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The minority Commonwealth government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard is now ‘moving forward’ with the Review of Funding for Schooling, which will inform the creation of a new funding formula to be introduced from 2013.

The review, according to its terms of reference, ‘will be directed towards achieving a funding system…which is transparent, fair, financially sustainable and effective in promoting excellent educational outcomes for all Australian students’.

The current model is based on a measure of the cost of educating a student in a government school, which is then applied to non-government schools – despite government schools enrolling more of the students that are most difficult and expensive to teach.

The current funding model has been criticised for its measure of socioeconomic status not of a student’s family but of a student’s home suburb. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) used on the government’s My School website has been criticised for similar reasons – although a proposed revamp of the index may include information from individual families compiled from sources such as enrolment questionnaires.

The fact that funding for non-government schools has been ‘funding maintained’ has also been a sore point.

Finally, the current school funding system does not take into account an individual school’s capacity to generate its own income through fees, investments, donations and fundraising.

The review panel will need to find ways to address these key flaws in the current funding model – but the Commonwealth government’s track record doesn’t look good. Proposed changes to the ICSEA are already being criticised for not being comprehensive enough.

Following a planned relaunch in December, the My School website will publish information about the finances of each school, including its funding from state and Commonwealth governments, fees, charges, donations and fundraising, as well as capital expenditure. The Deloitte company will collect and check the data and ensure it is comparable across states and territories as well as government and non-government schools.

Independent schools will not be required to disclose the wealth they hold in assets, trusts, foundations, bequests, share portfolios and property portfolios. The Australian in October reported that Melbourne Grammar has net assets of $128.3 million, Scotch College, Melbourne, has $116.6 million and Geelong Grammar has $108.9 million.

As Australian Education Union President Angelo Gavrielatos has noted, this plan does not live up to Gillard’s initial vision, expressed in parliament in 2008, that, ‘Only by understanding the total amount of funds at the disposal of individual schools is it possible to understand the relationship between resourcing and educational outcomes.’

Speaking of donations, the Victorian state government is attempting to work around current funding restrictions to encourage patronage of government schools. National tax laws make it difficult for philanthropists to donate to government schools, while independent schools are able to gain ‘charitable organisation’ tax status and receive funds from alumni.

To address this, the Victorian state government recently established the Business Working with Education Foundation, headed by KPMG chairman Michael Andrew, as a charitable foundation to facilitate donations to government schools, but businesses and philanthropists who donate money to the charitable foundation will not be able to specify which school their money should support.

The schools awarded funds will not be allowed to spend them on ‘core government responsibilities’, such as teacher salaries, and under current tax laws they will not be allowed to spend them on capital works. The Victorian state government has committed to matching donations up to a total value of $2 million dollars.

In the coming months, though, it’s not going to be all about the money. It’s also going to be about the national curriculum, apparently ready for implementation from next month.

Rebecca Leech
A Time for Transformation

"Enhancing the quality and building capacity of principals to lead learning."
—Dame Patricia Collarbone

When one looks at the duties of school principals, a few key responsibilities stand out, says Dame Patricia Collarbone—most obviously the intricate business of leading teaching and learning in their school.

But principals need qualities beyond the ability to inspire and manage, says the eminent British educationist. "There’s the knowledge and understanding that you need to go with that, along with the whole thing about what you are as a person—your values, your attitudes, your personal qualities. All of those make up what you do, how you act as a person, and as a principal. That becomes quite important, too. The principal’s role is complex, then, and demands people of special capability.

Dame Pat has been engaged in detailing those complexities and defining those capabilities since she arrived in Australia in September to help develop the draft national standards for school principals for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

Creating the national standards has been an important task for AITSL since the agency was created in January this year. In shaping them, it is working with stakeholders and with national and international experts like Dame Pat.

Dame Pat sees the standards as “enhancing the quality and building capacity of principals to lead learning”.

Few people are better qualified to shape the standards than Patricia Collarbone, for school leadership and educational remodelling have been at the heart of her innovative programs in education. Now head of the Creating Tomorrow consultancy, in little more than a decade she has taken a leading role in developing the National Professional Qualification for Headship in the UK, managed the Transforming the School Workforce Pathfinder project and subsequent Workforce Modernisation program for the British Government.

Her transformational work saw her awarded Dame of the British Empire in 1998. She is no armchair theoretician: she taught for almost three decades in inner London schools before venturing into educational change management.

In Australia Dame Pat has spent three intensive weeks looking at the relevant literature, surveying international benchmarks, and consulting those with expertise or an interest in standards—educationists, academics, professional associations, education officers, and principals themselves.

The work done across Australia’s education sectors in this area is of “great quality,” she says. "This set of national standards is very much about valuing what has been done in the states and territories, and in the independent sector and so on, and seeing where the commonality is: what as a nation do we all stand for in terms of what the role of the principal is? What they should be doing? What would they aspire to do? What does excellence look like?”

For education authorities, the standards will ensure that Australians are “explicit as a nation about what is really significant and important.”

For teaching professionals who might be contemplating a move to leadership, the standards will spell out clearly the job’s demands. "If you lay that out and it’s very clear, people can aspire to it, they know what they need to do to prepare themselves to do the job," Dame Pat says.

Many teaching professionals find the school principal’s position “a bit awe-inspiring”, Dame Pat says, “particularly now in the 21st century, with so many demands being placed upon it”. All the more important that we should attract school leaders who recognise that the principal’s tasks and responsibilities add up to “one of the most exciting roles that you can take on as a professional job.”
Overcoming the democratic deficit in VET

Why VET needs its own Bradley Review
Vocational education and training prepares people for work, develops the individual and provides second-chance education for many Australians – so it’s about time Australians had a say in the policy regulating the sector, writes Leesa Wheelahan.

‘The failure of the Australian and state and territory governments to undertake…consultation on changes they contemplate to vocational education has produced a democratic deficit – a gap between government decisions and the participation of the citizens affected by those decisions.’

So wrote higher education policy analyst Dr Gavin Moodie in the Australian TAFE Teacher last year.

This ‘democratic deficit’ can be seen by the fact that vocational education and training (VET) is changing rapidly, but there is no coherence to these changes or shared understandings about what VET should be like. The danger is that the current changes will lead to the development of a new tertiary education sector that includes the upper levels of VET, but leaves the remainder as a rump. VET needs its own review, similar to the 2008 Review of Australian Higher Education led by Denise Bradley. There needs to be a vision for VET, and a shared public purpose and some explicit understanding about its relationship with schools and higher education.

THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT IN VET

The last public review of technical and further education (TAFE) was conducted 1974 by the Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education led by Myer Kangan. The Kangan Committee established TAFE as a national tertiary education sector and developed a shared sense of purpose that still lingers. TAFE’s interdependent purposes were to prepare people for work, develop the individual and provide second-chance education. There has been no public review of VET since then.

All subsequent changes to TAFE and VET have been made by government without broad public consultation. In the late 1980s, governments and policymakers were deeply suspicious of TAFE. Gillian Goozee explains in her 2001 history, The Development of TAFE in Australia, that the prevailing view during the period of reform was that TAFE had a monopoly on VET, that it was unresponsive to industry and that more weight needed to be given to the ‘demand’ side, which she explained was invariably defined in terms of industry rather than broader social objectives of public policy or the needs of students or trainees.

