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Dear Minister

Advice to the incoming Minister for Education from leading ACE educators.

Contributions from Barry Jones, Don Watts, Lawrence Ingvarson, Margaret Clark, Lyndsay Connors, Chris Bonnor, Brian Caldwell, Alan Reid, Annette Rome and John Munro.

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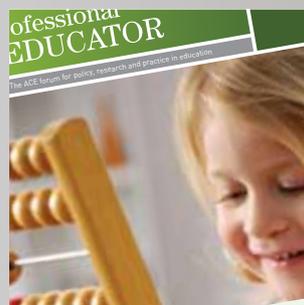
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Your say



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An educated vote

Australia will go to the polls on September 7 to elect a federal government. Education is shaping up as a key issue in determining the outcome. Of particular interest to the electorate will be how the major parties intend to implement the recommendations of the Gonski Review. With Gonski to date, we have seen how the machinations of Australian education federalism have disfigured to some extent this opportunity for basing the funding of schools on an equitable, needs-based formula. As we await the major education policy platforms of the political parties, ACE has taken the initiative to provide the future government with some suggestions for policy action and /or policy debate.

In this special pre-election edition of *Professional Educator*, we have invited some of ACE's leading thinkers to counsel the incoming Minister for Education. Their brief was to write an open letter addressing areas of priority and policy action. This was a challenging brief as, of course, at the time of writing they did not know, and still don't know, who will be the Minister for Education and which political party that person will represent. The anonymity of the future Minister

has enabled the contributors to look beyond party politics and address issues that should be of concern to all sides of politics regarding the future of education in Australia.

Our contributors address some of the hot issues of the day such as the Gonski reforms, the role the federal government should play in school education, the appropriateness and fairness of large-scale, national and international testing programs and the importance of listening to our profession when making decisions about education. We need to remember that the reasons the Whitlam government systematised federal involvement in schooling were that the federal government has greater revenue raising capacity than do the states and territories, and that Whitlam believed, correctly in my view, that socially just schooling demanded Commonwealth involvement for redistributive funding to ensure more socially just schooling for all irrespective of background. There was recognition that schools and teachers were very important to achieving such ends, but so too were macro policy settings and redistributive funding.

We recognise that, as ACE represents educators from a broad range of fields and interests, that the opinions expressed by our contributors will not be shared by all ACE members and the ideas put forward are not official policy of the College. Some members will not agree with the policy actions called for. Indeed, on some matters, our contributors don't necessarily agree with each other.

Our contributors do agree that whoever the next Minister is or which side of politics forms government, we hope to see the Minister and government work collaboratively with the profession to achieve the best possible outcomes for all Australian children. Here we, that is ACE, are calling for a broader involvement of the profession in education policy development.

ACE, particularly through our publications, has always seen part of its role as providing stimulating and thought-provoking reading about the major educational issues of the day and fostering debate. I'm sure the contributions in this edition fit that bill. I encourage readers to discuss and respond to the issues raised. We welcome written contributions as well.

Come September 7 we will meet our new Minister, or Ministers, should the current practice of splitting responsibility for schools and higher education continue. Whether the election returns the Rudd Government or puts the Coalition into power, I will write to the incoming Minister and the opposition spokesperson and provide a copy of this issue of *Professional Educator* and invite the Minister and opposition spokesperson to write back to us, responding to the issues raised.

Professor Bob Lingard PhD FASSA
National President

your say

“

I have enjoyed reading the May 2013 edition of PE. My response has been delayed by my absence from the country. As a life member, no longer working in a traditional education environment, I enjoy keeping up to date through PE and I found the May edition very instructive.

I have to agree with contributor Rupert Dalley about the issues concerning teachers, based on my conversations with some classroom teachers.

As Annette Rome, also sadly mentioned, 'The average teacher or principal is simply too busy'.

The separate arguments by Doctors Geoff Masters and Catherine Scott for integrating assessment with teaching and learning, together with their common interest in the 'D-student' and self-defeating beliefs, resonated with my previous experience in classrooms.

The contributions by Dr Bob Lingard, as President, and Ian Keese brought me up to speed with the Australian Education Bill 2012, particularly the non-funding issues.

I was delighted with the report on Professor Sandra Harding's Queensland Oration because my personal notes taken at that Oration could not capture adequately the historical research underpinning her thesis. Professor Harding is also engaged in the economic/political field in Queensland

and, perhaps, she might be persuaded to contribute another article on education funding at the State level.

I was convinced by Dr David Tripp's argument on the development of quality and flexible teacher judgements versus the competence-based approach of TAFE training courses.

I look forward to his follow-up article.

Indeed, if PE can maintain that standard, I look forward to all of the next edition.

Greg Ivey MACE

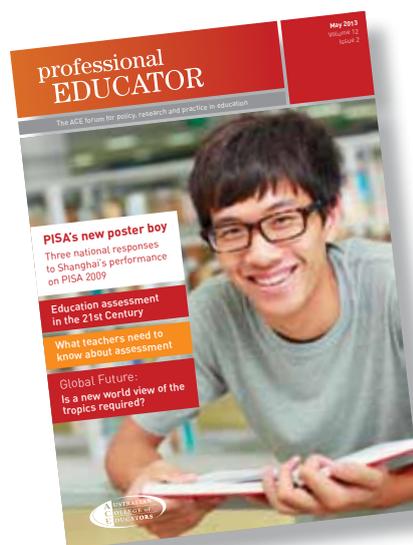
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I have just read with interest Dean Fink's article 'Trust in our schools: the missing part of school improvement', which was interesting, but somehow does not quite get to the crux of the matter. Unfortunately I had my 'eureka' moment about trust some time ago, it was, and continues to be, both depressing and frustrating.

Trust, in all its different types is an essential part of every workplace, be it an educational institution or not. As a teacher at a higher education institute, I have seen the benefits of relational and institutional trust and how positive and productive they can make a workplace when present. I have also seen the opposite effect when that trust has been broken.

As a parent of two primary school children, the first place I want to be able to place my trust is in the classroom. I want to be able to trust that my children's teachers are articulate, respectful, thoughtful, capable and switched on. I also want to trust that they will teach my children, not simply have them play computer games or YouTube clips to pass the time. I want to trust that they will treat my children with kindness and respect, as I would expect my children to do to them, and never to speak to them in a disparaging way, or verbally abuse them. I want to trust that my children's teachers actually enjoy their job and truly want to be in the classroom not spend the day



yelling and screaming at them. Finally, I want to trust that my children's teachers are good and decent people, who are in full control of their faculties, and will make my children look forward to school every day.

Of course there are many teachers both in the public and private systems who are very good teachers. However, after having been in education for approximately 25 years, I know there are many who are not.

While trust in policy makers, institutions and communities is perfectly valid, unless you have trust in those on the frontline, that is the teachers to whom we give our children every day, then it does not, and never will, mean a thing to me.

Dale Down MACE, MACEL

“

Concerns about Numeracy

What do you think needs to be done about mathematics education and numeracy in Australia? asked Bob Lingard in his editorial to *Professional Educator*, June 2013.

It has been my experience (as a teacher of primary school mathematics, a principal, university lecturer, Director of Schools and counsellor/registered psychologist working with children with learning difficulties and behaviour disorders) that many students do not have enough basic proficiency with numbers; they simply are not *accurate and automatic* with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts. There is now a

significant body of research that shows that *accuracy and automaticity* are two key factors affecting future progress in literacy and numeracy.

Keith McNaught noted, also in the June edition of PE, that 'It is obvious that significant changes need to take place in the culture and practices within Australian schools'. So, at the risk of being a target for presenting simplistic views, I postulate some changes in the culture and practices within schools:

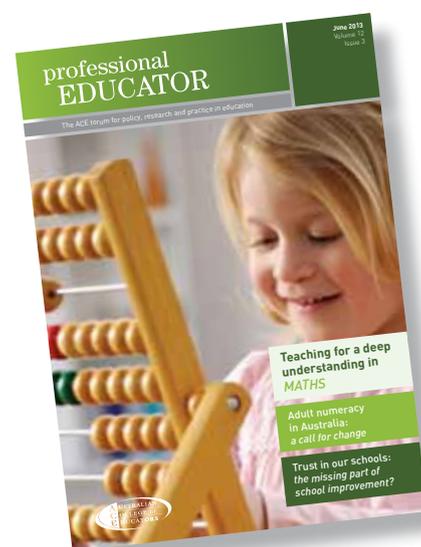
- a) Greater emphasis on accuracy and automaticity in number facts so that all children by the end of 4 years at school are competent, confident and comfortable in all number facts to 100.
- b) The use of rhyme, rhythm and repetition to ensure mastery of facts.
- c) All teachers training to be primary teachers need to have courses in Maths Teaching Method and the people lecturing in these courses need to have actually taught children from Kindergarten to Year 6 or Early Stage 1 to Stage 4
- d) Schools need to group children according to their achievement levels for maths.
- e) We need to identify some really great maths teachers from all levels; those wonderful kindergarten teachers who can inspire young learners, those who have great teaching strategies to get across to those who are struggling, those who can take a group of gifted students and extend them to areas of mathematical excitement and discovery.
- f) Holding principals and teachers accountable.

There is no simple solution to improving numeracy levels but one thing is sure; if firm foundations of accurate and automatic remembering of basic number facts are not laid, then any structures overlaid on top are not going to work

Lyle Whan MACE

Lyle's extended article in response to concerns with numeracy raised in the June edition of Professional Educator is available on the ACE website at www.austcolled.com.au

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To have 'your say' on the articles in this or the previous edition of *Professional Educator*, please email ace@austcolled.com.au

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1

BARRY JONES

Education as commodity? How creativity fell off the agenda and labour market factors took over

Australia, regarded as a great educational pioneer a century ago, faces fierce international competition, especially in our region. At a time when Australian education needs innovation, complexity and creativity, we see instead an increasing commoditisation of education with labour market demands emphasised at the expense of creativity, imagination, reflection and lifelong learning.

Of immediate concern to the incoming Minister for Education should be the growing middle-class flight from public education and dominance of pedagogues over educators.

Public education has become a residual category, and middle-class flight means that those parents who could be best equipped to fight for public education (and were themselves the beneficiaries of it) are now emphasising 'choice' and cross subsidy by taxpayers as their priorities.

I welcome the commitment to increased spending on education, following the Gonski Review, of \$14.5 billion over six years but that figure should be seen in a broader context. Outlays in the 2013-14 Budget are estimated to be of the order of \$370 billion, so that over a six year period we might expect a figure in excess of \$2 trillion (i.e. \$20¹².)

The terms of reference given to Gonski by the Gillard Government were narrowly economic – emphasising the levels of public funding for the three sectors in Australian schools – government, independent and Catholic – and Australia's comparative ranking internationally, especially in science and mathematics.

In 2000 only one country outperformed Australia in reading and scientific literacy and only two outperformed Australia in mathematical literacy. By 2009, six countries outperformed Australia in reading and scientific literacy and 12 outperformed Australia in mathematical literacy (Gonski et al. p. xiii).

Australian Government expenditure on education, at 3.6 per cent of GDP, is slightly below the OECD average of 3.9 per cent.

