

4. Develop high quality leadership. From the classroom to the national level leaders must understand the importance of high achievement for all, advocate for it and have the skills to create, manage and monitor strategies to make it happen.

5. Establish a culture of urgency and responsibility. Make failure of any child unacceptable.

6. Accept no excuses for low student achievement.

7. Ensure that teacher training prepares teachers to help students achieve at high levels.

8. When evidence shows results are unacceptable, take action on behalf of students.

9. Help educators close the gap between knowing about poor achievement and correcting it. We must learn how to improve achievement for each student.

10. Ask schools to build improvement plans from the plans for individual students. This keeps student achievement at the centre of planning and decision-making.

In support of the recommendations, following are five data lessons that I believe are applicable to most education jurisdictions.

- Questions precede data. [See the list of five questions in the excerpts from his address, page 15.]

- Collect data at individual level.

- Track each student's achievement throughout their school lives.

- Make data available to the people most affected.

- Embed data use in improvement systems.

Reasons for hope

— Excerpts from a presentation from Tony Greer, Group Manager, Indigenous and Transitions Group, Department of Education, Science and Training.
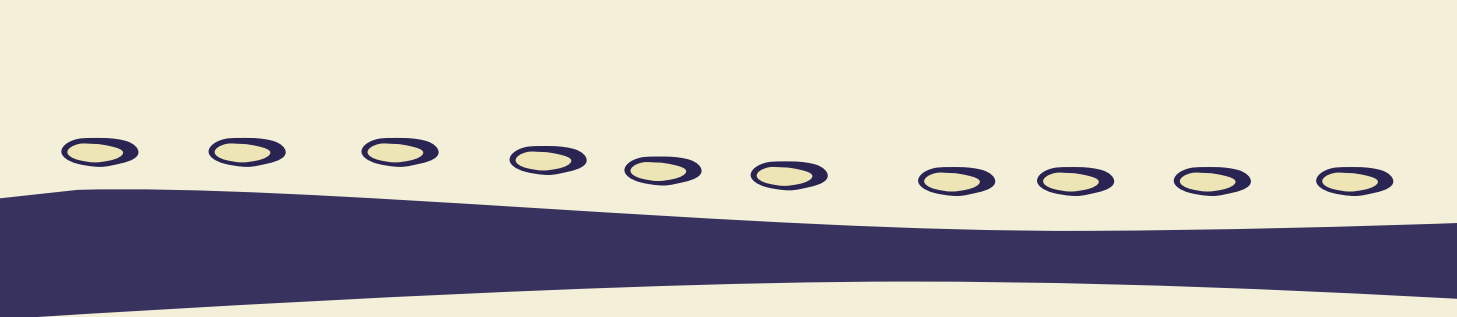
Amid the unceasing effort, there are signs of progress which are cause for celebration, publicity, and subsequent investigation as to the generalisability of the procedures or programmes and the social constructs which underlie them. Three brief examples will have to suffice as indicators of such successes.

First, a manifest cause for celebration. Elaine Morganson's story is an inspiring one, of commitment and dedication. Now a Year 8 teacher at Abergowrie College in Queensland, her life at the school began almost 30 years ago, when she applied for a job doing domestic duties. She worked in the laundry until 1994, and then worked as the college cook until 1999 when her excellent rapport with the college's students was recognised and a colleague suggested she apply for teacher's aide work. After successfully applying for a scholarship to the Australian Catholic University, Ms Morganson began six years of study by correspondence. In April 2007, she graduated from the university as a Bachelor of Education, and is now teaching a Year 8 class at the college, having started as a teacher half way through 2006.

Second, a case deserving wide publicity; a success appearing at the level of an individual institution. Woolaning Homeland Christian College is a secondary boarding school south of Darwin in the Northern Territory in an area which is one of the poorest in the country. The college began with the seed of an idea about how to get local students to secondary school without having to send them to Darwin where they would be prey to drugs and alcohol.

The Principal says that the programme starts from the understanding of the hardships most students share. When the students come to the school from the community, they will be 13 to 15 years old having led community lives often typified by social dysfunction and indeed tragedy. They will typically have the literacy levels of Years 1 and 2: when they start most don't know the alphabet. He says: 'It's not because they are deficient; it's because they have not had the consistent schooling.'

Reading age improves at the rate of about 1.5 years a calendar year. Attendance rates overall have risen to 81 percent, and students are more likely to stay on: when the school opened in 2002, there were 24 students. Three years later, 14 of the initial intake were still there. But success measured not only measured along traditional lines. Some of the best teaching at Woolaning goes on outside the classroom. Students learn trade skills (they have been literally building the school), social skills, practical aspects of day-to-day living, and healthy recreation and leisure activities. Although literacy and numeracy are important, it is felt that real success comes as much from engendering self-confidence, about young people beginning to talk about the future and where they fit into it.