As a result, TAFE was subsumed into a broader VET system so that it was one provider in a competitive VET market, and its purpose was redefined as preparing people with the specific skills they needed to perform specific jobs. Henceforth, VET was subordinated to national economic imperatives and the Kangan vision was gone from policy. VET was to be ‘industry-led’ and produce the skills that industry needed. Competency-based training was implemented so that learning outcomes were defined in terms of industry-designated workplace tasks and roles, and VET qualifications were bundled up in ‘training packages’ and exclusively based on this industry-focused outcomes approach.

VET teachers were excluded from the development of training packages and felt that their professionalism was undermined. The exclusion of teachers from developing VET qualifications contributed to narrowing the curriculum and downplaying the importance of underpinning knowledge.

In 2004, Kaye Schofield and Rod McDonald led a review of training packages. They addressed the high level of discontent in calling for a ‘new settlement’ to underpin training packages based on a new consensus about their purpose. They also argued for less emphasis on regulation and compliance, and for more faith in the professionalism of VET practitioners.

In contrast to this ‘democratic deficit’, this dearth of review, public debate or professional feedback of VET policy, are the many reviews of higher education. Submissions to these reviews and the reviews themselves have been publicly debated and discussed, and most of the key changes to higher education have been as a result of recommendations from reviews. This highlights, as Gavin Moodie has argued, that the public must have an opportunity to contribute to a comparable debate about VET to improve policy...
outcomes, build the legitimacy of VET policy and provide the basis for policy implementation.

**WHY VET NEEDS ITS OWN REVIEW**

A review of VET is needed now because of the pace of change. Many in VET have adopted the Bradley Review of higher education as VET’s review, partly because there has been no review of VET, and partly because its recommendations have implications for VET. However, these implications are for upper-level VET, and do not include lower-level VET qualifications. The Bradley Review argued for a better-integrated tertiary education system, including more consistent fees, funding and regulatory arrangements for upper-level VET programs and higher education programs. In a joint statement, TAFE Directors Australia and Universities Australia, the peak bodies of TAFE institutes and universities respectively, have defined tertiary education qualifications as ‘those at diploma level and above, including where these qualifications may embed pathways from the qualification level below’. At best, this may include Certificates IV, but it is hard to see how it could include lower-level certificates, and so it is clear that, while the recommendations of the Bradley Review may be welcome, this review alone is not sufficient to cover VET policy.

There are some very good reasons why we need much more consistent arrangements between VET and higher education. We need consistency in funding, governance, quality assurance, definitions and policies if we are to build a coherent tertiary education system, promote collaboration between institutions and support student pathways.

We also need more curricular consistency. Only about 30 per cent of VET graduates end up in the jobs associated with their qualifications. Degrees are increasingly becoming the entry-level qualification in many occupations, and diploma graduates compete less favourably with degree graduates for the same jobs. It is hard to sustain arguments for curricular differentiation in qualifications with VET offering competency-based qualifications and higher education offering curriculum-based qualifications, when the labour market outcomes are not so differentiated. If nothing else, this should challenge the basis of the sectoral divide and raise questions about the relationship between the sectors. The existing arrangements seem to particularly disadvantage VET students compared to higher education students.

The sectoral divide is under further pressure through the growth of ‘mixed-sector’ provision. Apart from the five recognised dual-sector universities, many universities now offer VET in their own right, through companies they have established for this purpose, or in partnership with private providers. TAFE institutes offer bachelor degrees in every state except Tasmania and in the Northern Territory where TAFE is part of the dual-sector university. In addition, approximately 62 private providers offer both VET and higher education. This mixed-sector provision will grow, and we need public policy that will support this expansion, ensure it is high quality, and enable students who attend these institutions to have a similar ‘higher education experience’ to those attending universities, as well as similar opportunities and outcomes.

However, arguably bigger challenges for VET are the outcomes from lower-level VET qualifications and VET in schools. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research reports that 41 per cent of all senior secondary school students participated in VET in schools in 2008. Students from equity groups are over-represented in lower-level VET qualifications such as Certificates I and II, and the further study outcomes and labour market outcomes from these qualifications are very poor. The outcomes for young people aged between 15 and 19 years are particularly worrying. Their employment outcomes declined by almost three per cent from 2001 to 2008, and their further study outcomes declined by about five per cent.

A focus only on upper-level VET takes attention away from these outcomes and the policy challenges they pose. The key challenge for equity policy in Australia is to increase access by disadvantaged students in lower-level VET qualifications such as Certificates I and II, and the further study outcomes and labour market outcomes from these qualifications are very poor. The outcomes for young people aged between 15 and 19 years are particularly worrying. Their employment outcomes declined by almost three per cent from 2001 to 2008, and their further study outcomes declined by about five per cent.

A focus only on upper-level VET takes attention away from these outcomes and the policy challenges they pose. The key challenge for equity policy in Australia is to increase access by disadvantaged students in lower-level VET qualifications to diplomas. This is for two reasons. The first is because diploma graduates achieve better labour market outcomes compared to those from lower-level VET qualifications. The second is because diplomas are the key qualifications used by VET students to access higher education. Consequently, the outcomes of lower-level VET qualifications are a key concern of tertiary education policy.
A review of VET would need to recognise the reality of what VET actually does, and not the limited view of it in policy.

The sector covers VET in schools, bachelor degrees, qualifications ranging from Certificate I to diplomas and advanced diplomas, and VET graduate certificates and diplomas. Its students include the most disengaged young people with low-level language, literacy and numeracy skills, refugees, welfare recipients, school leavers, apprentices, those seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce and those wishing to upgrade their skills or develop new skills, university graduates, and highly skilled professionals.

Any review of VET would need to recognise this diversity of students, learning contexts and environments, goals and purposes.

A review of VET would also need to consider the relationship between VET and schools and higher education. It would consider how VET can build a social ladder of opportunity for students from low-level qualifications to higher-level qualifications, including bachelor degrees. VET’s central importance in achieving government policy objectives for senior school certificates and higher education qualifications would be recognised and recommendations to support VET in these roles would need to be considered. Such a review would demonstrate that the schools and higher education sectors rely on VET to achieve their own objectives.

A review would also need to recognise the challenges that VET has in meeting government policy objectives. VET is now required to incorporate ‘green skills’ in all qualifications, embed language, literacy, numeracy skills and employability skills, and ensure students are technologically literate and have the knowledge and skills they need to embark on educational pathways. It must play a role in supporting government targets for educational participation and attainment, not just for VET qualifications, but also for targets for school retention and higher education qualifications.

This requires reviewing the ‘official’ purpose of VET, which is to provide the specific skills that industry requires. VET must do this, but much more besides. We need a vision for VET that goes beyond a narrow focus on training people for specific workplace roles and tasks, particularly when VET graduates don’t end up working in those jobs. If VET is to serve multiple purposes and meet government policy requirements, we must also emphasise its educational purposes, not just its vocational outcomes. This may well mean a return to the Kangan vision that integrated educational and vocational purposes.