There has been criticism of Gonski from some education researchers. In *What's Wrong with the Gonski Report: Funding reform and Student Achievement?* Moshe Justman and Chris Ryan highlight some areas of concern. Higher spending does not in itself improve student performance, as recent decades demonstrate. The formula for determining base funding levels per student that all schools would receive is questionable. The case for a more centralised education system is not adequately argued. International comparisons may be misleading, taking into account social and political differences.

Because the terms of reference were so narrow it is hard to blame the distinguished panel members.

There are some major areas for concern in Australian education generally, with the state system being extremely vulnerable. The terms training and education are used interchangeably as if they were synonyms. When politicians talk about 'education' they usually mean 'training'. In education, emphasis is on ensuring that students are trained to make a direct contribution to the economy.

Universities have become trading corporations, not just communities of scholars. They are very important foreign exchange earners since overseas students have to pay their money up front. Private schools are significant money earners, with high fees, generous public subsidies from tax payers and salaries for some principals which far exceed remuneration for the Prime Minister or the Chief Justice of the High Court.

In the United States 'American exceptionalism' is a matter of national self-congratulation – but Australian exceptionalism in education should be cause for concern. As the Gonski Report notes, in 2010 only 66% of students attended government [public] schools with the remaining 34% attending non-government [private] schools, 20% in Catholic schools (systemic and 72 non-systemic) and 14% in independent schools, including not only high-fee paying schools but Anglican, Uniting Church, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Muslim, Jewish, Adventist, Steiner and other denominational or ethnic based schools. In the past five years Catholic schools had increased their enrolments by 6% and

“ There are some major areas for concern in Australian education generally, with the state system being extremely vulnerable. ”



Evaluation of the
Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

THE NATIONAL SURVEY IS COMING...

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has engaged the University of Melbourne and their partner ACE in a three year evaluation of the implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

To ensure we capture the voices of all education professionals involved in implementation activities, we are developing a national online survey to be launched shortly.

The National Survey provides an opportunity for teachers and school leaders to identify what they know about the Standards, how they are using the Standards in their school, their perception of the Standards, and how the Standards impact on their daily practice.

The University requests your support in this important next stage of the evaluation. Watch this space!

<http://education.unimelb.edu.au/news-and-activities/projects/EAPST>;
www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/Evaluation



Australian Institute
for Teaching and
School Leadership
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independent schools by 14%. The OECD average for attendance in government schools is 88%.

In *The Doubter's Companion*, the Canadian writer John Ralston Saul defined 'Public Education' as 'the single most important element in the maintenance of a democratic system'. I kept crusading for public education to be an instrument for personal and societal transformation. With the existing mindset, education generally entrenches or reinforces existing abilities, or disabilities, advantages or disadvantages.

Even where parents have attended state schools themselves, once they choose to send their children to private schools they generally cease to be effective advocates for the state system.

If the state system breaks down, the impact on social cohesion will be very serious. The strength of a large, comprehensive state system is that it permits/encourages diversity *inside* school and social cohesion *outside* it, rather than cohesion inside school and diversity (often harsh or fragmented) outside it.

The particular attraction of private education (apart from its unspoken appeal to social mobility, 'getting on' and a reinforcement of social stratification) is asserted to be its commitment to 'values', and this is inevitably assumed to be associated with church schools, whether the Catholic system, independent schools or the rapidly growing number of new faith-based schools. The critical assumption, more implied than asserted, is that state education is secular, materialistic, instrumental and uniform, aimed at the lowest common denominator, rather than recognising and encouraging individual capacity and diversity.

State education in Australia runs the risk (elite high schools aside) of being seen as a residual system for low SES areas and for migrant children, not the system of choice. Recent polling suggests that more than 70 per cent of parents of state school pupils would opt out if they could afford it, which would be a serious blow to social cohesion.

The distinction between 'traditional' and 'current' models in education dates from

Athens in the 4th Century BCE. Education was divided into two categories, Pedagogy (one of my least favourite words) and Philosophy.

The pedagogue (παιδαγωγός, paidagogos) was the slave who escorted children to school and I am puzzled that many who use the term have not speculated about its origin.

The philosopher Isocrates (not to be confused with the better known Socrates) was a practitioner of 'rhetoric', or as we would now say, 'spin'. Isocrates said that an education system needed clients or patrons who would pay for the delivery of education services and he is associated with the word 'pedagogy'. Obedience, conformity and controllability were among the desired goals. The outcomes were certain.

Plato rejected rhetoric and pedagogy and insisted on 'education', the drawing out of individual talents, and encouraging the search for truth, value and meaning in life. In one system, the outcomes are predictable; in the other, they are uncertain.



Philosophy, literally 'love of learning', was intended to encourage the pursuit of truth, wisdom and self-discovery, irrespective of where it led. Its goals were uncertain.

In Australia in 2013, Pedagogy is the overwhelmingly dominant model but in practice it inevitably leads to self-limitation. Pedagogues are enthusiasts for measurement and precision and look for certain outcomes. Educators assume that the most important elements in human life are uncertain and speculative, defying precise calibration.

One of the most neglected areas in public policy, including education, is our failure to address complexity. Students tend to back away from the more challenging subjects, such as foreign languages, mathematics, music, and the enabling sciences – physics and chemistry. It appears, as the Gonski Report confirmed, that these are precisely the areas where our neighbours in China, Korea, Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, but also Finland, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Canada, are excelling.

“ State education in Australia runs the risk (elite high schools aside) of being seen as a residual system for low SES areas and for migrant children, not the system of choice. ”

Numbers of students in physics, chemistry and mathematics are falling as a percentage of undergraduates – and the greatest increases are in medicine, law, economics and what could be described as the marketing or packaging disciplines. History, literature, classics and philosophy departments are all under threat because they are seen as having no value except promoting self-understanding, that 'shock of recognition' that gives us a glimpse of what human life is about and what accountant could put a price tag on that?

Currently, in Australia, we are part of by far the best educated cohort in the nation's history. The 2011 Census

indicated that 3.5 million people in the population have bachelor's degrees or higher, about three times the number of blue-collar workers. Just over 1,015,000 people (about 900,000 of them locals) are currently studying at Australian universities, both undergraduate and postgraduate. This educational abundance ought to mean that the conduct of our politics and public institutions generally are carried out at an unparalleled level of sophistication – really 'world's best practice.' That's what the numbers suggest. The cold, hard reality suggests something different.

Higher education is under attack, judging from the 2013 Federal Budget and the cuts to research have bipartisan support (except for The Greens). Politically, universities are seen as a soft target and no political leader expects to see reprisals for the cuts. Oddly, there are seen to be votes in schools (because of their relationship to particular marginal electorates), not in tertiary institutions. Research, other than medical research, is often seen as too remote, too specialised, too abstract. Sir Gus Nossal often quotes something I observed years ago, that Australia seems to be the only country in the OECD where the word 'academic' is always used in a pejorative sense.

I hesitate to put the proposition that the relationship between graduate numbers in the community and the quality of political debate is inverse, but it could be seriously debated. We appear to be lacking in courage, judgment, capacity to analyse or even simple curiosity, except about immediate personal needs.

So, Minister I ask you this. Is education essentially instrumental, intended to serve the needs of the economy, with the emphasis on training and predictable outcomes, or is it for the development of personal growth, imagination, creativity, wisdom, values, access to culture for the whole of life? Is education as a closed system with all the KPIs ('Key Performance Indicators') set like ducks in a row, or an open system with emphasis on creativity and individual mastery of complex information? I hope that as new Minister for Education, you will see your role as advancing education ahead of pedagogy and commodity.

Hon Dr Barry Jones AO, FAA, FAHA, FTSE, FASSA, FRSA, FRSN, FRSV, FACE has been a public servant, high school teacher, television and radio performer, university lecturer and lawyer. MP for Melbourne in the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1972-77, he transferred

to the Commonwealth Parliament in as MP for Lalor 1977-1998 and was Minister for Science 1983-90, Prices and Consumer Affairs 1987, Small Business 1987-90 and Customs 1988-90. He is the only person to have been elected as a Fellow of all four Australian learned academies. He was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators in 2003 for contributions to Australian education.

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This article is based on an address delivered to the Australian College of Educators pre-conference dinner in Melbourne on 20 June 2013. The address is available from www.austcolled.com.au

“ Higher education is under attack, judging from the 2013 Federal Budget and the cuts to research have bipartisan support (except for The Greens). Politically, universities are seen as a soft target and no political leader expects to see reprisals for the cuts. ”

2

DON WATTS

Upper schooling lacks balance and diversity - A case for technical schools

Changes are required to our schooling system to ensure that a suitable alternative is offered to those not thriving in the traditional school environment. As the new Minister for Education, I hope you will work to reverse the demise of our once well respected technical colleges. I believe your predecessors at state and federal levels were wrong to allow the technical school system to be dismantled.

Changes in Australia's education system must be understood in the context of the revolutionary legislation introduced in 1973 by the Whitlam Government in which Kim Beazley Snr. was Minister for Education. Most commentators emphasise the impact of the transfer of the control of our universities from state governance to Commonwealth funding and governance with enhanced power within Canberra-based bureaucracies.

However there were also significant shifts in the responsibilities for technical education that will be understood now as the government rolls back university numbers. Until 1973, technical education was the responsibility of state-based authorities answerable to Ministers for both Education and/or Training. There were state differences in how these responsibilities were split and administered.

These institutions had been established to provide an alternative to schooling for those who were not thriving in the traditional school environment or were simply looking for an earlier transfer to work and, for many, the establishment of apprenticeship opportunities. In practice, the completion of Year 10 had signaled the end of the school system monopoly with Technical Schools empowered to compete with the school sector in the provision of work related learning for those in Years 11 and 12.

The new Commonwealth legislation defined Technical Colleges as post-Year 12 institutions thus removing a respected alternative to upper schooling. In 1973 these valuable institutions were transformed into TAFE Colleges which continue with uncertain futures. Today, they are seen as 'asset rich' and thus as 'takeover targets' in commercial dealing involving universities and private providers.

One political driver in all this was the increase and consolidation of the control of post-school learning within the power seeking Commonwealth bureaucracy. Labor policy since 1973 has been directed to transferring education responsibility to the Commonwealth from the states. In 2013, we find Labor governments attempting to use the Gonski Report to achieve the same end.

“ Until 1973, technical education was the responsibility of state-based authorities answerable to Ministers for both Education and/or Training. ”

The loss of the respected Technical Schools in each state led to the new TAFE sector with responsibilities commencing after the completion of schooling at the end of Year 12. This left about 30% of the age group without the alternative of respected training after Year 10. They were absorbed for two more years in

schooling before the TAFE Colleges qualified to play their training role. The school sector took a long time to establish any work related training. The school sector was ill equipped to serve this need. The equipment required for job training had been moved into the TAFE Colleges along with the many trade capable teachers.

There is ample anecdotal evidence that at least 30% of those entering Year 11 prior to 1973 were disenchanted with schooling and had been re-invigorated by the opportunity to enter a new learning environment that encouraged them both to seek mastery of some of the learning they had missed in their earlier schooling and to concentrate on knowledge taught with the objective of planned work futures. Some found a new interest in learning in this applied environment and finished entering universities with renewed enthusiasm for learning. Most however sought trade related careers with more challenging opportunities than struggling and failing at university or passing into relatively unchallenging employment with university qualifications with little application.

