
Systems and Support for Principal Performance

Tabled 09 December 2020



Audit objective

This audit looked at whether the Department of Education and Training (or 'DET') supports and manages principals' development and performance to optimise student outcomes.

Who and what we looked at

We examined how DET manages the performance and development (or 'PD') process for school principals.

We looked at DET's PD model and how it is implemented, and its understanding of principals' learning and development needs.

Conclusion

We found that while some principals experience a constructive PD process, DET does not consistently implement its PD model.

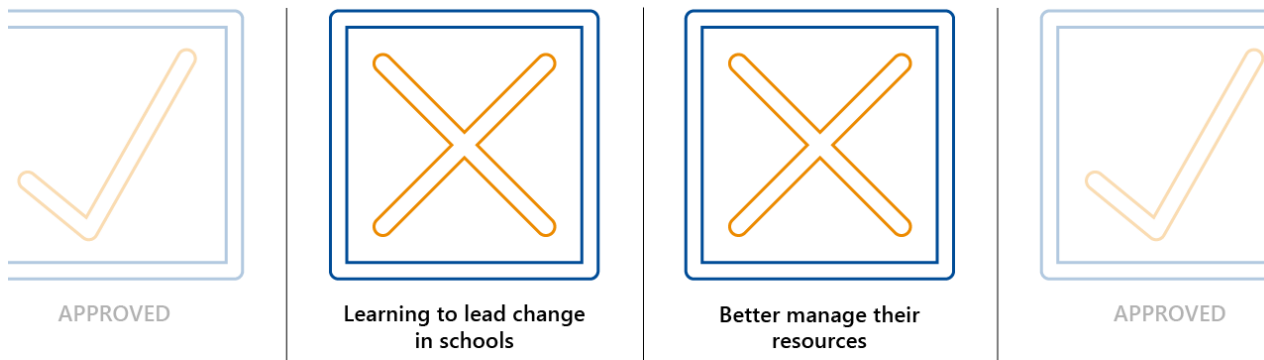
- DET does not systematically monitor principals' participation in the PD cycle.
- Its model focuses more on leading teaching and learning and less on managing resources and leading the school community.

DET's inconsistent implementation of the PD model means there is not equivalent assessment and performance expectations for all principals.

DET also does not have a detailed view of principal performance across Victoria.

- Its understanding of principal performance and principals' learning and development needs is highly localised.
- It does not analyse PD data at a region or statewide level to understand and respond to system-wide performance.

Issue 1 Organisational leadership is not supported consistently



Background

The principal is a school community's critical leader who directly influences its culture and learning environment.

Principals are also accountable for their school's performance and progress towards the Victorian Government's Education State targets.

The principal's role encompasses instructional and organisational leadership to support students to do well through effective teaching and a cohesive school community.

DET's PD model is designed to understand and assess a principal's performance and develop their capability by setting goals and identifying their learning and development needs.

Issue 1: Organisational leadership is not supported consistently

DET's model is intended to be based on a whole-of-practice approach. In practice, it focuses more on instructional leadership than organisational leadership though.

For example, some principals' goals about learning to lead change in their school or better manage their resources have not been approved.

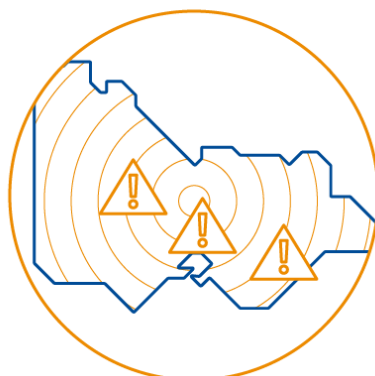
This means that not all principals are supported to develop in the whole of their role.

Issue 2: Inconsistent performance expectations and assessment practices

While DET's model does include an assessment scale, the way it is implemented across different regions is inconsistent. This is because DET does not have clear assessment criteria and moderation practices.

DET's model includes an assessment of whether a principal has met the accountabilities of their role, but does not provide guidance on how to do this. We found variation in how DET staff manage these accountabilities in the PD process.

Issue 3 No detailed statewide understanding of principal performance



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DET does not systematically monitor principal's participation in the PD process or analyse its outcomes.

DET does not monitor compliance with PD cycle milestones such as goal-setting, the mid-cycle review or final review.

DET also does not analyse the outcomes of the PD cycle so that it can understand the full range of principal performance.

While DET's understanding of principal performance is better at a local level, it does not use this information to analyse principal performance across the state to identify whether particular issues exist across regions or principal types, or if systemic issues exist.

This hinders DET's ability to target its support and development to identified needs.

Recommendations

We made seven recommendations to DET:

- 3 to improve the PD model, and
- 4 to improve DET's systems and processes for PD monitoring and assessment.