REFERENCES

Dr Leesa Wheelahan is an associate professor at the LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management at the University of Melbourne.
The Commonwealth government has adopted a social inclusion agenda designed to better integrate social and economic policies to reduce disadvantage in the Australian community. Increasing participation and success in education and training are key aspects of this agenda, as reflected in the recent government targets set to improve the participation, engagement and attainment of disadvantaged students in higher education.

Vocational education and training (VET) will play an important role in meeting the aims of this agenda, particularly in providing education to people who have not experienced success in schools.

The National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC), an advisory body for the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, has a particular interest in the implications of the national social inclusion agenda for vocational education and training.

NVEAC was established in 2009 to replace three VET equity advisory bodies covering Indigenous, disability and equity issues. Its focus is on recognising the needs of all students experiencing poor access, participation and achievement in the national training system.

This article is based on a paper we wrote for NVEAC, entitled "Equitable and Inclusive VET," in which we drew together the major issues that need to be addressed to achieve a socially inclusive VET system, particularly the integration of equity into all aspects of the national training system to ensure it meets the needs of all learners and potential learners.

Education is one part of a broader social, economic and political context. Factors such as poverty, homelessness, long-term unemployment and remoteness from educational opportunities—all of which affect educational participation and attainment—need to be addressed if equity in education is to be achieved.

Issues within the broader educational context, such as non-completion of schooling, poor education experience, and poor or inadequate pathways between education sectors, also need to be addressed.

Governments and education systems can learn lessons about equity and inclusion in VET from past experience. They should identify where acting on established research and expert opinion is appropriate and the type of action required.

AGENDAS AND AGREEMENTS

In the broader context, the issues for VET with the potential to impact on equity in the near future arise in the main from a reform agenda of national agreements by the Council of Australian Governments.

These national agreements acknowledge that some people in the community continue to face barriers to education and training, experience disadvantage in education and training systems, and achieve poorer outcomes. They recognise the need for action to create fairer, more inclusive systems that will enable greater
participation and success, and promote better outcomes.

Education and training objectives are contained within the national agreements on education, skills and workforce development, and on Indigenous reform. They include improved participation in, and outcomes from, schooling; the provision of opportunities for all Australians to participate in education and training to improve their employability in the labour market; overcoming barriers to education participation and attainment; and reducing the gap between the skills and qualifications of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Commonwealth government’s productivity agenda also has implications for social inclusion. Education and training are critical for raising the skills of the workforce to ensure Australia is competitive in a global market. The productivity agenda seeks to ensure that the skills of the Australian workforce match the skills needed in the labour market. The productivity agenda has an emphasis on lifelong learning that recognises the need for workers to learn continually in order to maintain and improve the relevance of their knowledge and skills in a changing economy.

BUILDING ON EXISTING KNOWLEDGE
In the VET sector, some valuable insights that can inform new approaches to equity and social inclusion are found in the work of the previous equity taskforces, and experts such as equity researchers and practitioners. In particular, previous equity blueprints and expert opinion raise nine main issues:

* Progressing a whole-of-life approach: There is a need to join initiatives across areas such as improved service delivery, the removal of infrastructure barriers, and the raising of personal and community expectations. Research into equity issues has recognised that people can experience disadvantage in multiple dimensions, and that a multi-pronged approach, through integrated government and community services, is likely to be more effective than isolated programs.

* Supporting students: There is a need for improved information to assist prospective students to make decisions about course choices and to understand academic expectations. There is also a need for the provision of advice and support that is individually appropriate to the student and his or her needs and goals.

* Systemic reform: The system needs to be redeveloped according to universal design principles that assume a diverse student body rather than ‘typical’ and ‘other’ students. This will ensure that at every level and in every way the VET system accommodates and supports the different learning needs of participants.

* Transitions and pathways: There is a need for consistent support for students when they move across education sectors, and between education, training and the labour market, especially for those who are, or may, experience difficulties, such as some students with disabilities.

* Employment outcomes: Stronger attention is required to this area, such as more funding to support transitions to employment, and measures to improve the match between skills and employment opportunities where required.

* Funding: Greater flexibility is needed to accommodate students who take longer or need more resources to achieve a positive VET outcome. There is also a need for incentives for systems and providers to focus on issues of equity and inclusion.

* Partnerships: There is a need to build, strengthen and extend existing partnerships between VET and other education institutions, government, community organisations, employers and industries, and advocacy organisations for disadvantaged groups.

* Enhancing the VET system: Reform needs to occur at the system level, by ensuring that VET reflects Australia’s formal commitments to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds; and at the local level, by ensuring that core products and services are responsive, flexible and appropriate to the needs of individual learners.

* Measuring achievements: It is important to measure the impacts of changes in policies and initiatives to know where improvements have been made and where further effort is needed. Measurement is also needed to strengthen the national monitoring of performance and enhancements to existing data.
collections, and to provide greater consistency in definitions and measures across state and sectoral boundaries.

**LEARNING LESSONS**

There are four main lessons to take forward in attempting to create an equitable and accessible VET system:

1. Previous efforts to address disadvantage in VET and support greater equity have built up substantial expertise, resources and ideas, including where there are problems and difficulties, which strategies have been tried, what new approaches need to be taken, and the traps and pitfalls to avoid. This knowledge is critical to the success of future efforts.

2. It is insufficient to work to address the specific difficulties faced by groups identified as disadvantaged in VET without making the systemic changes necessary to ensure the VET system is designed and operates in such a way that it can sustainably meet the needs of all learners and potential learners. Failing to do so could potentially put gains at risk and lead to the emergence of new categories of disadvantage.

3. A new understanding has emerged that participation and attainment in education and training must be viewed and approached within a social context – recognising that a very broad range of interconnected factors influence education and training, many of which are outside the VET system. A whole-of-life approach needs to be promoted, requiring strong partnerships and conjoined effort with a range of agencies and groups outside the system.

4. The VET system must continue to pay attention to the particular difficulties faced by Indigenous students and students with a disability. Special effort will be required where disadvantage is entrenched, particularly in encouraging people in these groups to progress to higher qualification levels.

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When you think of professional development (PD), what springs to the forefront of your mind? Do you think of attending a workshop, going to a conference or being at an information session? Chances are these will all cost your organisation money.

As the founder and chief executive officer of the largest vocational education and training (VET) PD company in Australia, maybe I should not be telling you this, but you don’t always have to pay for PD! There are plenty of alternative ways to ensure your staff develop their knowledge and skills, and keep on top of the latest techniques that don’t cost you a cent.

I firmly believe that PD is a crucial element of any organisation, even more so for training providers. The VET sector is unique in its requirement for trainers and assessors to possess and maintain skills and qualifications in both industry and training. For Australia’s workforce to be the best, our trainers and assessors need to be first class.

Trainers’ and assessors’ vocational currency and the quality of their teaching and assessing play a huge role in the workforce capability of many different industries. Take a look around your local town or suburb: hairdressing salons, motels, health clinics, restaurants, tourist attractions, aged and community care facilities, road maintenance and house building all rely on vocational skills. The importance of PD for VET practitioners cannot be over-emphasised.