Two experiences gave me some understanding of the attitudes in the young who are happy to learn in the university way while others are not. I created a short friendship with a fellow who supervised a building operation in our home. He was helping a young apprentice set up for the concrete pouring for a swimming pool. I was intrigued by his path to creating the right angled corners of his framework. He grabbed twelve feet of hose to construct his right angle opposite the hypotenuse in Pythagorus's theorem that told him that a right angled triangle is specified by sides of 3,4 and 5 units with the right angle between the two short



sides. He explained how he did not do well at school and found no interest in mathematics. It was not until he started his apprenticeship that he saw value in aspects of geometry and developed a number of skills that created a reason and joy from his study of these aspects of mathematics. Learning geometry outside its usefulness did not move him.

The second tale was the school lives of two of my colleagues in the Chemistry School at UWA. Both had left the school system in Victoria pre-1973 to undertake their secondary study in a Technical School. Victoria had exemplary opportunities to educate in an environment in which the trade learning was much respected and challenging. Both completed their schooling in this environment and used the quality of that study to enter the University of Melbourne where they followed very different paths to PhD study and professorships in chemistry. Their technical school grounding was reflected in their approach to their chemistry and their teaching. Our School of Chemistry was enriched by their technical school background.

Today we see universities expanding their roles in training markets by responding to commercial opportunities. The Commonwealth Government is simultaneously encouraging the enrolment of ill-prepared students into universities under the guise of an equity initiative.

There seems to be little concern about any loss of educational balance or diversity in the system as a whole. It is time to ask questions about what has been lost in learning options as Australia closed its Technical Schools and later, its Colleges of Advanced Education (the CAEs). It is clear that the CAEs and most of their educational options have been absorbed into an expanded and widely diverse university sector.

However, the great weakness created in 1973, was the loss of the Technical Colleges that had, until then, provided important training experiences for those who for a great diversity of reasons had lost any enchantment with the culture of schooling. A vacuum resulted in what was offered to adolescent Australians. The old Technical Colleges, as TAFE Colleges, saw their future in emulating the old CAEs and in developing a future in competition with universities or in partnerships with them at the lower end of tertiary education.

The results have seen a redefinition of the purpose of a university. The attempts by the Group of Eight (Go8) to define

themselves as research universities is creating an awareness of differences within the university sector. The old and respected universities have sought to differentiate themselves through their research capabilities. However, after years in which universities have said that research is a prerequisite of quality teaching in higher education it is difficult to justify 'teaching-only universities'. In the end, the Go8, and a group of technological universities will differentiate themselves in their success at gaining the resources to do expensive research.

Circumstances have substantially changed attitudes to applied research previously denigrated by the Go8 universities. The old Institutes of Technology, once part of the CAE family, will assume an important role as research universities as a result of this evolution. There seems little doubt that the Go8 will have but a temporary existence as the new status symbols become the various worldwide university rankings most of which concentrate on research measures, not teaching. The current government has created a system that Australia cannot afford. Of greater concern, the system is serving only the interests of about half the population.

In this, we find that the very best scholars in our universities are no longer deployed in enriching the quality of teaching and learning and in providing inspiration to students in the early years of their undergraduate intellectual development. The hidden and not justified introduction of 'research only' and 'teaching only' academics will lower the quality of learning and the richness of the university undergraduate experience.

On the other hand, the state authorities have failed to grasp an opportunity to supply a contemporary brand of training that complements the primary role of upper schools in the education of those looking for a future in universities. It is interesting, that after forty years we now observe private suppliers, state education authorities and some TAFE Colleges taking initiatives in this market. The future of this competitive market will be interesting to follow.

The greatest threat to the nation's renewal of appropriate training for those passing through schools looking for a future based on training is the invasion by universities into this market as part-time commercial ventures. This commercial opportunity derives, in part, from the Commonwealth's perception of how to deal with inequities in educational

opportunities and, of course, to solve the problems of youth unemployment. It is difficult to conceive a less appropriate path. These inequities result from deficiencies in the philosophies of the schooling system, particularly in Years 11 and 12. It is at this level that the unacceptable inequities are founded. The solutions to these problems are far removed from the responsibilities of universities.

This broad area of training must be seen as a separate but important path for those, perhaps 30% of the cohort, who want another chance and see futures in industries and commerce where skills are respected.

Australia needs Post-School Education Authorities in each state and territory with powers concentrated on licensing institutions to cater broadly for those in Years 11 and 12 and in the early post-school years where needs are not catered for either in schools or current TAFE institutions. These new Institutes must be developed with missions to concentrate on skills and with achieving mastery of skills and the concepts that underpin applied activity. They must also recognise their role in assisting those who have not flourished in the Middle Years of schooling. There must be a way back in learning those essential competencies missed in their earlier schooling that form the foundation of rewarding working futures.

These Institutes could be state and/or privately funded and open to seek Commonwealth support. Their future should be defined through independent governance accountable to, but not governed by state Ministers.

Surely the needs of these young Australians for a planned entry into training can overcome the differences between the state and Commonwealth political ambitions and between our two major political parties in changing the culture and objectives of education and training for adolescent Australia.

[Professor Don Watts was Professor of Chemistry at UWA, Director of the Western Australian Institute of Technology, Foundation Vice-Chancellor of Curtin University of Technology, Foundation President and Vice-Chancellor of Bond University and Emeritus Professor at The University of Notre Dame Australia. He is a Fellow and Life Member of the Australian College of Educators.](#)

3

What happened to the National Statement from the teaching profession?

In 2003, 15 teacher associations put together a *National Statement from the Teaching Profession on Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism*. It recommended that

A nationally coordinated, rigorous and consistent system should be established to provide recognition to teachers who demonstrate advanced standards . . . The enterprise bargaining process between employers and unions will be an important mechanism for providing recognition for professional certification. All employing authorities should be encouraged to provide recognition and support for professional certification as the process comes to demonstrate its credibility and its effects on professional learning.

The Statement was the culmination of three years' work coordinated by the Australian College of Educators (ACE). Ten years later, it is time to revisit the Statement and the progress made toward ensuring that responsibility for its operation rests with the profession, given the commitment that many teachers' associations made to it ten years ago.

The Statement encapsulates the mutual responsibility that the teaching profession and governments have for ensuring all students have quality opportunities to learn. If teachers want recognition for accomplished practice, they must be able to demonstrate that they can set high standards and identify those who have attained them. If governments want to lift student performance they must place high value on teachers who attain those standards and create a strong market for them.

The National Statement carefully distinguished the certification role of the profession from the recognition role of government and other employing authorities. Responsibility for professional

standards and certification usually rests with national level and independent professional bodies. However, the way in which governments and other employing authorities may choose to encourage and reward attainment of that certification is, of course, their prerogative.

Certification is the way most professions drive continual improvement in their members' practice, in their own and in the public interest - not competitive annual bonus pay schemes. It is hard to see how Australia will join the top five nations in educational performance by 2025, an ambitious goal of the Gillard Government, without a rigorous profession-run certification system - a system that will justify significant increases in salary and ensure that teaching can compete more successfully with other professions for the ablest graduates, prepare them well and promote widespread use of effective teaching practices.

“ If governments want to lift student performance they must place high value on teachers ”

The current policy framework for promoting quality teachers and teaching is clearly not working. The academic quality of students allowed to enter undergraduate teacher education programs is declining while Australia's rank is slipping on international tests of student achievement. Ninety-two per cent of Australian teachers in the OECD Teaching and Learning International

Survey (TALIS) reported that if they improved the quality of their teaching they would not receive any recognition in their school (OECD, 2009). And eighty-three percent reported that the evaluation of their work has no impact on the likelihood of their career advancement. In tune with so many earlier reports, the OECD report identifies the need for a professional certification system.

Governments and other employing authorities usually do not see themselves as having the expertise or the responsibility for developing professional standards and methods for assessing performance against those standards. Professions are given 'jurisdiction' to establish their own certification agencies, traditionally by means of a royal charter, in return for evidence of capacity and rigour. Teaching however remains unique among professions in having no equivalent agency. The puzzle is why governments that talk so much about promoting teaching as a profession rarely treat it as if it were one.

Creating such a system calls for bold policy-making that appeals to the professionalism of teachers and entrusts them with the responsibility of developing a rigorous professional learning and certification system for its members.

During the 2000s, sixteen professional teacher associations had developed certification standards for their specialist field (most with Australian Government funding amounting to several million dollars). Two had developed their standards and assessment methods to the point where they provide a potentially valid basis for a national certification system and a general consensus had emerged about the need to establish a national certification system for the teaching profession.



Following this, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) was established in 2010, with responsibility 'for developing and implementing a nationally consistent certification function'. This well-managed body has made a lot of progress. It has established the basic architecture of a 'nationally consistent' system for the certification of Highly Accomplished, and Lead Teachers. But I believe it is time to review whether it has the capacity to ensure that Australia gains the respected profession-wide certification system that it needs. There are several factors currently that limit its chances of success.

The first factor, perhaps the main one, is AITSL's lack of independence and authority, especially in a context where support for the National Partnership Agreements is waning. AITSL reports to state and territory Ministers of Education and representatives of other employing authorities. AITSL bears little resemblance to certification agencies in other professions. It has not been granted jurisdiction to operate a certification system in the way that applies to other established professions. Instead, MCEEDYA directed that the certification function be delegated to state and territory 'jurisdictions', meaning that Australia would have at least eight different certifying bodies, and probably several more. In some states, this directive meant that there would be more than one certifying authority: one for public school teachers, one for teachers in the Catholic school sector and one for teachers in the independent school sector.

Because AITSL lacks independence, its capacity to develop a rigorous national professional certification system has been undermined. In effect, state and territory Ministers of Education and other employing authorities have successfully assumed responsibility to operate their own local certification systems. In some cases the certification scheme has been transformed into a bonus pay scheme.

There are a number of perceived problems with rigour of the assessment procedures that stem from the quality of the National Professional Standards Framework itself. Expert teachers and researchers played little part in its development, consequently the standards are not well grounded in contemporary research on what accomplished teachers know and do. Nor do the levels reflect an underlying theory about the development of expertise. There needs to be much more clarity and elaboration

of the core capabilities expected of accomplished teachers. It needs to be recognised that the development of a credible professional certification system is a major educational measurement exercise requiring the highest levels of psychometric expertise. That expertise needs to be assembled in the service of a national professional body. It is unrealistic to assume that it exists across the eight or more current state and territory certifying authorities. A profession-wide approach would lead to a more rigorous and efficient certification system.

Perhaps the most important factor limiting AITSL's capacity to deliver an effective certification system is that most state and territory governments and the Australian Government appear to be withdrawing from their side of the bargain to use certification as the basis for substantial salary advancement beyond the top of current incremental scales. The National Partnership Agreement on teacher quality contains an agreement to provide recognition and reward to teachers who reach high standards and gain certification. The point of certification is to lift the quality of teaching by providing strong incentives to all teachers to seek the kind of professional learning that will enable them to use evidence-based successful teaching practices. The profession's side of the bargain is to demonstrate that its certification system is credible and accurate.

The long-term stability of a national certification scheme would have been more assured if Australia had established an independent professional body with responsibility for its development and operation. As it stands, state and territory ministers have successfully appropriated responsibility for the certification system, contradicting the concept of professional certification. Teachers and their associations have been sidelined. This has undermined AITSL's capacity to ensure a certification system that meets original expectations for improving teacher quality. Recent evidence on the quality of entrants to teacher education indicates that the need to offer more attractive salaries based on certification has intensified.