As a third example, one which requires thorough investigation of its potential, the Australian Government cites the National Accelerated Literacy Programme (NALP). This aims to narrow the educational divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the Northern Territory by raising literacy levels using the Accelerated Literacy methodology developed by the University of Canberra and Charles Darwin University.

NALP is a 'lighthouse' project with a national scope and (initially) a research focus. Its policy intent is to test and develop the use of Accelerated Literacy as a systematic and sustainable pedagogic model that meets the literacy needs of Indigenous students. The Accelerated Literacy methodology provides a structured approach to teaching literacy which has proven especially effective with Indigenous students in remote areas. In Northern Territory schools participating in NALP, the average student progress rate has been 1.74 reading year levels per year. Any increase over 1.0 reading year level per year is a significant gain for target students who were at least two reading levels below the expected level (many having been non-readers at the time of initial testing). The methodology is also being made accessible to other schools across Australia.

Given all the endeavours, the challenge is to accelerate the rate of progress as broadly as possible. Data collection (both quantitative and qualitative), interpretation and dissemination will always be integral to promoting this wider success, along with rigorous evaluation according to the highest sociological and, indeed, ethnographic precepts and principles.
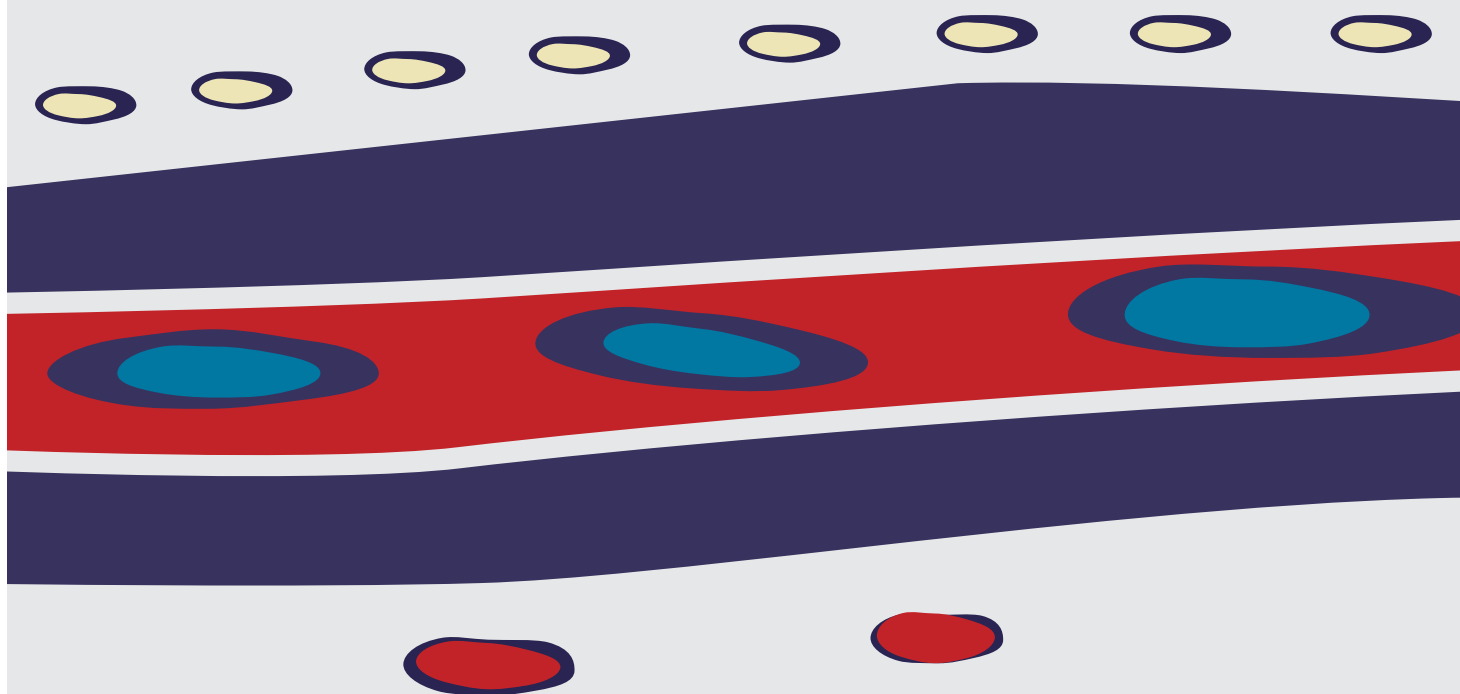
For the future

Two possible strategies could be considered in the future by the Australian Government for using data to drive performance for Indigenous education.