According to the Western Australian professional development framework for vocational skills of VET practitioners, all practitioners need to acquire the “skills necessary to competitively...
perform, to an industry-acceptable standard, the functions of the occupation for which they train and/or assess learner competency…(in terms of) both the ability to undertake and complete a series of specified tasks (technical skills) and the personal attributes (employability skills) that enterprise and industry associate with a “work-ready” individual’.

VET practitioners must possess the competencies for which they train and/or assess their learners. The defining strength of VET is its ability to produce work-ready individuals, but it is important that practitioners recognise there is a difference between vocational skills and teaching and learning skills.

Under the current Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) Essential Conditions and Standards for Continuing Registration – just as in previous incarnations of the AQTF – there is a strong emphasis on continuous improvement.

In the most recent AQTF, Standard 1.4, which requires trainers to maintain and improve their teaching skills and their industry currency of technical skills and knowledge, has been strengthened, and now states that training and assessment is delivered by trainers and assessors who:

(a) have the necessary training and assessment competencies as determined by the National Quality Council or its successors
(b) have the relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered or assessed
(c) can demonstrate current industry skills directly relevant to the training or assessment being undertaken, and
(d) continue to develop their VET knowledge and skills as well as their industry currency and trainer/assessor competence.

The specific AQTF focus on the industry currency of training staff seems to have increased registered training organisation (RTO) attention on this matter. RTO managers appear to be more aware of the need to have suitable systems in place to recognise, plan for, and support industry, and trainer and assessor, currency requirements.

So what does that mean for an RTO? All trainers and assessors of nationally recognised training must meet agreed competency requirements and continue to develop their training and assessing competencies.

In order to achieve this, there are key actions an RTO can take to help support its trainers and assessors.

**SUPPORTING TRAINERS AND ASSESSORS**

The first action an RTO can take to support practitioners is to facilitate their meaningful engagement with industry and relevant professional bodies. The Queensland Department of Education’s *Keeping It Real* report on the industry currency of trainers suggests activities such as:

- industry placement
- concurrent employment in industry and the RTO
- industry and professional association membership
- attending conferences, professional workshops and industry specific development programs
- attending professional development activities run by industry skills alliances
- researching best and new practice and general research
- subscribing to professional journals and publications
- applying for sponsored corporate teaching awards and scholarships
- networking with industry mentors, employers and other trainers
- talking to students about practices and job roles in their workplaces
- industry specialist visits, industry site visits and study tours
- undertaking specific training courses in new equipment or skill sets
- work shadowing, and
- fulfilling industry licensing or regulatory requirements.

The *Keeping It Real* report found that ‘Trainers who worked in teams with a strong industry currency culture were positive and enthusiastic about maintaining their industry currency. They sought new and innovative ways of engaging with their local employers to promote, strengthen and raise professional standards in both the industry and training.’

The report found that the benefits of VET trainers maintaining industry currency of their technical skills and knowledge include:

- the trainer is engaged with the latest industry practices and technologies, with industry specialists and with business networks, partnerships and relationships
- the trainer is passionate about his or her industry and educational practice
• industry has a better understanding of training issues, and
• training programs and resources match industry requirements for skills.

The second action an RTO can take is to support trainers and assessors with their understanding of teaching and learning methods, and to make sure they know and understand the requirements of the VET system. Much of this support can be provided through in-house discussion opportunities, as simply as including a segment about teaching, learning, assessment or AQTF requirements in regularly scheduled meetings. Devoting as little as 15 minutes per meeting actually builds up to a considerable amount of information input and professional discussion over a year. Encouraging trainers and assessors to observe each other or to validate each other’s work can build a culture of professionalism.

The third action an RTO can take is to foster a culture of critical evaluation and innovation. We need to move away from a ‘keeping my arm around my work’ mentality to a view of the world that values sharing and constructive criticism. We need to encourage staff to see change as an opportunity rather than a threat. We need to see continuous improvement in terms of the four-step ‘plan, do, check, act’ problem-solving cycle typically used in business process improvement.

COMPLYING WITH THE AQTF

In order to comply with the AQTF, PD should be recorded so the RTO is able to demonstrate compliance against its requirements.

RTOs should record any activities that can be considered as evidence of PD, including:
• attendance at relevant PD activities
• participation in networks, communities of practice or mentoring activities
• participation in industry release schemes
• reading of industry journals
• participation in projects with industry, and
• shadowing or working closely with other trainers/assessors.

Up-to-date records of the verified qualifications and competence of all VET trainers and assessors must be maintained by the RTO. Useful ways of actually doing this in practice could be through the use of teacher/trainer/assessor profiles, a teacher/trainer qualification and current

Top 10 resources

There is a wide range of resources that are free, or low cost, available to RTOs to support the PD of their staff. Here are my top 10:

Standards for professional development
Department of Education and Training, Queensland

Professional development planning tool
Department of Education and Training, Queensland

Keeping it real: Industry currency of trainers in Queensland
Department of Education and Training, Queensland

Professional development framework for vocational skills of VET practitioners: A guide on how to maintain and enhance the vocational skills of VET practitioners
Department of Training and Workforce Development, Western Australia
www.vetinfonet.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/docs/t18%20professional%20dev%20framework_lr2.pdf

Troubleshooting guide: Assessment in VET
Department of Training and Workforce Development, Western Australia
https://vetinfonet-staging.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/resources.aspx

Guidelines for assessing competence in VET
Department of Training and Workforce Development, Western Australia
https://vetinfonet-staging.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/resources.aspx

A guide to continuous improvement of assessment in VET
Department of Training and Workforce Development, Western Australia
https://vetinfonet-staging.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/resources.aspx

Designing assessment tools for quality outcomes in VET
Department of Training and Workforce Development, Western Australia
https://vetinfonet-staging.det.wa.edu.au/progdev/resources.aspx

A guide to developing Training Package assessment materials

And, of course a range of resources is available from Velg Training
www.velgtraining.com
competency form, a direct supervision record sheet, a team assessment responsibility plan and a supervision of teacher/trainer/assessor staff form. These types of recording documents are not attached to the back of the User Guides for the AQTF. It is the responsibility of each RTO to develop and maintain these. Velg Training has developed templates, which are available through membership.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research report, Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce, released in September, examines key issues underpinning PD structures and proposes a set of features for the development of a workforce development strategy. Hugh Guthrie, the author of this report, outlined three levels of vocational skills PD:

1. formal learning, which is a structured program of instruction that is recognised by the attainment of a formal qualification or award such as a certificate, diploma or degree
2. non-formal learning, which takes place through a program of instruction but does not lead to the attainment of a formal qualification, for example in-house PD, and
3. informal learning, which results from daily work-related, social, family, hobby or leisure activities, such as the acquisition of skills developed through the experience of working.

**FOSTERING A CULTURE OF COMPETENCY**

So, PD is essential for the good of Australia’s workforce and future productivity, but how does an RTO manage this process? Feedback from our clients has indicated that decisions in RTOs about what is recorded as currency are often compliance-driven rather than focusing on continuous improvement. This can lead to a culture of ‘we are doing this for the auditors’ rather than ‘we are doing this as part of our personal, professional and organisational growth’.