The Australian case indicates that there is room for its politicians and policy makers to place greater trust in the capacity of the teaching profession to play a major role in its developing a rigorous standards-based professional learning and certification system for its members. A member-driven independent professional body is consistent with and supports the aim of building of professional culture in schools.

For a third time, Australia has tried to establish a national professional body, but it is not third time lucky. The currently fragmenting National Partnership is not a context conducive to steadily building a professionally and publicly credible system for recognising and rewarding accomplished teachers.

In the meantime, teachers in England are currently considering a discussion document for an independent member-driven College of Teaching. The College would aim to provide an authoritative voice of the profession on matters of teaching values, standards, practice and research. To enhance teachers' professional learning, one of its key functions would be to provide a tiered membership and certification process along the lines suggested earlier. The Prince of Wales' Teaching Institute has provided support and a coordinating role, bringing teacher associations and teacher educators together in the preparation of the discussion document.

I urge you as Minister for Education to ensure that the impetus for a national, independent professional certification body comes from the profession itself. There may be a valuable role that Australia's Governor-General can play as well, similar to that played by the Prince of Wales in England. A starting point would be to create a forum with ACE and other professional associations to revisit the 2003 National Statement and review progress toward the principles it espoused.

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4

MARGARET CLARK

NIRA is not enough for remote Indigenous communities

2008 was important for Indigenous education because that was when all Australian states and the Commonwealth signed up to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) through the COAG Reform process. I applaud this achievement.

The NIRA committed all states and territories to halving the gap for their Indigenous citizens on a number of key measures by 2020. For the school sector, the already agreed targets set out in the National Education Agreement (NEA) – improvements to student performance based in NAPLAN tests, and Year 12 retention and completion – were confirmed.

While NIRA has given added focus and priority to a very important equity policy issue, it will not drive change for those in the most disadvantaged Indigenous communities – those living in remote discrete communities in the Northern Territory.

There are many reasons for this but here I want to focus on just two: the suitability and usefulness of the targets and measures that have been set; and the fact that the agreement only focuses on outcomes and not inputs or process measures.

The suitability of the NIRA targets and measures for NT remote communities

Example One: NAPLAN Performance

According to Nicholas Biddle (2002) over 67 per cent of NT Indigenous people speak a language other than standard Australian English in their home. For children who grow up in discrete Indigenous communities in remote NT this figure is nearer to 95-100 per cent. This doesn't just mean that these children speak another language; it means that they don't speak English and no one

else does, so they don't hear it spoken in the home, in the playground, in the community, at social functions, on the radio, in shops and in church.

They live in a non-English speaking world, until they arrive at school.

When the children go to school, the school has to work out how to teach a whole class of children who do not understand English. In communities like Yirrkala where children speak a living Indigenous language or languages, and there is a tradition of two-way education, children learn in their own language, Yolnu Matha, using texts that have been developed through the school for this purpose. English exposure is largely oral at this stage.

This program was once well-funded and well supported with trained linguists actively supporting the school in developing new resources and with skilled two-way teachers. Over the years funding dwindled to a trickle and in 2010, it was briefly NT government policy to teach only in English for most of the school day. This was introduced in haste by the former Indigenous Minister for Education Marion Scrymgour who later apologised for this 'mistaken' decision (Rawlinson, 2012). However, Yirrkala along with a number of schools, refused to comply, and now the NT Education Department appears to passively 'allow it' but with no support. Even those schools that did comply, in part or completely, still faced the overwhelming challenge of teaching a whole class of children who do not speak or understand any English. Whatever adaptations made involved major adjustments to the standard approach to literacy education in Australian schools.

By third grade, many remote NT classrooms are just starting to expose students to English language texts and

are still using community language reading texts. Their English language focus at this point is still English language oracy as they rightly see this is a pre-condition to being able to read English. However in Year 3, all these learners are forced to sit the NAPLAN tests – tests that are totally unsuited to their stage of English learning development, no matter how they approach the ESL challenges. The vast majority of students either do not turn up on test days or get a zero score – meaning that they are unable to get even one answer right. Indeed we are crazy even expecting them to.

Now let's compare this treatment and experience to a similarly English language challenged group.

Children who are new arrivals from non-English speaking background countries can access up to one year of an intensive English program and can be exempted from sitting for NAPLAN tests for this period.

These children have come from a foreign land but in many ways remote Indigenous children are in a foreign land, yet no parallel Commonwealth funded intensive English program was ever provided for them and the exemption definitions do not allow them to be excused from NAPLAN testing.

The solution to this problem is extremely easy, affordable and accessible. There are culturally sensitive, developmentally appropriate diagnostic assessments developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) with remote Indigenous students in mind and sophisticated processes that would enable the results of these tests to be equated to mainstream NAPLAN results in ways that would make sense. This simple but urgent change would put an



end to the negative impact of the tests in remote schools. Having a class that all score zero on their test gives the worst kind of useless feedback to parents, students, teachers and systems.

Example 2: Year 12 retention/completion targets

For this target, the reporting framework relies on two measures. For Year 12 completions the target group is 20 – 24 year olds and the data source the School Education and Workforce (SEW) Survey managed by the ABS. The ABS data is collected through a telephone survey, from which remote communities are excluded. This means that for our most disadvantaged cohort we have no data and therefore no performance targets. This should be addressed through the initiation of a remote Indigenous survey as a matter of urgency.

The other measure is Year 12 retention. There are a lot of issues with this measure. But for remote Indigenous children the key problem with this measure is that it means absolutely nothing.

A friend of mine running a government service in remote Australia went to the local Indigenous school and promised a guaranteed job to everyone who completed Year 12. Later she was taken aside by a teacher who explained to her that completion to Year 12 just means that a student is still attending school to Year 12 – that is they are still enrolled and that is all. While the school could point to a few Year 12 completers in the community most of them could not read enough to be safe in the workplace.

In my view, it is quite mischievous to use as a measure something that appears to measure something of value that actually means nothing at all. We should stop this practice. Its existence means that the lack of meaningful data in this area is hidden from view and never prioritised.

The limitations of focusing only on outcome measures

There is an assumption that outcome measures are a magic bullet and will bring about the required changes on their own. This is not the case where good governance is lacking.

Marcia Langton (2012) the Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne argues that the high levels of funds allocated to the NT from the Commonwealth Grants Commission based on the level of disadvantage of its Indigenous citizens have been diverted for other purposes.

“ *The solution to this problem is extremely easy, affordable and accessible.* ”

This has happened over a sustained period and no matter which party holds power.

Other policy observers – journalists, social justice advocates, and researchers such as Nicolas Rothwell (2011), Rolf Gerritson, and Barry Hansen support this view with data.

Rothwell argues that there are no votes in solving Indigenous disadvantage and no strategies to make transparent what is happening or to hold the Territory accountable. The mantra that there are no votes in Indigenous issues is an oft-repeated NT Public Service phrase. The vast difference between the world of ‘white Darwin’ and the world of Indigenous Darwin and Indigenous remote communities is shocking.

Mainstream Darwin residents enjoy the laid back lifestyle, visits to markets, world-class conference precinct with a wave pool, state of the art senior colleges and middle schools and the extremely elaborate Parliament House and precinct, all for a Territory of less than 220,000.

Town Camp Darwin is different. Nine-Mile Town Camp, for example, is not marked on the map – it is just a blank space. This is a place where buses don’t visit, where the main power line to Darwin runs through the middle but there are no street lights, where many houses are condemned and several have no ablution facilities, where there are no footpaths and the grass is higher than a primary school child. The children who do manage to go to school have to be at the bus stop with no bus shelter outside the community by around 7.20am because the only bus they can catch picks them up first and then all the other children. They are on the bus for 50 minutes to go to a school less than 15 minutes away.

Remote NT is worse. The average number of people per bedroom is around three, rubbish services are spasmodic, there are no gutters and where I have seen children swimming in open drains. There is no parity of amenity.

In 2007 I attended the opening of a new high school that would never have been built in a Darwin suburb. It was built on

the only oval, taking away this amenity from the whole school. It had no footpaths or covered ways, no water faucets, a very poor library, a staff room that was too small for the number of staff, and huge mud puddles between buildings. But before this date this community of over 2900 had no secondary school whatsoever.

My argument in a nutshell is that outcomes-based accountability measures will not put any real pressure on the NT to do the right thing by their Indigenous citizens, and real accountability is what is urgently needed here. They know that they can keep on failing because this issue is already assigned by many to the too-hard-basket.

At one of the COAG working party negotiations that I attended, where states were arguing over funding shares, one state representative remarked that there was no point giving any funds to the NT because they wouldn’t deliver the goods and that the close-the-gap target could be achieved by focusing on the Indigenous population in the eastern states alone. Let’s not make this chilling black humour a reality.

Margaret Clark was CEO of the Australian College of Educators from 2010-2011.

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5

Can federalism work for schools?

From the time of the Menzies Government, it became apparent that there was a need for the Commonwealth to augment what the states were able to provide in education. Thus began a difficult history of federal involvement in education that has at times been dogged by irrational divisions between federal and state responsibilities for education and resulted in mixed blessings. It is hoped that the incoming Minister for Education and federal government will cooperate with states and territories to find a model of federal involvement in education that works for all schools.

From the very start, the provision of public funding to schools by the Commonwealth has been bedevilled by one of the country's most persistent and divisive political issues – the provision of public funding beyond public or government schools to those in the private or non-government sector.

In 2011 the Gonski Review panel provided a damning indictment of Commonwealth-State relations in the funding of schools. It found that Australia lacked a logical, consistent and publicly transparent approach to schools funding; and that arrangements were complex, confusing and opaque. 'Funding is often provided

in an uncoordinated way, and it is not always clear that funding is provided by the right level of government, based on their ongoing ability to consistently provide that funding' (Gonski et. al., p.48). Its recommendations provided advice on achieving a better balance over time for sharing the responsibility of funding schools between both levels of government through a common funding framework that set resource standards linked to the educational outcomes expected of schools, took account of the differing needs and circumstances of the students they serve.

The Gonski Review panel recognised the realities of our hybrid school system and the differing traditions and values it embodies, as well as of the peculiarities of our brand of federalism. It reached conclusions that embodied a set of compromises and that achieved broad support. Whatever now results from the political process for implementing reforms based on the Gonski Review, its report has the potential to enable progress towards arrangements that could build the capacity of schools, individually and collectively, to achieve an overall improvement in participation, achievement and outcomes.

There is an intentional focus here on the costs and weaknesses of federal arrangements for schooling, for the reason that these indicate where corrective action is needed. Reflecting on my own experience in education since the 1970s, it is not hard, however, to find examples where the tensions inherent in a federal system have benefited schools. They have been what might be called 'creative tensions'.

In schools starved of discretionary funds to start new ventures or to augment effort, even small amounts of funding from Commonwealth programs have been a fruitful stimulus. Grants provided through Commonwealth specific purpose

programs have not only improved conditions for students with a range of intensive support needs but have been a source of consciousness-raising across the school community as a whole and have provided valuable platforms for teachers' professional learning. The work of Commonwealth advisory and consultative bodies and, in particular, the Schools Commission, led the way in the gathering and analysis of data and information to guide policy formation, at arm's length from government. Where there is a respectful attitude on the part of the Commonwealth for the experience and expertise in states and territories, progress can be achieved. This has been the case in relation to cooperation between Commonwealth and states and territories to progress towards national teaching standards, through the medium of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership set up by the Commonwealth in 2010.

