



Communique

To Ministers and Senior Officials of Education Departments and School Authorities National and Sub-National Governments

Strengthening Educational Leadership by Supporting Principal Associations and Professional Learning Autonomy

Dear Ministers and Education Leaders,

On behalf of the **International Confederation of Principals (ICP)** - representing over 200,000 individual school leaders worldwide and across more than 40 nations, we write to advocate for strong, sustained government support for principal associations and the professional learning autonomy of school leaders.

School principals are credentialed professionals who lead with integrity, insight, and vision. Their role is not only operational it is strategic, relational, and transformational. These leaders are entrusted with the educational and social wellbeing of students and communities. That same trust must extend to their own learning.

Professional learning for school leaders must not be reduced to a narrow compliance task. It is, rather, a vital enabler of innovation, system responsiveness, and deep pedagogical and cultural leadership. Local principal associations, working in diverse jurisdictions, are uniquely positioned to identify, curate, and deliver learning experiences that reflect real-world leadership challenges. These associations play an essential role in ensuring professional learning is relevant, contextualised, and responsive.

Recent global trends, including increasing standardisation and travel limitations, have seen school leaders' autonomy over professional learning eroded in some systems. Restrictions on attendance at interstate or international conferences, as well as requirements to take personal leave to access high-value learning, send the wrong message. They imply a lack of trust in the professional judgment of leaders and diminish the power of collaboration and system-wide learning.



The ICP urges all governments and departments of education to adopt the following principles:

1. Trust in Professional Judgment

School leaders should be trusted to identify the learning experiences most relevant to their role, context, and aspirations. Blanket restrictions or prescriptive approaches to professional development undermine this trust and dampen innovation.

2. Recognition of Principal Associations

National and state-level principal associations are not just advocacy bodies, they are hubs of peer-led, strategic leadership development. Governments should formally recognise these associations as partners in delivering and endorsing professional learning for school leaders.

3. Removal of Structural Barriers

Restrictions on interstate or international travel for the purpose of professional learning, especially when aligned with a clear development plan, should be reviewed and removed. Principals frequently invest personal time and resources into their growth; such dedication must be supported, not penalised.

4. Support for Immersive and Cross-Jurisdictional Learning

Conferences and leadership exchanges, especially those enabling cross-cultural and cross-sectoral dialogue are crucial. They cultivate adaptability, reflective practice, and system-level thinking. For leaders in rural, remote, or under-resourced schools, these opportunities are often particularly affirming and impactful.



5. Alignment with Leadership Standards

Globally recognised principal standards emphasise lifelong learning, self-development, community engagement, and innovation. The most powerful learning happens not in isolated modules but through dialogue, immersion, and collective reflection, often facilitated by principal associations.

Principal leadership is both a privilege and a responsibility. The work is demanding, and the stakes are high. It is incumbent on education systems to create conditions in which leaders can grow with confidence, creativity, and connection.

We urge your government to champion and support principal autonomy in professional learning and partner meaningfully with your local principal association/s to ensure every school leader is equipped and empowered to lead schools of the future.

Sincerely,

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President

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