To achieve real staff growth, it is important for RTO managers to assess the competency and knowledge of their trainers and assessors to identify any gaps and to use these identified gaps to set learning goals. Recording progress then is not just a compliance activity, but a means of measuring the learning outcomes of the PD activity. Successful RTOs will share the outcomes of these experiences in order to align the organisation to a continuous improvement model for all staff. And, of course, any strategy or goal needs to be reviewed to reflect on the benefits and limitations of such an activity.

I believe there is still a time and place for staff to attend ‘paid for’ PD opportunities to ensure that they are getting the correct information from the leaders in the industry, but it is important to take an holistic approach to your PD workforce strategy. Focus on measurable outcomes by providing your staff with flexibility and variety. As an RTO, it is extremely important to recognise information learning as a source of evidence. Staff will never be fully on board unless the RTO commits to continuous professional growth and empowers its staff, challenging them to continue to grow and supporting them in their endeavours.

PD is a crucial part of the VET industry. By participating in formal, non-formal or informal learning we will build the professionalism and capabilities of our nation’s VET practitioners through improved teaching, learning and assessment practices relevant to the learners’ needs.

Michelle Weaver is the CEO of Velg Training (formerly known as Voc Ed Learning Group). Velg Training provides professional development to the VET sector through workshops, consultancy, conferences and membership. For more information go to velgtraining.com

**REFERENCES**


Working-class heroes

Interviews with ‘working-class’ university students suggest new ways to think about social class, identity and university aspirations. Murdoch University’s Jane Pearce, Barry Down and Elizabeth Moore explain their research.

With government policy encouraging wider participation rates from under-represented groups of people within the university sector, working-class students have found themselves to be the objects of numerous policy prescriptions and recommendations.

What seems to be largely missing, however, is an understanding of how students themselves make sense of and negotiate their educational identities and futures. Their voices and perspectives are mostly absent from policy analysis and debates.

We undertook a small study, drawing on a series of conversations with students on a small regional university campus to explore what it means from their perspective to be included in or excluded from the benefits of education and how social class fashions their life chances.

While social class has held a prominent position in the sociology of education literature to explain educational inequality, it is a term that has largely been excised from recent policy debates in favour of less controversial terms such as disad-
vantage, low socioeconomic status (SES), at risk, disengaged and so on.

As bell hooks points out in her book *Where we Stand: Class matters*, class is nowadays an ‘uncool subject’ because it makes us all ‘tense, nervous, uncertain about where we stand’. After all, Australia is supposed to be a classless society where individual effort and talent determines how high people can rise on the ladder of opportunity, not social class.

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that class analysis of our social and political institutions is often dismissed as irrelevant or unhelpful. For us, however, the category of class resonates repeatedly in our work with university students from working-class backgrounds. We believe it remains a salient and powerful category in understanding the cultural processes of advantaging and disadvantaging of students in education at all levels.

**THE STUDY**

To better understand these cultural processes we set out to examine, through interviews, the experiences of a small group of university students from a community typically described as ‘disadvantaged’. We wanted to look behind the statistics that show a long history of unequal access to university education in Australia, such as those found in the *Review of Australian Higher Education*, also known as the Bradley Report, to develop a snapshot of how students from working-class backgrounds experience university education.

We invited students to share their stories of how they came to be at university, and what it was like for them once they got there. Importantly, we wanted to understand, through the use of stories, what kinds of obstacles and barriers get in the way of their learning and what assets and resources most help them.

In pursuing this project, we turned to Pierre Bourdieu’s writing on class, particularly his 1996 book *Reproduction*, to understand how the processes of economic and cultural reproduction occur in educational institutions such as universities.

Bourdieu propounded the concept of habitus, defined in his 1982 book, *In Other Words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*, as ‘a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment..., as well as being the organising principles of action’. Our habitus is a set of acquired understandings or perceptions through which we interpret our everyday world. It is deeply affected by our upbringing and education, our gender, age and racial background, and other social, industrial and political structures within which we live.

Bourdieu’s concepts of institutional and cultural habitus are especially helpful in illuminating the norms and practices of institutions and of particular social classes, and the ways in which particular cultural habitus are not only reproduced but contested and transformed. We want to provide a sense of how these complex cultural processes are worked through by some of our students.

**DROPPING OUT**

Brian’s story tells us something about how masculinity and working-class culture impacted on his own aspirations and expectations. In Brian’s words: ‘Going to uni just wasn’t on the cards for us, the kids I went to school with. The bosses’ kids went to uni. They got the cars and we borrowed ours. I knew that once I turned 18 I could go to work in the foundry and earn good money and become a man. It’s really mixed up with the identity of who you are as the man: part of the image of being a bloke. Most of the kids I knew started drinking from an early age because that’s what you did, and then once you got old enough to work you tried to match the other guys who were the veterans.’

Brian’s story is a powerful example of the kinds of constraints facing many working-class boys as they struggle to construct a sense of self within the prevailing working-class habitus. In the setting he describes, education reinscribes the demarcation between those with power and those without. Those with power, ‘the bosses’ kids’, are in a position to retain power because they can go to university. For kids like Brian, university was just ‘not on the cards’ and they now face futures that are likely to be circumscribed by a lifetime of work in the foundry. We see how the habitus of the school and that of the broader community have together resulted in a particular world view and of Brian’s own place in it.

We saw similar evidence of the impact of institutional habitus on the behaviour of other students as they made decisions about their individual and collective futures. Students like Bec, Franci and Kath believe that ‘people like us don’t fit in at school’.

Bec was a transient child. When she did turn up to school the teachers used to tell her off because
she didn’t have the ‘stuff’ that the other kids had. Franci also failed to fit in at school; she thinks this was because her mum was a single parent. The teachers put her at the back of the class and told her not to disturb anybody else and just stay there. Because of this she thought she was too stupid to go to university. Kath discovered that sometimes even if you do the ‘right thing’ such as answer a question correctly you still get into trouble. She found that for students like her (she is Indigenous) it could sometimes be detrimental to know anything, because you ended up with a clip around the ear.

Not fitting in because of ‘deficit’ stereotypes associated with being a transient child, or the child of a single parent, or an Indigenous child who knows more than she ought to, has led to these students becoming ‘problems’ in the classroom. Again, institutional habitus works in largely unconscious ways to exclude significant numbers of working-class students from the benefits of education.

Other stories highlight how many working-class students self-select out of education by making a conscious decision not to sit competitive tertiary entrance examinations. From their perspective, sitting the exams was a waste of time because the academic curriculum was seen to be the preserve of the smart kids from middle-class backgrounds.

Megan is one of those students who didn’t do her final exams because she felt it would ‘bring the school down’, and she didn’t want to be responsible for that.

Jen also worried about doing the exams, because everyone told her how stressful it was going to be. She knew she would not cope well with the stress, so she decided not to sit the exam.

Scott was doing fine during Year 12, and was all set to take his exams, but when he did badly in his mock exams it ‘freaked’ him out so he chose not to sit the final exams.