But there are also examples where Commonwealth programs have been set up with ambitious goals and accountability requirements out of all proportion to the scale of funds provided. These have made the work of some school authorities harder rather than easier. Some of our most hard-pressed schools have been forced to divert their efforts from teaching and learning into submissions to compete for scarce funds and reports on outcomes, while funds for schools with significantly greater resources to serve significantly more privileged communities have had their funds delivered on a recurrent basis with lesser accountability. Clip-on programs that come and go from the Commonwealth have encouraged some principals to divert their energies into managing these, instead of attending to the professional leadership of their teachers, who represent a far greater investment by government. Schools have been put in the position of trying

“ *Some of our most hard-pressed schools have been forced to divert their efforts from teaching and learning into submissions to compete for scarce funds and reports on outcomes...* ”



to serve two masters – where the goals of Commonwealth programs or the practices they have required have put schools at odds with the priorities or values of their own systems. The advice of the Gonski Review panel reflected its understanding of these problems.

Of course, federalism involves relationships among the states and territories themselves as well as between them and the Commonwealth. In this regard, progress towards national curriculum has proved difficult to achieve since the 1970s. This possibly has as much to do with interstate relations as with those between the Commonwealth and states, reflecting the way in which states tend to jealously guard their own curriculum, the structures and processes through which curriculum is developed, and the materials produced to support it.

It is difficult to see how it will be possible to achieve rational and fair arrangements for schooling, and schools funding in particular, without fundamental tax reform and a clearer articulation of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Commonwealth and states and territories. Geoff Gallop (2011) makes the assessment that despite the latest attempt through COAG at cooperative federalism, the players at both levels are 'reverting to type':

Australia seems destined to have a federal system that at its best is second best. Our responsibilities in such a situation are to make that second best system work as best as we can. That means the states being more forceful in pursuing their interests and the Commonwealth more understanding of complexity and the benefits of diversity. Is that going to be possible in the adversarial system that has developed in our nation? (Gallop: 2011)

There is much scope for action, in my view, through taking our responsibilities to make our second best system work as well as we can. The recommendations of the Gonski Review provide an excellent starting point.

The review recommended that the Australian government and state and territory governments should establish a National Schools Resourcing Body. This body would be made responsible for a range of tasks. These include development and periodic review of resource standard and loadings; indexation; research, analysis and data improvement. Members would be appointed to the body on the basis of merit and expertise, and be independent of government. The body should be provided with a realistic operational

“ *Australia seems destined to have a federal system that at its best is second best. Our responsibilities in such a situation are to make that second best system work as best as we can.* ”

budget funded by all governments to support the commissioning of research and data work as appropriate. This body would be supported by a representative advisory group to provide advice to the body on schooling matters, with membership drawn from representatives of both the government and non-government school sectors.

Establishing such structures at arm's length from governments would be one means of reducing scope for governments and politicians to use schooling for short-term political purposes and of focusing effort on the achievement of longer-term educational goals. They would provide a forum for rational and informed policy formation, based on consideration of options, where members would be publicly accountable for their advice. These arrangements would go some way towards mitigating the influence of the powerful constituencies that current funding arrangements have helped to create.

It would be appropriate, given the circumstances of our federal system, for governments and, in particular, for the Commonwealth government, to set down some self-disciplining ordinances. For example, the Commonwealth could develop for itself a charter or code of conduct designed to increase the intellectual and ethical standards of decision-making about schooling.

Its first provision should be the first rule of democratic governments: do no harm.

Then there are further democratic principles. At the heart of the Gonski panel's consideration was its explicit recognition of equity. It defined equity in schooling as 'ensuring differences in educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power or possessions'. It is hard to see how citizens in a democracy could support the

argument that they should be, and few do so openly! Yet there are aspects of our national arrangements for schooling that are hard to justify against this principle.

In matters that concern children and young people, such as schooling, there is a strong moral argument that it is their interests that should come first. Linda Darling Hammond applies this principle to accountability. She argues that the main purpose of educational accountability is a duty of care owed by schools to students and their parents.

This duty precedes and undergirds all other forms of accountability for it is central to the implicit promise states make to parents when they compel them to send their children to school. The promise that schools will be responsible for and responsive to the needs of students they serve (Darling Hammond, 1994).

Governments could do well to adopt this principle and to test their own requirements for accountability against it.

As well as ethical principles, there are some commonsense questions that could well be applied to public policy decisions.

- Will proposed changes make it easier or harder for teachers and students to get their daily work done in schools? Will they enhance the time teachers spend with their students or on preparation for teaching or in professional learning?
- How will any proposed changes affect the status of teaching and the nation's capacity to attract and retain effective teachers?
- Are policies based on an informed understanding of the current realities in schools across the country?
- Are policies grounded in an understanding of the unique legal obligation of public school systems to enrol all-comers and of the practical implications?
- Where changes to current arrangements entail significant effort and cost, are they educationally justifiable? In some cases, it may well be that it would have been preferable to have done things differently in the first place, but there is still a need to consider whether the benefits of changing them now significantly outweigh the costs.
- At what level of the schooling system, national, state, regional or local are responsibilities for making particular decisions best located?

Had such questions been asked openly and honestly over past decades, then Australia's public investment in schooling might have been more effectively targeted and achieved better outcomes, despite fundamental flaws in our federal system.

Here is a personal plea to the Prime Minister. Writing this piece has reminded me that Australians are confused even about what to call our national government. 'Federal', 'Commonwealth' and 'Australian' are all in daily use and the government websites designed to provide a formal guide on usage do more to create than resolve confusion.

As a child born during World War II, I felt that it was a fine thing to be living in a 'Commonwealth'. I had no idea that this nomenclature was keenly debated at the Federal Convention of 1897-98. Or that Alfred Deakin had won the day with his argument that the term had an ancient pedigree and stood for 'the common good of the people'.

Then, in 2003, there was an apparently sudden decision by the then Commonwealth government to change its name from that set down in our Constitution to 'Australian'. One rationale provided for this change was the need

for 'common branding'. Perhaps it was also a way of appealing to nationalistic tendencies. It is confusing in a federal system, because there are actually nine 'Australian' governments.

Like the vast majority of Australian children to this day, I was dependent upon government for my education, upon sharing the 'common wealth'. Despite excisions for politically motivated purposes relating to immigration, most of us do not need to be reminded that we live in Australia. But we might all be clearer about the true purpose, roles and responsibilities of the national government in schooling, at least, if it took back the name accorded to it in the Constitution and wore it with pride.

[Lyndsay Connors's distinguished career in education includes appointments as a member of the Commonwealth Schools Commission, Director of Higher Education in the NSW Department of Education and Training and Chair of the Victorian Ministerial Working Party, Public Education: The Next Generation. She was awarded the Australian College of Educators Medal in 2001 and served as the College's national president from 2009-2011.](#)

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A longer version of this article including a historical review of the Commonwealth's involvement in education is available from the Australian College of Educators website at www.austcolled.com.au



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6

CHRIS BONNOR

A second serious equity problem

Educators have long attached critical importance to improving equity in the provision of schooling and the chance this creates for increased student success. We have welcomed the national conversations about, and government action to address, the growing social and educational gaps between learners and between our schools – gaps which represent advantages for some at the expense of others, with consequences for individuals, communities and the nation.

There is a second serious equity problem which deserves the attention of both governments and schools that you as Minister for Education need to address. This is the inequity created when the available schooling fails to cater for the diverse learning needs of all our young people. This equity problem is created, not only by the differences between schools, but by the inadequacy of how we do school itself.

Inequity beyond Gonski

The first equity problem has long plagued our framework of schools. The Gonski Review reinforced the need to reduce the social and educational gaps in education. The recommendations of the panel and the subsequent legislation should ensure that funding is based on student needs for a quality education, and that achieving this requires us to reduce the disadvantage faced by a number of targeted groups. This is an important policy shift which is supported across the board by the school education community.

The problems created by the compounding of advantage and disadvantage in separate schools certainly concerned the review panel:

Increased concentration of disadvantaged students in certain schools is having a significant impact on educational outcomes, particularly, but not only, in the government sector (Gonski et. al, p. xxxii).

The extent of this concentration is quite marked in Australia (OECD 2010) and it tends to exacerbate the impact of family SES on student achievement by adding a significant school SES effect (Thomson et. al, 2010, p. 289). There is a substantial body of research and literature which points to how this works, especially through the impact of concentrations of advantage and disadvantage on school culture and effectiveness [e.g. NSW Government; Teese, 2011; Nous Group, 2011].

It is our hope that new distribution of funding, combined with school initiatives, will reduce the impact of this problem. But it is not a static problem and the impact is worsening. A scan of Victorian schools, completed for a forthcoming book from the Centre for Policy Development (Lyons, 2013) shows an alarming fall-off in high achievement scores in less advantaged schools. In short, the lower the socio-educational status of schools (as measured by My School) the greater the decline in high-end VCE scores between 2003 and 2011. Lowest SES schools lost over 20 per cent of their high achievement scores.

This trend is about much more than school quality – unless, as is unlikely, the teachers and leadership of lower SES schools have somehow collectively decided to become less successful. It substantially reflects enrolment shift from low to higher SES schools, leaving fewer students and greater concentrations of disadvantage in the former. The fact that this is so easily measurable over just eight years and impacts across sectors is deeply concerning.

Governments and schools have to decide if there are sufficient measures in place to reverse this problem. There is always more to be done at the school level, particularly in professional learning, quality teaching and the ways in which

we structure teaching and learning. In looking for solutions governments need to seriously examine the track record of previous policies. The concern of the profession is that far too many policy decisions have been made in the absence of compelling evidence and with scant regard to access and equity.

Nothing is more symbolic of this than the My School website. It was supposed to inform choice by making more information available, enabling accurate comparisons between schools and making schools more accountable to school systems, parents and the community. The reality has been quite different: the information has always been incomplete, the measures of school success far too narrow and fine comparisons between individual schools misleading. We would like to believe that it has driven improvement of schools – but it defies what we know about good practice in accountability and school improvement.

We would ask that, along with a review of the purpose and impact of My School, the incoming government re-examine all the Australian and overseas evidence about, and the equity impact of, a range of current policies. Educators will support a calculated measure of autonomy, especially in staffing, curriculum, assessment and reporting, but equity concerns need to be transparently addressed. Teachers and principals also remain concerned about the equity impacts of such matters as access to learning technology, capital improvement of schools and what appear to be misplaced priorities in the development and resourcing of the Australian curriculum.

Inequity in learning opportunities

There are additional, but not unrelated, problems created by unequal learning opportunities available to young people through our schools. Students come

to school with a diversity of personal resources, interests, abilities and learning styles. They have no guarantee, and in many cases not even the remote possibility, that the schools which are available to them are able to maximise their potential to enable them to achieve their best.

Part of this problem is created by the very uneven and unequal offering of schools across Australia. High performing systems of schools tend to be those which are relatively comprehensive and inclusive. However, a large proportion of Australia's secondary schools, both government and non-government, are able to exercise varying degrees of choice over who they enrol. They employ a raft of discriminators ranging from entry tests, fees and specialisations...to the subtle discriminators often employed by high-demand schools. Such practices impact on all schools. The Gonski Review did not take up the opportunity to create greater transparency in school enrolment practice. This is unfinished business.

