QTU Position Statement

Information and communications technology

Funding public education

The QTU believes that Queensland should aspire to an education system that demonstrates high quality and high equity. The QTU asserts that these aspirational values are embedded in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. The QTU has long held the belief that matters of quality and **equity of students'** educational experience should not depend upon the socio-economic status of their parents, where their school is located, or the wealth of the local school community. **All schools within the public system should be fully financed from public sources, should not charge fees and should operate within a public policy of equity of opportunity.**

The QTU believes that this long held belief applies to the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in contemporary classrooms. **Delivering a high quality, high equity curriculum that realises the potential of digital futures requires increased and sustained investment from the state and Commonwealth governments. ICT provision to students – or lack thereof – should not create an additional educational divide between the rich and the poor.**

Equity

The roll out of bring your own device (BYOx) programs in Queensland state schools is leading to increased equity gaps. QTU members report slow rates of uptake of BYOx in low socio-economic areas, while elsewhere QTU members report challenges to quality teaching and learning programs resulting from some learners having the latest technology in the same classroom as other students with devices that are more than five years old. While socio-economic inequities between students are not new to classrooms, the use of devices to access curriculum materials and undertake learning tasks adds complexity to classroom management, as practices such as requesting that students share a textbook are no longer a solution.

The QTU believes that it is not reasonable for the government or the Department of Education and Training (DET) to expect that all students will bring their own devices to school. Families who may have difficulty providing even one computer with internet connectivity in the home should not have to endure the indignity of being unable to provide a device for each of their children.

The QTU believes that government has a responsibility to fully fund the use of ICTs in schools and ensure every Queensland child has equitable access to effective teaching and learning in the classroom. Should current or future enacted curriculum require one-to-one devices, it is the QTU's position that these devices should be fully funded by government.

Effective teaching and learning

QTU members have contributed to banks of innovative teaching and learning resources. As teachers share professional ideas with teaching colleagues around the globe, ICT hardware needs to be reliable.

The QTU believes that any ICT infrastructure or teaching resources need to be designed with the end user in mind. Moreover, the context in which the materials will be used needs to be at the forefront of design. QTU members report frustrations with the reliability of ICT infrastructure in schools and insufficient bandwidth to meet the requirements of 21st Century classrooms. When ICT systems fail, teachers' ability to implement the curriculum is impeded. While teachers work to resolve technical problems, they can simultaneously experience an increase in student disruption.

The QTU believes that technology offers exciting possibilities for teachers to facilitate connections between students and learning. Technology has also afforded teachers the opportunity to work more efficiently

through online curriculum materials and student reporting. The QTU opposes the use of technology that does not contribute to the core business of teaching and learning, but instead contributes to work intensification. Excessive data entry and unreasonable quantities of email are two common examples of work intensification that detract from teachers' time to plan, implement, and evaluate effective teaching and learning practices.

The QTU believes that effective teaching, learning, assessing and reporting is the core business of teachers, and that a range of clerical tasks such as those related to data entry ought to be assigned to other staff members in a school. QTU members who are concerned about the impact of technology on work intensification should seek resolutions through the school local consultative committee (LCC). Mapping school based tasks against the role descriptions of staff members can be a way for LCCs to resolve issues of work intensification. The QTU's Position Statement "*The purpose and use of data in Queensland schools*" can similarly support LCCs resolving issues of work intensification.

ICT support staff and quality infrastructure

To be of value in education, ICT must be reliable. That is, ICT needs to be maintained by specialist support staff and supported by quality infrastructure.

The QTU believes that the state government has the responsibility to fully fund ICT infrastructure, including initial set up costs and ongoing maintenance, as well as replacement and upgrade costs. The QTU does not support requirements for schools to allocate funds from elsewhere to ICTs in order to enable the delivery of a high quality and high equity curriculum.

QTU members continue to report frustration with ICT matters that hinder the implementation of teachers' pedagogical practices. QTU members express concerns with reliability of servers and network accessibility, insufficient bandwidth that hinders effective teaching and learning, maintenance of Computer for Teachers (CFT) devices, and cyber safety for students. With ACARA flagging the introduction of online NAPLAN testing in coming years, it is clear that schools will require reliable service. All state schools need to have confidence in the ICT network and infrastructure in order to reap the benefits of technology in education.

The QTU believes that ICT technicians need to be available for all state schools to ensure continued maintenance and preservation of ICT assets in a timely manner. Technical support should not be the responsibility of teachers or school leaders who already carry a heavy burden of professional duties.

The QTU understands the need for quality ICT infrastructure to be upgraded. **The QTU believes that upgrades should only occur following comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders and following thorough testing and review.** Reviews of school ICT infrastructure need to take into account issues related to climate, remoteness and usage in which infrastructure will be based.

Further, any upgrade to or introduction of a new operating system must be done only after consultation with end users and must be done in such a way as to minimise disruption and support users as they move to the new system.

Professional development

The QTU believes that ICT training and support should be available to all teachers and school leaders, that such professional development should be fully funded, and that there should be an appropriate allocation of release time. **Any additional requirement for teachers to use ICT as core business in schools should be accompanied by an allocation of professional development time to enable familiarisation and effective implementation.** Just as teachers differentiate the curriculum to meet the individual learning needs of students, so too the allocation of professional development time for teachers undertaking ICT training should be needs-based. The QTU believes that a range of training modes should be available to teachers including, but not limited to: face-to-face tutorials, collegial communities and online training.

Teachers should not be placed in positions where low exposure to ICT hampers their ability to deliver effective learning and teaching programs. Such a position is demoralising to the teaching profession, which values professional skills and is motivated to ensure successful outcomes for all students. **Teachers and school leaders need an appropriate allocation of release time to undertake professional development** that enables consideration of the applications of new technology and software, experimentation with the applications, alignment of new technology and software with pedagogical practices, and engagement in collegial communities to share practice.

Digital futures

Students in today's Queensland classrooms will be tomorrow's global citizens. Classrooms must enable learners to connect with one another in ways that celebrate intercultural understanding and active citizenry. Technology can be used to enable local and global connections, intra and interpersonal understanding, and connections with experiences from other times and places. The QTU believes that ICT ought to support effective learning and teaching and be embedded as part of the curriculum across all learning areas, rather than forming a major curriculum focus in its own right. **A future focused pedagogy might use technology as a platform, but classrooms should not become subordinate to technology's use.** Students need to be encouraged to maintain a critical awareness of information, and make discerning choices about the application of information.

Cyber-security, health and safety

The QTU expresses concern over the implications of BYOx for students' cyber safety. Schools have limited capacity to monitor the peer-to-peer sharing of materials that seek to groom or radicalise youth, disseminate adult material such as pornography, or provide avenues for bullying. Further, schools will have limited capacity to protect students from viruses and cyber-attacks. **The QTU also expresses concern over the proliferation of devices in classrooms that could be used to photograph or record students and/or teachers without appropriate consent.**

The QTU believes the rapid increases in devices being used in classrooms requires DET to produce guidelines for the design of 21st Century classrooms. The guidelines need to give consideration to the health and safety of both teachers and students, covering issues such as:

- electrical cords running around classrooms, particularly in spaces where students have water bottles
- appropriate ventilation and cooling
- ergonomically designed furniture
- reducing the impact of glare on screens
- laying out the room to enable teachers to monitor students.