At Dylan’s school, students had the idea drilled into them that if you didn’t do the exams you might as well drop out. So Dylan followed the script, dropped out and went to technical college instead.

This stories highlight the gatekeeping role of the formal examination process in sifting and sorting different classes of students. Students, first, appear to measure themselves against the ‘gold standard’ provided by the examination system that separates the learning ‘failures’ from the learning ‘successes’. They then collude in the sorting process by taking matters into their own hands and making a decision to withdraw. Megan puts the school’s reputation before her own future. Jen has been told how difficult and stressful exams are, so on this basis she decides to opt out. Scott, panicked by his experience of failure, does not sit his exams. Even Dylan, though he frames his own script as one of resistance when he acts against the grain by dropping out, also effectively colludes in his own exclusion.

These different narratives show some of the ways in which the everyday practices, habits and routines of institutional life shape students’ educational experiences and learning identities, and in the process perpetuate the established social order. For each participant in this research their social class background has circumscribed their life chances.

What is interesting is that educational inequality is brought about when students’ futures are bound by their social class habitus rather than individual capabilities, dreams or aspirations. As Carolyn Shields, Russell Bishop and André Mazawi argue in Pathologising Practices: The impact of deficit thinking on education, when school failure is blamed on the individuals because of their class affiliations it contributes to a ‘deficit’ form of thinking that pathologises students and predisposes many to disengage from schooling. Such practices are expressed in discourses that frame the experiences of students and teachers, and sustain the idea that existing power relations and associated educational inequities are deemed to be natural and just.

REFERENCES

On the other hand, these stories also challenge the position taken by many sociologists since the 1980s that class identities have weakened. Mike Savage, in *A New Class Paradigm?*, provides a more appropriate account when he suggests that while there have recently been ‘fundamental social changes’ these involve ‘the re-working rather than the eradication of social class’.

It seems that students are shaping more fluid identities at the intersection of more traditional notions of ‘working’ and ‘middle’ class, as they engage in an institution colonised by middle-class culture and values. Taking this approach, we can now begin to appreciate how students’ desire to learn is often embedded in the realities of their working-class identity rather than through any notion of innate intelligence or ability.

Dylan believes, for instance, that university changes your life. Because of this, he would now love to teach at university. He wants to teach people who are like him, those that ‘should not’ be at university. More than anything else, this is what keeps him there.

Kath believes that university allows you to do and be whoever you want to be. She is now better able to understand the world from the perspective of people like her. She is studying human resources, and the experience of her present work as a casual clerical assistant makes her think that the human resource practices she sees in operation have nothing to do with humans at all. She is excited about being able to change this after she qualifies.

Bec, who went to at least 26 schools between the ages of five and 11, now wants to be a teacher. She wants to know how she can challenge children’s learning identities so as to avoid academic failure, low expectations and limited futures. She knows how hard it is for many children just to get to school on time, let alone bring shoes or lunch.

And Marie is studying community development and wants to work with young people in her local community. She says it’s about equality. The gap is too wide, and she believes it can actually be bridged. She is angry when people who have never lacked privilege think they know what being underprivileged is like. She thinks you only have a really good sense of it when you have actually been there.

These stories suggest a different analysis of identity, aspiration and social mobility, with students from working-class backgrounds seeking the status and power afforded by middle-class occupations not for their own individual status, but rather so they can work to improve the life chances of others from a similar class background. What we find here is a strong sense of civic responsibility and solidarity. Participants do not see their futures in terms of becoming middle class, but in terms of giving something back to the community to which they belong.
With government targets set to increase the proportion of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in higher education, the pressure is on schools in disadvantaged areas to improve student retention, achievement and transitions.

Dorothy Hoddinott, principal of Holroyd High School in Sydney’s western suburbs, explains how the school supported half of its Year 12 students to receive university offers.

The 2008 *Review of Australian Higher Education* chaired by Professor Denise Bradley made the point that Australia needs to take advantage of the talents of all of its people. Bradley found that although there had been an increase over the previous decade in university enrolment of under-represented groups, students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, Indigenous students and students from remote and regional areas are still seriously under-represented.

According to the Bradley Report, 25 per cent of the Australian population is categorised as low SES. The enrolment rate for low-SES students is barely 16 per cent of all university enrolments, and is not spread evenly across the university sector: low-SES students are more likely to be found in the less prestigious universities and are poorly represented in high-status courses such as law and medicine.

It is some comfort to learn that these students, once enrolled, tend to have a high success rate at university, similar to that of other students. Given that the challenges for low-SES students to complete their schooling, gain university entrance and finish their degrees are greater than for other students, their success is good news. It is hard to understand, however, why the participation rate has remained much as it was 10 years ago, lower than for comparable countries. When you combine this with relatively low school attendance and retention rates for low-SES students, we clearly have a problem.

Bradley concluded that current policy and funding have not achieved more equitable access and participation for low-SES students. Projects that have been successful in increasing tertiary participation rates are highly targeted and tend to involve partnerships between tertiary and schools sectors. Early intervention and outreach, strategic funding and support, and the establishment of national targets are essential. Bradley recommended a national target of 20 per cent low-SES participation by 2020, which has since become government policy.

At Holroyd High School, in Sydney’s multicultural west, we have been following these developments with great interest. Holroyd is one of those schools that does not conform to
predictions based on its social mix or its results in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). It is a small, comprehensive, coeducational high school, with a fluctuating enrolment of about 350 students in Years 7 to 12 and 200 in the Intensive English Centre, where newly arrived students from non-English-speaking backgrounds spend up to a year learning English before moving into mainstream schooling. Holroyd is what used to be called a disadvantaged school, and is now known as a Priority Schools Program school.

Eighty-seven percent of all students in Years 7 to 12 are of non-English-speaking background and few were born in Australia: 35 per cent have been in Australia for fewer than three years, and 61 per cent for fewer than seven years. Almost 50 per cent are refugees, all of whom have suffered dislocation and trauma, and substantial interruption to their education. Some have had no schooling at all; their first experience of schooling is when they enrol in the Intensive English Centre. They are all poor.

The knowledge and skills gap in their learning can be enormous for these students, not only in content knowledge but also in the cultural knowledge that underpins the successful negotiation of the whole curriculum, and of examinations.

The Commonwealth government’s My School website has given the school an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) rating of 850, which, according to the ICSEA Technical Paper, might suggest ‘a student population drawn largely from relatively disadvantaged households’. Yet, the school has not been granted support through the Commonwealth and state governments’ Low Socioeconomic Status School Communities National Partnership project. While we could speculate on the roll of the dice in this regard, it is much more useful to look at what we achieve for our students through our teaching and learning programs, careful use of our limited resources, and strategic partnerships with business and universities to mentor students and help raise their expectations. Indeed, some of the themes that Bradley teased out in her report are already embedded in the school’s practice, particularly highly targeted teaching and learning programs, early intervention, and partnerships with universities. These efforts have contributed substantially to the school’s success in getting students into university: 49 per cent of our 2009 Higher School Certificate (HSC) students received university offers in 2010, up from our usual 30 per cent average.