There is a further way in which available schools do not adequately serve the learning needs of all their students, in the process creating a serious equity problem. Secondary schools in particular, by their very structure and culture, cater for students who can and will adapt to the way we do school. In most schools students learn (or don't learn) in seemingly unrelated and remotely developed subjects. They progress in a lock-step fashion and jump through qualification hoops, again remotely designed. The inputs and student outcomes of such factory-era schools are then methodically compared in a misguided strategy which is claimed to somehow raise quality.

The criticisms of our conventional schools are mounting and telling. Sir Ken Robinson says the current system is failing so many of our students because it is impersonal and standardised, typically force-feeding them a dried diet of received information, in schools which are rooted to the industrial culture of mass production (Robinson in Washor & Mojkowski, 2013). Critics point not only to student retention problems in such schools but also to the much larger group of students who endure school but don't become self-motivated and self-directed learners (Hannon, 2011).

Increasingly advocated solutions point to schools that are customised to the needs and motivations of students, to teaching that arouses their appetite for learning. Valerie Hannon talks about project-based

learning, extended learning relationships, and learning in and out of school. More recently the Global Education Leaders Program (GELP) has confronted the practical challenges in transforming schools. GELP refers to the way in which students, families, communities and entrepreneurs are creating their own learning models on the ground – at the same time as governments continue to dictate change from above.

GELP argues that the core challenge for jurisdictions – to which we can add governments – is how to encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and new entrants in education without the state withdrawing from the innovation space entirely – and how to scale and diffuse exemplary models and practice through an entire system.

At least three things get in the way of this happening. Firstly school authorities have not sufficiently taken a leadership role in the required level of school innovation, although recent signs are that this is changing. Secondly, schools and organisations working hard at personalising learning to reengage young people are doing this vital work on a shoestring. Thirdly there are too many state and federal policies which inhibit innovation, including recurrent testing regimes and excessive curriculum mandates – approaches which are underpinned by lack of trust in schools and a lingering and mistaken belief that external levers can create authentic school reform.

The challenge for governments is to allow professionals to get on with the job while subjecting schools and teachers to accountability processes that support innovation and quality learning. Government action must support a far wider range of measures of student achievement and school quality. It must restrict centralised curriculum to framework statements and both substantially and equitably resource schools and supporting organisations to develop sustained reform and cultural change in schools.

In other words, provide the required support, establish agreed guidelines, equity safeguards and accountabilities – and then get out of the way.

In the light of what at best is a mixed bag of policy interventions by successive governments over a long period of time, it is not too much to ask.

[Chris Bonnor was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators in 2013 in recognition of outstanding professional practice and leadership.](#)

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7

Please vacate the area of school education

Prime Minister, I recommend that your federal government vacate the area of school education and that you refrain from appointing a Minister for School Education. While this may not be possible in the current term of your recently-elected government, it should be a priority for your next term, or the first term of another government should you not be successful at the next election.

This does not mean that the federal government should withdraw funding to support schools; rather, it calls for a new approach to governance in the field and new structures and processes to ensure that resources are allocated on a needs basis and more effectively than under current arrangements.

I attended the launch of the report of the *Review of Funding for Schooling* (Gonski Report) in early 2012, and my first reaction after a close reading during the lock-up and days following was 'let's get on with it'. At its heart lay the proposal for a shift to needs-based funding of schools. I know that such an approach can be designed and implemented. Victoria has had one for nearly two decades. I chaired the initial working group that recommended the formula for government schools. Catholic schools in Victoria have had needs-based funding for three decades. In both instances there is constant review and regular update to meet the changing circumstances of schools.

With the assurance that no school would lose funds and, with two levels of government involved, along with organisations representing the interests of non-government schools, the challenge was how to commit funds over the next quadrennium when federal debt is high and growing, and the fiscal outlook in some states is uncertain if not shaky. Whether or not the additional funding would help lift Australia to the top tier of nations as far as outcomes are concerned depends on how the money is spent.

What has occurred over the last 12 months is politically unedifying, educationally indefensible and without counterpart in any comparable country. Implementation of Gonski should have been relatively straightforward. All negotiations on funding arrangements for each quadrennium have been successful for several decades, always accompanied by political argy-bargy of course, and that is what should have occurred in this instance.

What has happened is that implementation of Gonski has been tied up with a variety of requirements for all jurisdictions to sign up to in order to get federal funding. The federal government was then forced to conduct state by state and territory by territory negotiations, as well as with organisations representing the non-government sector. Different deals were done over months. The approach has had no precedent in terms of the language of the federal minister and the Prime Minister (with leaders in states and territories often giving as good as they got). Readers of media releases were shocked at the power-coercive language and the command-and-control strategy emanating from the federal government. States and territories which, after all, have constitutional responsibility for schools, were aghast at the threat to their authority and their plans to give schools more autonomy. Tying everything to implementation of a 'national plan for school improvement' or a 'national plan for better schools' was bizarre, given that school improvement is something that schools must be responsible and accountable for. Besides, it was a throw-back to the late 1970s when school improvement plans were all the rage around the nation.

It is also likely that the endless debates about the roles of the two levels of government in school education will continue unless you take the lead on the matter.

There is a way forward that will help resolve the issue and free up hundreds of millions of dollars each year to support the transformation of schools. Interestingly, the Gonski Report provides a clue to strategies that may lead to one of the most constructive if not momentous changes in the funding of schools in recent times. Recommendation 24 of the Gonski Report raised the possibility that agreement on needs-based funding might enable the integration of the scores of short-term mostly unsustainable small grants handed out by the federal government each year, many with tiresome paperwork and debatable impact. All of these funds should be rolled up in a new funding mechanism and delivered directly to state and territory governments as well as systems of Catholic and independent schools around the nation. Funds should be delivered directly to schools wherever possible. If this is accomplished why then will we need a federal Minister for Schools and a large federal bureaucracy to continue a command-and-control approach, implemented through a classic power-coercive model of change?

Why not follow the lead of a comparable country like Canada where there is no federal apparatus in education; indeed its constitution forbids it except for the education of indigenous/First Nation students, children of armed services personnel, and those in prisons? It works. Canada outperforms Australia on all international tests of student achievement, with two of its provinces (Alberta and Ontario) coming in just behind Finland in student outcomes. National policies, priorities and areas of cooperation are determined by a Council of Ministers that has worked well for decades. Fiscal equalisation across the country and needs-based funding in the provinces and territories ensure the workability of the scheme. I am familiar with the approach having worked in Canada for 13 years during which time I researched the pioneering approach to needs-based funding in Alberta.

Australia can follow the lead of Canada but it may take several terms of a federal government to get there. Some arrangements can continue, for example, with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). They are generally working well and there is bi-partisan support across the nation even though they require the engagement of state and territories and organisations representing the interests of non-government schools for successful implementation. A third body along the lines of a School Funding Agency (SFA) should be established to decide on, monitor and update the needs-based funding mechanism.

The case for a diminished role for the federal government is contained in my recently published co-authored book entitled *The Self-Transforming School*. You will find the same case for the United States of America, where there is increasing concern about governments getting in the way of each other in the rush to improve schools, and where achievement continues to decline relative to other countries. You will find evidence and illustrations on a range of issues from 11 countries as to how schools may be transformed, that is, where there is significant, systematic and sustained change that secures success

for all students in all settings. We review developments over the last 25 years and identify the major forces that are likely to shape what occurs in schools for the next 25 years, thus spanning 50 years from 1988 to 2038.

There are several options for establishing an SFA. A starting point would be to shift ownership for it, as well as for ACARA and AITSL, to the states and territories. Each may have a board of directors whose composition requires careful consideration. Directors might include representatives of the states and territories as well as non-government school authorities. The federal government should, of course, continue to contribute funds in support of school education. As I said, there are many options and that is why careful consideration should be given to my recommendation.

These recommendations in no way deny the important role of the federal government in providing funds to support schools. It has done so since the 1960s and especially since the landmark Karmel Report of 1973. But much of what has occurred over the last decade or so has proved dysfunctional. There has certainly been no overall improvement in student achievement, as measured in national or international tests; indeed, the evidence is that we have slipped and the

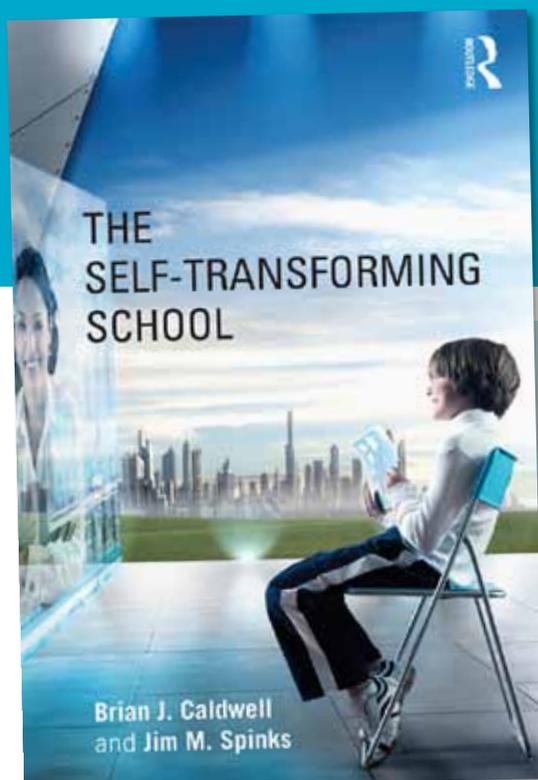
gap between low- and high-performing students is as wide as ever.

As an intermediate step you might consider serving as Minister for School Education as well as Prime Minister, supported by a Parliamentary Secretary who has a small Office of School Education. However, your declared intent and unreserved commitment to the nation should be that you will be the last federal Minister for School Education. Part of the transition might be a seat for the federal government on the boards of ACARA, AITSL and SFA. Always, of course, in the years of transition, as well as in the longer term, the federal government should set its priorities for education, economy and society and use every form of moral suasion to ensure they are connected up for the benefit of all.

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8

ALAN REID

Please resist the PISA effect

As the new Minister for School Education, you will probably have a number of ideas about the issues in Australian education and the strategies needed to address them. I want to suggest that you begin by articulating the assumptions upon which these ideas are based and subjecting them to critical analysis.

So many consequences flow from first assumptions. If the policies advocated and implemented by a Minister address a problem that doesn't exist, or is only half understood, then the strategies are not only likely to miss the issues which really need attention, but may do real damage to the schools and students they aim to support.

This may seem an obvious point to make and yet in the past few years there have been a number of assumptions about education standards in this country which merit, but which rarely are subjected to, critical scrutiny. How many times have you seen a media opinion piece, a government report, a think-tank education report, another politician or a letter to the editor start with the claim that standards in Australian education are declining compared to other developed countries?

Hardly a day passes in which such an assertion is not made in the public arena. It would be interesting to know the genesis of this received truth, and to track the trajectory of the 'idea' over time. But the salient point here is that it has become the self-evident starting point for debate, not a matter of opinion requiring evidence.

When evidence is proffered, invariably it is Australia's performance on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests. So if PISA is at the heart of the matter, and if you do start by examining your foundation assumptions, then it is pretty important for you to come to grips with the PISA phenomenon.