Increasing the focus on the whole-of-government perspective: As noted in the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report (Productivity Commission, 2007), the whole-of-government approach challenges governments to think outside traditional policy areas and find solutions that cut across portfolio boundaries. Indigenous education policies and strategies cannot be disassociated from, for example, health, housing, family and community contexts. If data is to be effective in driving performance, information systems need to be designed to support the whole-of-government direction. This raises issues such as what data is most useful, how should it be collected, who should collect it, and how can it best be used?

Aligning the level of data with the level of control: There is an increasing recognition of the value of directing efforts to improve outcomes for Indigenous educational outcomes at the local, individual level by putting data in the hands of those most intimately involved in, and who can most directly influence, the teaching–learning process — parents, students, teachers and schools. This means, for example, providing data to parents about their children's progress and assisting them to influence educational decision-making; assisting teachers to use diagnostic assessments as effectively as possible; or using data to improve the feedback students receive on their efforts. 'Local solutions for local situations and people'.

Some key messages

- Across the world people concerned with the education of indigenous peoples are grappling with the same fundamental issues and against similar backgrounds of dispossession and poverty.

- All effective solutions of issues related to education require the continuing involvement and engagement of indigenous peoples themselves — students, parents and care givers, and other members of their communities. As a practical example of the impact of involvement, the prospects of success are more likely when indigenous people are engaged in teaching indigenous children.
    - This process must include, perhaps begin with, non-indigenous people recognising and respecting the distinctive aspects of the culture and identities of indigenous peoples.
    - This process is at markedly varying stages across the countries represented at the Seminar. Australia is not a leader in this regard.
    - Indigenous peoples must play a role in helping to define the purposes and nature of the education their children and they themselves receive. In our contacts with indigenous students, we all need to be able to answer the question 'learning for what?' convincingly.

- Given the diversity of indigenous peoples and the individuality of their circumstances — within nations and regions, and in specific localities, as well as across nations — local solutions and local commitment to those solutions are more likely to be effective than 'one size fits all' approaches. Community must own their institutions and the way they operate; and they must feel responsible for their success or failure. These institutions need to be 'community based' and 'community paced'.

- Any solution that does not explicitly promote and endeavour to meet high expectations is no solution. 'Second best', alternative', short term or stop-gap measures of achievement should be unacceptable to all concerned. We need to focus on and develop resourcefulness, aspiration and success.

- Meeting high expectations requires teaching which is rigorous and of the highest quality.

- The use of evidence, including data and well-founded ideas about what works, is a crucial basis for improvement efforts. It should underpin planning and practice. It is a foundation for discussion that focuses on individuals and their learning.

What Works. The Work Program

The What Works materials are based on a three part analysis of the way teachers and schools generally work to improve outcomes for Indigenous students: **Building awareness – Forming partnerships – Working systematically**.

The website (www.whatworks.edu.au) provides resources to support all of these.

The **Workbook** is the central support for targeted, systematic action.

The **'School and Community: Working Together'** series supports the development of partnerships between schools and their Indigenous communities.

The '**Core Issues**' series, includes

- *Core Issues 1: Setting Up For Success* suggests ways in which schools might best be set up to maximise success for Indigenous students.

- *Core Issues 2: Reducing Suspensions* explores positive alternatives to suspension and ways they can be implemented in schools.

- *Core Issues 3: Literacy* explores questions about what it means to develop genuinely effective literacy.

- *Core Issues 4: Numeracy* tackles important questions about the meaning and importance of numeracy.

- *Core Issues 5: Student Engagement* discusses attendance, participation and belonging.

- *Core Issues 6: Boarding* looks at current practice in this small but growing area of Indigenous education.

- *Core Issues 7: International Perspectives* is a report of the DEST/OECD seminar held in Cairns in May 2007.

- *Core Issues 8: Education and Student Health: The Big Picture* looks at some of the health issues affecting Indigenous students and the part schools and teachers can play in dealing with them.

- *Core Issues 9: Using Data to Close the Gap* is designed to help build the capacity of schools to take action informed by evidence.

- *Core Issues 10: Personalised Learning Plans* aims to assist teachers and schools to deliver effective personalised learning to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

All these and other print materials are available for download through the 'Publications' link on the website, where you can also sign up for **What Works eNews**, to keep in touch with the What Works project.

Experienced What Works consultants are available free of charge to work with schools on the materials.

What Works.
The Work Program