What does it take to achieve that level of participation, given the nature of our students and the challenges they face? At Holroyd, we necessarily have a long-term approach, because it takes our students longer than mainstream students to reach national standards. We aim to get them over the line at the HSC, rather than earlier.

Our NAPLAN results are well below the national average, and we are at the bottom of the league tables; but the value added by the school, shown in students’ improvement, is almost double the state average in literacy and more than double in numeracy. The value added by the school is also apparent in the numbers of students completing the Year 10 School Certificate: 34 per cent of 2009 Year 10 students sat the School Certificate tests fewer than three years after arriving in Australia.

We use our analysis of NAPLAN and School Certificate data to inform teaching in Years 7 to 10, as do most schools, but our programs have to be highly targeted and strategic, because there is little time for our students to make up the deficits in their knowledge and skills before they embark on HSC studies. In Years 7 to 10, we have built in additional literacy, numeracy and English as a Second Language support through funding provided by the New South Wales state government’s Priority Schools Program. We operate a Years 9 and 10 Board of Studies endorsed, school-developed English as a Second Language and cultural understandings course in the Human Society and its Environment key learning area, Australian Cultural Studies, which all recently arrived students must take as an elective. We start our business and university partnerships and mentoring programs in junior high school.

In 2009, every student in Years 8 to 12 received some form of mentoring through business and university programs, with a focus on Year 9. Holroyd High is part of the Australian
Business Community Network, which links business with disadvantaged schools through a mix of mentoring, partnership and support. Twenty Year 9 students each year undertake a six-month one-on-one mentoring program called GOALS (Growing Opportunities and Learning Skills). Students from Year 9 also take part in the University of Western Sydney’s Fast Forward mentoring program. Year 11 students attend career choice workshops.

We are one of nine schools in the University of New South Wales ASPIRE program. All students in Years 8 to 12 participate in workshops with students from the University of New South Wales, covering educational pathways, courses and careers, learning styles and time management skills; targeted students in Years 9 and 10 visit the university; and Year 11 business studies and economics students visit finance and banking companies to explore career options in that sector. Years 11 and 12 science and engineering students take part in outreach programs through the University of Sydney’s Faculty of Engineering, and the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Western Sydney science faculties.

This range of mentoring and outreach programs serves a number of useful purposes for our students that we could not deliver through the conventional curriculum: it opens our students to a greater range of university and career options than they would normally access, given their limited engagement with mainstream Australia; it familiarises them with new contexts and demystifies those contexts. An offshoot of this is increased confidence in new situations, very important for future success at university, where the majority of students are not low SES; it raises not only the students’ expectations, but also those of their families, crucial to developing a self-concept that involves continuing education. And last but not least, it reinforces and gives meaning to what students learn at school. It is a powerful motivator.

We have built high expectations into the daily life of the school. The subject-choice counselling students undergo in Years 8 and 10 reinforces this message, as do the teaching and learning programs, regular review of student progress in the senior years, and a focus on regular attendance.

Students not at school lose continuity in their learning. The majority of our students already have discontinuities in their learning. They need to be at school. Both attendance and retention rates at Holroyd are above regional and state averages. The school’s focus on achievement reinforces the expectation that students attend school and complete their schooling, and the curriculum enables that to happen, whether students are bound for university, technical and further education or apprenticeships. Our assumption is that all students will continue their education beyond school.

Because we have an intake of low literacy refugee students in the middle years of secondary schooling, we have developed specific programs and an alternative vocational HSC pathway for them, our Work Ready HSC, which delivers a combination of English, English as a Second Language, literacy and numeracy support and vocational courses. The school offers six of the eight Vocational Education and Training (VET) Framework courses in Years 11 and 12: 53 per cent of 2009 HSC students studied a VET course. We also maintain a Priority Schools Program-funded VET transition position, and a Refugee Transition Program coordinator. Our curriculum is broad, flexible and responsive to students’ needs, interests and capacities. There is a way forward for everyone.

At our first school assembly last year, I told the students that 30 per cent of our 2008 Year 12 students had received university offers.

‘That is good,’ I said. ‘Thirty per cent is the national average, but I have been reading a report by Professor Bradley, who says that 40 per cent of young Australians should go to university. From now on, I expect that 40 per cent of you will go to university!’

I guess they must have been listening!

Dorothy Hoddinott AO has been the principal of Holroyd High School since 1995. She is an Honorary Fellow of the University of Sydney, founded the Australian Council of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Associations and the Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Association (now the Australian Professional Teachers’ Association, APTA), and has the APTA Medal for Outstanding Lifetime Achievement named after her.
Want to know about professional development opportunities, conferences and just plain useful stuff? The Diary tells you what’s on.

**17 NOVEMBER**

Personalised learning symposium  
Hosted by the Australian College of Educators Victorian branch, this symposium will feature key speakers Catherine Scott, Ian Sloane and Nicholas Abbey.  
**PLACE** The University of Melbourne  
**WEBSITE** http://austcolled.com.au/events

**17-18 NOVEMBER**  
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network Conference  
**PLACE** Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide, SA  
**CONTACT** Melissa Jackson  
**PHONE** 02 9273 1577  
**EMAIL** mjackson@sl.nsw.gov.au  
**WEBSITE** www.aiatsis.gov.au/atsilirn

**25-27 NOVEMBER**  
International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education 2010 Conference  
**PLACE** The University of Queensland, Brisbane  
**EMAIL** iasceconference@uq.edu.au  

**26-27 NOVEMBER**  
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in Education Conference  
**PLACE** Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove, Brisbane  
**PHONE** 07 3138 2111  
**EMAIL** qutinformation@qut.edu.au  
**WEBSITE** http://stem.ed.qut.edu.au/

**29 NOVEMBER-1 DECEMBER**  
Internet Technologies and Society 2010 Conference  
**PLACE** Curtin University of Technology, Perth  
**PHONE** 08 9266 9266  
**WEBSITE** www.its-conf.org

**29 NOVEMBER-2 DECEMBER**  
Australian Association for Research in Education annual conference: Making a difference on teaching and learning, leadership and management, and research methodologies, production and publication.  
**PLACE** The University of Melbourne  
**CONTACT** Jan Wright  
**PHONE** 03 9417 3555  
**EMAIL** info@ncsonline.com.au  
**WEBSITE** www.aare.edu.au/AARE2010

**5-8 DECEMBER**  
ASCILITE 2010 – Curriculum, Technology and Transformation for an Unknown Future Jointly hosted by the University of Technology, Sydney, the University of Queensland and Charles Sturt University.  
**PLACE** University of Technology, Sydney  
**EMAIL** info@ascilite.org.au  
**WEBSITE** www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/sydney10

**10-13 JANUARY**  
Australian Geography Teachers’ Association National Conference: Geography, going national  
The conference will provide an opportunity for educators to become familiar with the nature of the K-12 Australian Curriculum for geography. Conference participants will receive free K-12 resources to support the implementation of geography.  
**PLACE** Scotch College, Adelaide  
**EMAIL** agta2011@scotch.sa.edu.au  
**WEBSITE** www.agta.asn.au/conf2011