The PISA phenomenon

The Programme for International Student Assessment is an OECD administered test of the performance of students aged 15 years in Maths, Science and Reading. It has been conducted every three years since 2000, with the last results published in 2009. We are currently waiting for the 2012 results. It purports to test 'real-life' skills and knowledge. About 65 countries participate in the tests which are two hours in length and hand written, and involve a stratified sample of students in each country. In 2009 Australia was ranked 9th in Reading, 15th in Maths and 10th in Science.

“ How many times have you seen a media opinion piece, a government report, a think-tank education report, another politician or a letter to the editor start with the claim that standards in Australian education are declining compared to other developed countries? ”

Despite warnings on the PISA site about not using the test scores to make superficial judgments comparing the quality of education in various countries, when PISA results are published, press commentators and politicians in each country blithely ignore these warnings. The 'winners' are eulogised while those countries which have slipped a few rungs on the League Table are excoriated.

PISA has sparked a burgeoning education industry involving educators and bureaucrats visiting 'successful' countries (i.e. those in the top 5 of the League Tables) and identifying the factors that have contributed to the success. These are then written up into education reports, and become the basis for new policy designed to engineer a rise up the league tables. In June 2013, the Gillard Government's Australian Education Bill enshrined the aspiration for Australia to be in the top five schooling countries by 2025. Given that then PM Gillard made it clear that this aspiration applied to maths, science and reading, obviously PISA is the benchmark for Australian education.

The PISA effect

Later this year the 2012 PISA results will be released. No doubt you and your opposition counterpart will wait with bated breath – one ready to claim the credit if Australia has advanced a rung or two up the League Table; the other wanting to take a baseball bat to the government in the event we have slipped down the table. Either way, what is said will confirm the myth that PISA is a scientific and objective measure of education quality. This has a number of consequences which I refer to as the PISA effect.

In recent years, although Australia has stayed in the top ten in Science and Reading, we have slipped a few rungs down the ladder in these areas, and out of the top ten in Maths. This has fuelled the belief that education standards in Australia are declining, and has created a storm of media attacks on educators and policy makers. The response has been a flurry of policy activity designed to address the decline. The situation has also created a sense of educational crisis with schools and teachers bearing the brunt of criticism, with a flow-on negative impact on morale.

But the PISA effect doesn't stop there. The claims about standards are invariably used by media commentators as a springboard for advocating a favourite policy position. Following the release of the 2009 PISA tests in December 2010 and the usual bemoaning of our perceived decline in education standards, many commentators proposed a range of disparate strategies to improve Australia's standing in PISA tests. These included the usual suspects such as performance pay for teachers, greater school autonomy, revamped teacher education programs and voucher systems to enable school choice.

It did not seem to trouble the commentators that there was no evidence to support a relationship between the PISA data and the solution. They simply jumped from apparent 'problem' to solution, ignoring important intermediate steps, such as assessing the evidence, clarifying the problem, gathering extra evidence, and making a connection between the solution and the problem. The game of proposing strategies to address the crisis has continued ever since.

Another version of the PISA effect involves the quest to discover why the top five countries are more successful than Australia. This consists of visiting a country, describing some of its structures, practices and processes, guessing which variables have contributed to its success, aggregating them, and then urging that these practices are adopted in Australia. A classic of this genre is the Grattan Institute's 2012 report *Catching up: Learning from the best school systems in Asia*.

These various PISA effects influence policy makers and ultimately help to shape education policy. Sometimes this is overt, such as using PISA as the benchmark for Australia's educational aspirations for the next decade. At other times, its influence is more subtle, such as when PISA outcomes are used in inquiries and reviews to justify particular policy proposals.

It is curious that so much store is placed on the results of a test which is conducted every three years, by different companies/groups/agencies in over sixty countries, testing sample groups of students. Clearly a lot of trust is being placed in the test itself. But what would happen if it could be shown that the results of PISA tests, or the ways in which they have been interpreted, need to be taken with a grain of salt, or are faulty?

Where would that leave all the strategies designed to address the PISA effect?

PISA problems

There are a number of problems with blindly accepting the PISA outcomes. First, test results at one stage of schooling every three years in only three areas of the curriculum, are too narrow a base upon which to make claims about the quality of Australian education. The fact is that although reading, maths and science are important, they tell us nothing about outcomes in such crucial areas as the arts, history, geography, health and PE, English literature, civics and citizenship, and information and communication technology, to name just a few areas of the formal curriculum. In addition, we get no sense of how students are faring in such critical domains as problem solving, inquiry, creativity and intercultural understanding. That is, at best the international test results present a very narrow picture of student progress.

“...although reading, maths and science are important, they tell us nothing about outcomes in such crucial areas as the arts, history, geography, health and PE...”

Second, test results are interpreted too simplistically. As England's Office of Qualifications has pointed out, the differences between countries' performances are not that large anyway and are usually statistically insignificant; and whether or not a country has moved up or down the league tables is not very meaningful because the absolute differences in scores between countries are not great. What is the real difference between 5th and 10th? And even if there are differences, how can we use this data to identify causes? There are real difficulties associated with ascribing causality to cross-sectional data, and these can only be resolved by exploring the relationship between different variables using longitudinal models.

Third, there are many obvious problems with the ways in which comparative judgments are being made about the

quality of education in various countries. These include the vast differences in contexts between countries, and the fact that it ignores other issues in some countries. In Singapore, for example, there is a concern that although students are successful in tests, their creativity is being stifled by a narrow and strait-jacketed curriculum; and in Shanghai there is considerable concern about the high rate of youth suicide. The point is that although it is useful to share information between countries, uncritically importing policies and practices from other countries is fraught with danger, particularly when the only reference point is an international test.

Fourth, there is now a burgeoning international literature which raises a number of serious questions about the efficacy of the PISA tests and their associated processes. These include such concerns as:

- the propensity of some systems to prepare students for the test (such as the extensive use of after-hours tutors in some countries)
- the difficulties associated with making an international test culturally neutral
- the differences in the ways in which ideas can be translated in various languages
- whether or not some countries endeavour to improve results through selective sampling
- the differences in student populations in various jurisdictions, especially given that some of the successful Asian systems are cities and others are countries
- the unexamined values and beliefs embodied in the test about what constitutes valued knowledge and about curriculum
- the definition of 'real-life skills' and the fact that they are only tested with pen and paper
- the increasing doubts being raised by education researchers about the validity and reliability of the tests, for example because the items compared are not all the same across all countries
- the narrowness of what the tests measure
- the difficulties associated with interpreting cross-sectional data



- the long time period between the taking of the test and the publication of the results, thus removing any diagnostic possibilities from the test results
- the fact that the raw scores do not tell the full educational story (for example, in the 2006 science results, Finland came out on top in cognitive outcomes; and finished nearly bottom in level of student interest in science. One wonders if the results have been gained at the expense of turning students off the study of science, and if so, whether this is something we would want to emulate in Australia).

I am not saying that such international tests cannot tell us anything. Rather I am making the point that policy, media commentary and research which is premised on PISA test results should at least acknowledge these difficulties and limitations and be much more tentative about using PISA as the sole arbiter of what constitutes quality in education.

The use of PISA to assess quality and as the benchmark for our national educational aspirations is fraught with danger. If I am right, then basing education policy on lifting PISA results may be educationally counterproductive and damaging. So what is the alternative?

Post-PISA education policy

It is important to stress that a critique of PISA is not a defensive educator's response to adverse data. I believe strongly that we need mechanisms to assess outcomes from our education system, that our schools (and policy makers) must be accountable, and that we should always be striving to improve the quality of Australian education. What I am arguing is that superficial and knee-jerk readings of international test data are more likely to impede than to advance the quality of education in this country. We need a post-PISA approach to quality improvement.

The starting point for a new approach is to change the existing starting point – narrow and flawed as it is. The best way to do this is to recognise and celebrate all that is so good about Australian education. I spend time in schools and constantly marvel at the creativity, care, breadth, individual attention, warmth, and excitement about learning – to name just a few qualities – that is so evident.

At the same time we need to recognise that there are a number of issues, and these need to be identified, understood and worked on rigorously over the long haul, using evidence, sharing ideas, and

tracking progress. The challenge is to do this without adversely affecting all the good work that is being done, without denigrating schools and teachers using flawed evidence, and without driving our schools back to an educational stone age with homogenous policy approaches focusing on very narrow outcomes.

The problematic way in which PISA has been discussed and used in Australia, suggests some alternative strategies for a new agenda. I will outline four of them.

1. Ensure curriculum breadth.

The Melbourne Goals of Schooling agreement has been agreed to by all states, territories and the Australian Government. It commits Australian education to a broad and comprehensive curriculum and a concern for equity in education. Why should it not also guide the nature of our accountability mechanisms? Why sign up to the Melbourne Goals of Schooling and then privilege just three aspects of the curriculum – reading, maths and science – by confining our educational aspirations to the focus of PISA?

2. Devise broader and more comprehensive ways to assess outcomes.

Given what is now known about assessment and evaluation in education, surely we can develop more enlightened approaches to assessing education outcomes – both in Australia and internationally – than a two-hour, pen and paper test held every three years. New approaches might include some light sampling of a range of subjects and domains across a three to five year period; working with other countries to find ways to assess the development of such important attributes as critical thinking, creativity and intercultural understanding; using a range of mediums for students to demonstrate their learning; and ensuring that methods to assess outcomes reflect agreed goals, and are based on more than just one form of assessment.

3. Be more rigorous in gathering and analysing data.

Undoubtedly, the information that is garnered from PISA has the potential to contribute to policy making. Unfortunately, as I have argued, commentators and policy makers have misused the data, by removing any of its subtleties and complexities, by jumping from problem to solution, and by making simplistic and superficial claims. If we are to track down some of the issues that the PISA results do highlight, such as the unacceptable differences in

educational outcomes between students from affluent backgrounds and those who suffer educational disadvantage such as Indigenous students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, then more rigour is needed in our public and professional discussions. This includes asking what the data is telling us, clarifying what it is not saying, and identifying what extra information is required.

4. Be wary of unproblematically borrowing policy.

I have not argued that we cannot learn from, or compare ourselves with, other countries. Of course it is useful to share and explore ideas and outcomes from other contexts. But we must reject approaches which assume that what has been done in one country can be simply transplanted to another. In making international comparisons we should ensure that we don't just focus on the good bits in other countries and ignore the negatives; that there is an appreciation of the social and cultural contexts which shape specific approaches; that we try to understand the relationship between variables and not focus on a single strategy as though it exists in isolation; and that we recognise the danger of making judgements about programs in other countries from the perspective of our own values and cultural assumptions.

In a post-PISA education world, education policy would start with, and always use, its agreed goals and purposes as its reference point, including the associated accountability mechanisms. In this policy world an international test like PISA would be seen as just one piece of the evidential jigsaw, not the whole picture. This would help us to identify and understand those aspects of Australian education which need work and improvement, whilst ensuring that we maintain and celebrate the things we are doing well. Who knows, we might even discover that Australia has a world-class education system of which we can be proud!

Professor Alan Reid AM is Professor Emeritus of Education at the University of South Australia. He was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators in 2002 and received ACE's inaugural MacKillop Medal for distinguished services to education.

