



QTU Position Statement



Professional autonomy

Professional autonomy of the teaching profession enables educators to shape the field of education, exercise professional judgement, and engage in actions that are specific to the core business of teaching and learning. Accordingly, teachers, heads of programs, and school leaders who are enacting and experiencing education policies in classes and schools every day throughout Queensland, should perform a central role in the development of education policy at federal, state and the local level.

The QTU believes that Queensland's teachers, heads of program and school leaders are best placed to lead decision making that impacts on the state's teaching profession. Teachers, heads of program and school leaders should perform a central role in the development of system-wide education policies and be empowered to make the professional decisions that implement policy at the local level to meet the educational needs of their specific students and communities. The QTU asserts that education policies at federal, state and local level should be underpinned by recognition of the high quality of professionalism in Queensland's teacher workforce and that such policies should enable and promote, not stifle professional autonomy.

The QTU recognises that professional autonomy is enhanced by engagement in collegial relationships both at the local level and across the field of education.

A collective profession

The QTU believes that relationships are at the heart of the teaching profession and that professional autonomy in education recognises relationships as nuanced, complex and unique. Teachers, heads of programs, and school leaders are best placed to make educational decisions which underpin their interactions with each other, their students, and school communities.

The QTU believes that professional autonomy delivers increased efficiencies by enabling teachers, heads of programs, and school leaders to operate within an overarching framework that has been developed by the teaching profession. Working collectively, teachers, heads of programs, and school leaders, in consultation with their local community, develop shared understandings on the purpose of education that will extend beyond standardised test scores or the production of decontextualized big data. Professional decision making then establishes collective initiatives, inquiring into complex education challenges, where co-ownership of the inquiry method and joint responsibility for devising and implementing solutions occurs. Responsibility for teaching and learning that meets the needs of a community is shared; teachers, heads of programs, and school leaders use pronouns like "we" and "our" rather than "yours" and "mine".

Systemic

The QTU believes that education systems have a role in drawing together stakeholders including teachers, heads of programs, school leaders and their union, working with parents, education researchers, government, and students. Collective stakeholder bodies establish education policies and broad accountability frameworks on matters like teacher registration and curriculum. A core systemic responsibility of government is to make equitable resourcing decisions that include facilities and human resources, so that school leaders can focus on curriculum and pedagogical decisions that are tailored to meet the nuanced and specific teaching and learning needs of their school community. Equity is a core responsibility of all



levels of education policy makers including federal and state government, Department of Education central office, and all regional offices of the department.

The role of central office of the Department of Education is to consult with the QTU to develop a broad policy framework that underpins professional practice in Queensland state schools. The Department of Education should support systems that build an empowered, collegial, democratic and autonomous teaching profession in this state. The role of regional office is to recognise school principals as curriculum leaders and to provide support as principals consult with their teachers and school communities to tailor education programs which meet the unique and local needs. The role of central office and regions is not to create compliance mechanisms and erroneous collection of data that stifle professional autonomy and become a hindrance to school leaders and teachers enacting great state school programs of teaching and learning.

The QTU recognises that data can support the decisions of teachers, heads of programs, and school leaders. The QTU believes that professional autonomy provides for teachers and school leaders to select data that will be collected, the method of data collection, and the strategy for data analysis. The QTU does not support the collection of big data that decontextualizes the teaching profession, students and their school communities.

School leaders and heads of programs

Professional autonomy ensures that school leaders and heads of programs can give students and their school communities the gift of education. The QTU believes that the focus of school leaders should be to foster the development of knowledge cultures rather than investing time in managerial tasks like human resourcing and facilities management. Managerial tasks like human resourcing are the responsibility of the Department of Education central and regional offices.

The QTU believes that school leaders enliven authentic consultation in their school communities, leading empowered educators to build cultures of change, with the understanding that cultural change can take significant periods of time.

Teachers

The QTU asserts that professional autonomy in the teaching profession creates knowledge cultures of trust in the profession and lets teachers teach. Working collectively, teachers identify challenges and generate solutions. Professional autonomy celebrates knowledge cultures whereby teachers are encouraged to trial alternative ways of working, engage in collegial reflection, and make professional judgements to meet the diverse needs of individuals and cohorts of students.

The QTU believes that pre-service teachers belong to our profession and that this position statement applies to pre-service teachers. Professional autonomy embraces authentic mentoring relationships that support pre-service teachers as they develop the capacity to trial various ways of working as they find their unique teacher voice.