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9

Don't allow the outsourcing of education

One of the most important activities in which a culture engages is the provision of education. It is probably the main means by which it invests in and ensures its future. Cultural leaders from time immemorial have seen this as a key responsibility. The effectiveness of any educational provision is determined by the quality of the teaching. This quality is influenced in turn by the professional knowledge of the teaching staff.

Of interest in education is the arrival on the scene of some new players. We are witnessing a plethora of for-profit and not-for-profit organisations establishing themselves in the education field across the world, including Australia. While many providers have for some time contributed to aspects of school operation such as security, maintenance and catering, we are increasingly seeing providers wishing to operate in the teaching and learning space. It is clear that some state governments in Australia are currently looking to outsource aspects of education not previously considered. The Victorian Government has recently stated it will investigate and draw lessons from the experience of other systems that have significantly increased school autonomy, including the examples of WA independent public schools, UK academies and free schools and US charter schools (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, 2013). In Queensland, the current Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek has said 'Queensland could one day see for-profit primary and high schools complement the state's public and independent schools'. Leaning on the need to open more schools around the state, Mr Langbroek said innovation was required within the education system to cope with 'a rapidly changing world'. He said for-profit schools, charter schools and other models were innovations the government might seriously consider (Feeney, 2013).

Within the non-government sector, we are also expecting change. Apparently Laureate is planning to open a for-profit school in Australia in 2014 (Laureate currently operate a hospitality school in Sydney). Of particular interest is the role of large business organisations, such as GEMS Schools, Cognito and Nord Anglia that operate in the government and the non-government school sector in other parts of the world. GEMS schools run for-profit as well as (government) Charter and Free schools in Ohio, USA and the UK respectively¹. Such operations cause us to reflect on the driving educational mission and values of such providers and their potential global agendas as opposed to a national focus. Should they decide to operate in Australia, we will have a whole new modus operandi to consider.

Supporters of for-profit groups running government and non-government schools claim that for-profit schools operate more efficiently, and that these increases in efficiency can lead to lower fees or costs. They argue that financial competition encourages the schools to seek out better qualified teachers; however, a brief search on the web will find many testimonies regarding low salaries and poor teaching conditions provided to teachers in such schools making that claim appear spurious. Indeed, it is a straightforward exercise to search for jobs available with their current salary and required qualifications clearly stated. The employment of non-degree teaching staff is common. There is also evidence that for-profit operations come at the cost of extracurricular opportunities, increased online (with low support) options, wellbeing provision and reduced curriculum offerings. Often this may be couched in terms of an increased focus on 'teaching and learning'. For those that argue the current Australian state education regulations prevent the operation of for-profit providers,

“ *...for-profit schools, charter schools and other models were innovations the government might seriously consider...*

”



we need only look to New Zealand. There, private businesses and charities will be able to open schools in New Zealand from next year under a controversial law change. The New Zealand parliament has amended the Education Act, allowing the establishment of publicly funded private schools. The schools will not have to employ registered teachers or follow the national curriculum. This has implications for education in Australia as news is trickling through of a number of non-traditional education providers seeking to increase efficiency through the use of staff with qualifications below that required by current state authorities for teaching. The perception that 'anyone can teach without training' is still heard around the world. This practice may well reduce the quality of the education provided as learning is a complex process. The use of unqualified staff can potentially lead to lower student learning outcomes and an increased likelihood of student disengagement. In the longer term this is likely to lead to an impoverished national knowledge base and a reduced capacity to learn.

While the Australian federal government has to date placed great emphasis on the importance of teacher quality through the establishment of AITSL and its extensive agenda, the changes around the world seem to fly in the face of such understandings. If the proposed Gonski funding model is accepted, there will be an added incentive as any cohort of Australian children will now carry an automatic dollar amount per head – something that is not seen in many other parts of the world. Surely this will make Australia an even more attractive base from which to establish an educational 'venture'?

Given that some changes to the provision of education to Australian children may be on the horizon, we would urge you as Minister for Education to at no stage step away from the teacher quality agenda. We ask you to work with the profession, through organisations such as key universities, the Australian College of Educators and Australian Council for Educational Leaders to maintain the processes and structures that regulate the quality of those working with our young people. It seems ironic that practising teachers around the world are subject to tighter and tighter controls, whereas some operators appear to be able to bypass such regulations completely.

We would ask that whosoever teaches our young people, they adhere to the application of parameters such as the AITSL standards and teacher performance and development framework and other knowledge bases we have that assist us to identify and articulate good teaching and learning. We recommend that state and federal authorities take explicit steps to manage this situation. This would include protecting teaching quality through the systematic application of AITSL standards and accompanying frameworks to the schools. A second would include ensuring that the communities served by any surrogate providers have the capacity to evaluate and influence the quality of the provision. This would include governments developing policies that facilitate genuine community scrutiny and evaluation of the provision of their nominees.

It is important that the government still pays great heed to quality control mechanisms for all providers that supply those recognised as the most important in-school factor in a child's learning – their teachers.

Annette Rome is Director of Staff learning at Methodist Ladies' College and is Victorian state president of the Australian College of Educators. She is a Fellow of both the Australian College of Educators and Australian Council for Educational Leaders.

Professor John Munro is Head of Studies in Gifted Education and Exceptional Learning in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne.

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“ *The New Zealand parliament has amended the Education Act, allowing the establishment of publicly funded private schools. The schools will not have to employ registered teachers or follow the national curriculum.* ”

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Congratulations to the 2013 ACE Fellows

Eighteen outstanding Australian educators have been honoured with Fellowship of the Australian College of Educators (ACE).

The 2013 Fellowships were announced by National President-Elect, Professor Stephen Dinham, at a gala dinner held in Melbourne on 20 June on the eve of the College's national conference.

Fellowship is one of the highest honours that the college can bestow. Fellows have been judged by their peers to have made a distinctive and outstanding contribution to education in Australia.

ACE congratulates the 2013 College Fellows.

Associate Professor Joseph Zajda FACE

Associate Professor Joseph Zajda has made an outstanding contribution to research in education with particular emphasis on globalisation, gender and equity and to the enhancement of teacher education.

Dr Dan White FACE

Dr Daniel White has made an outstanding contribution to educational leadership in Catholic education at diocesan, state and national levels and to educational scholarship and research. This research has included a focus on brain-based learning theory and its practical implications for classroom pedagogy, especially in the field of religious education.

Dr Edwin Boyce FACE

Dr Edwin (Ted) Boyce OAM has made an outstanding contribution to the global expansion of Christian Education. Through his far-sighted leadership he has achieved excellence in the inclusion of Christian Education within the curriculum of Pacific Hills Christian School and as an important component in teacher education programs conducted through Morling Education (formerly Southland College).

Dr Judy Smeed FACE

Dr Judy Smeed is recognised for her outstanding contribution to the enhancement of student academic outcomes through assisting schools in analysing student performance data in independent, Catholic and state schools in Queensland.



New Fellows in attendance at the pre-conference dinner and presentation evening. Left to right: Associate Professor Joseph Zajda, Mr Tony Bryant, Mr Brian Short, Mr Garry Le Duff and Mr Peter Russell.

Mr Brian Short FACE

For more than four decades, Brian Short has demonstrated exemplary leadership in researching and implementing curriculum and pedagogical change at Brisbane Grammar School.

Mr Christopher Bonnor FACE

Chris Bonnor has demonstrated outstanding professional practice and leadership through significant contributions to student learning and teaching practice, outstanding leadership of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council and contributions to education policy development in NSW; all of which has been characterised by an unwavering commitment to equity of opportunity and outcomes for students.

Mr Garry Le Duff FACE

For an outstanding contribution to education and the outcomes of students at the local, state and national level. Garry is committed to an education system that starts from the premise that high standards and excellence in educational outcomes should be accessible for all students and is a champion of education in South Australia.

Mr Gregory Prior FACE

Gregory Prior has demonstrated outstanding leadership of the NSW state education system, by enhancing the personalised learning culture of public schools to build capacity of staff, and by developing the highest community confidence in public education.

Mr Ian Moore FACE

Ian David Moore has made an outstanding contribution to innovative teaching and leadership of Economics and Business Studies by mentoring, rewarding success and instilling confidence in all his students to achieve the highest outcomes, particularly in secondary boys' education.

Mr Peter Russell FACE

For an outstanding contribution to leadership in the education of Aboriginal students in remote areas and an ongoing commitment to working with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the wider community to enhance educational opportunities for Aboriginal students and Reconciliation Education at a state and national level.

Mr Roy Clark FACE

Roy Clark has made an outstanding contribution to both Chemical Education specifically and administrative leadership in Science Education in general. Roy has served with distinction as a teacher lecturer and administrator in a wide range of educational institutions, including high schools, CAEs, TAFE and Universities.

Mr Stuart Hemmings FACE

Stuart Hemmings is an outstanding educational leader who has played a significant role in shaping and developing state policy for schools, and who continues to display a passion for agricultural education as well as advancing the education profession by promoting the values and importance of best education practices for our society.

Mr Tony Bryant (Hon) FACE

For an outstanding contribution to leadership in Victorian government schools, for catering for a full and diverse range of social disadvantage in his own school and for exceptional achievement and leadership in Information Communication Technology which has been acknowledged nationally and internationally.

Mrs Tracey Cappie-Wood FACE

Tracey Cappie-Wood has made an outstanding contribution to educational leadership in the NSW and ACT education systems, in the leadership development programs for aspiring and experienced principals across the NSW public education system, and in the provision of excellence in leadership within the tertiary ACT system.

Ms Kim Jackson FACE

Ms Kim Jackson has made an outstanding contribution to educational leadership at the school, system and state levels, both in her chosen subject areas and in the advancement of students from diverse backgrounds.

Ms Roslyn Curtis FACE

For outstanding contribution to the leadership development of educators and to the enhancement of student learning and outcomes and quality leadership in Australian Schools.

Mr Phillip Bailey FACE

Phillip Bailey has made an outstanding contribution to student learning and teaching practice through his innovative and engaging whole of school general music education program at Redeemer Baptist and his contribution to state and national music education programs through Sydney Symphony and Musica Viva. Phillip has also demonstrated commitment to leadership in pastoral care at Redeemer, initiating and coordinating a holistic pastoral care program including his Senior School personal tutor scheme and annual camp study publications.

Professor Robyn Ewing FACE

Professor Robyn Ewing has made outstanding contributions to teaching and learning and research in higher education and across the schools' sectors, with particular emphasis on teacher education, quality pedagogy, literacy and the Arts. Her focus on the achievement of excellence through equity has led to the creation of innovative community learning partnerships, drawing upon powerful alliances with the theatre industry and with professional educator networks.



Barry Jones delivers his address to the pre-conference dinner and awards evening where the 2013 Fellows were announced.

Australian College of Educators

Professional Educator is the professional journal of the Australian College of Educators (ACE), a professional association representing educators across all sectors and systems of education. We encourage and foster open, collaborative discussion to enable our members to provide the best outcomes for Australian students across all levels of education.

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Membership

As a member of ACE you will be part of a community of educators who have made a commitment to raising the status of their profession, and to their own professional growth and development, by joining Australia's leading education professional association. ACE members engage with enduring educational issues, and the hot topics of the day, through networking, professional reading and a range of events and activities organised through our regional groups across Australia. Member benefits include:

- the opportunity to contribute to an informed advocacy body for the education profession
- the entitlement to use the letters MACE as a recognised, professional post-nominal
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