**24-25 & 27-28 JANUARY**  
PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) at Work Institute  
Hosted by Hawker Brownlow Professional Learning Solutions, this two-day program will give you the opportunity to work with Richard and Rebecca DuFour to gain specific, practical, and inspiring strategies for transforming your school or region into a place where student learning is central.  
**PLACE** 24-25 January, The Lakes Resort, Adelaide, then 27-28 January, Hemisphere Conference Centre, Melbourne  
**PHONE** 03 8558 2456  
**EMAIL** info@hbpls.com.au  
**WEBSITE** www.hbpls.com.au

**15-16 FEBRUARY**  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership: Building leadership capacity to close the gap on disadvantage  
Hear insights from Kerrie Tim, Dr Tom Calma, Warren Mundine, Jack Manning-Bancroft, Tania Major, and Adjunct Professor Dennis Eggington on how to empower young people and build leaders of the future.  
**PLACE** Mercure Hotel, Brisbane  
**PHONE** 1300 316 882 or 02 9239 5700  
**EMAIL** registration@criterionconferences.com  
**WEBSITE** www.indigenousleaders.com

**21-23 FEBRUARY**  
Rock and Water  
The University of Newcastle Family Action Centre and Gadaku Institute offer Rock and Water three-day workshops presented by Freerk Ykema and master instructors in all states and New Zealand. Tentative workshop dates and locations for 2011 are on the website, with the first scheduled for 21-23 February in Lismore/Casino, NSW.  
**WEBSITE** www.newcastle.edu.au/rockandwater

**28 FEBRUARY-1 MARCH**  
TAFE Governance and Regulations Forum  
Discuss the emergence of the VET sector at the core of the govern-
ment’s response for the economic recovery, and proposed reviews, reforms, broad industry consultations and a national regulatory system.

**PLACE** Rendezvous Hotel, Melbourne

**PHONE** 02 9080 4300

**WEBSITE** www.informa.com.au

**4 MARCH**

Clean Up Australia’s Schools Clean Up Day Register online for a schools clean up kit with practical advice to plan for the day and a schools climate kit to help you address relevant learning outcomes. Clean Up Australia Day follows on Sunday, 6 March.

**WEBSITE** www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/about/about-the-event/clean-up-schools

**15 MARCH**

Building Learning Power: Schools that teach confidence, curiosity and creativity Join Guy Claxton in this ACER Institute seminar to find out how we can teach for results and build the dispositions for a lifetime of satisfying learning.

**PLACE** 15 March in Brisbane, 16 March in Sydney, 23 March in Melbourne and 25 March in Adelaide

**CONTACT** Margaret Taylor

**PHONE** 03 9277 5403

**EMAIL** taylor@acer.edu.au

**WEBSITE** www.acerinstitute.edu.au/index.php/seminar/building-learning-power

**21 MARCH**

Harmony Day A program of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to address cultural, racial and religious intolerance by promoting respect, fairness and a sense of belonging for everyone.

**PHONE** 1800 331 100

**EMAIL** harmonyday@immi.gov.au

**WEBSITE** www.harmony.gov.au/harmonyday

**23 MARCH**

National Ride2School Day National Ride2School Day is a national behaviour-change initiative which aims to increase the number of students riding, or walking, to school.


**10-12 MAY**

NAPLAN National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 will be held on Tuesday 10, Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 May.

**WEBSITE** www.naplan.edu.au

**16 MAY**

The Disciplined Mind: Educational visions for the future Join Howard Gardner in this ACER Institute seminar to learn about five minds for the future and teaching for understanding.

**PLACE** 16 May in Brisbane, 17 May in Sydney, 19 May in Melbourne, 20 May in Adelaide and 23 May in Perth

**CONTACT** Margaret Taylor

**PHONE** 03 9277 5403

**EMAIL** taylor@acer.edu.au


**21-24 MAY**

Hawker Brownlow Education’s Eighth Annual Thinking and Learning Conference: Teaching for learning – where the experts speak to you Ground your professional goals in research best practice, and learn more about brain-compatible instruction; differentiated instruction; professional learning communities; curriculum planning; intervention strategies; and much more.

**PLACE** The Heath, Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne

**PHONE** 03 8558 2444

**EMAIL** conferences@hbe.com.au


**3-10 JULY**

NAIDOC Week The National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee’s NAIDOC week is a way of celebrating and promoting a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our culture.

**WEBSITE** www.naidoc.org.au

**3-7 JULY**

Teachers and the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australia combined national conference: Mathematics: Traditions and (new) practices

**PLACE** Alice Springs Convention Centre

**CONTACT** Melinda Pearson

**PHONE** 08 8363 0288

**EMAIL** admin@aamt.edu.au

**WEBSITE** www.aamt.edu.au/conferences/aamt-merga-conference

**8-10 JULY**

Australian Literacy Educators Association National Conference: Multiliterate, Multicultural, Multifaceted...Melbourne

**PLACE** Hilton on the Park, Melbourne

**CONTACT** National Curriculum Services

**PHONE** 03 9417 3555

**EMAIL** info@ncsonline.com.au

**WEBSITE** www.alea2011.com

**10-13 JULY**

CONASTA 60: Science at the top The 2011 conference of the Australian Science Teachers Association will be hosted by the Science Teachers Association of the Northern Territory.

**PLACE** Darwin High School

**CONTACT** Josie West

**PHONE** 03 9417 3555

**EMAIL** conasta@asta.edu.au

**WEBSITE** www.conasta.edu.au

**7-9 AUGUST**


**PLACE** Darwin

**CONTACT** Margaret Taylor

**PHONE** 03 9277 5403

**EMAIL** taylor@acer.edu.au
Let me declare from the outset: I am no architect, but I know what I like in architecture, and as a teacher, I believe that school buildings and furniture play a significant role in helping kids to learn better.

To define what we mean by ‘learning better’, we need to consider what skills our students need in order to play a decisive role in a 21st-century global economy facing complex challenges. I think that creativity, collaboration, communication, empathy and adaptability are the core capabilities for that role. We need teachers who can foster these skills in our students; we need to encourage students to be active participants in their own learning; and we need parental engagement that enhances these learning outcomes.

The design of school spaces and furniture may be able to greatly facilitate these things by supporting teachers in the move away from ‘sage on the stage’ teaching; by providing students with flexible spaces that enable collaboration with their peers; and by reimagining schools as hubs for the community, where parents are welcome to become more involved in their children’s learning.

This will be a significant change from the way schools have been built, furnished and thought about in the past. Years ago I was trying to install some softer lighting in a boarding-school dining room in an effort to calm the students during meal times when the local electrician came up to me and declared: ‘Once your architect is gone, we can replace these lights with fluorescent tubes – I’ve added extra wiring to do that.’

In most schools with which I have been associated, the choice of building fabric, utilities and furniture have invariably been dictated by the budget, which was always too low. On the other hand, an architect who has done work for me in three large secondary schools across South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales has a mantra that the difference between good and bad architecture is not money alone. Imagination, risk and innovation can be in short supply, too.
In the recent flourish of building engendered by the Commonwealth government’s Building the Education Revolution program, members of my curriculum team were invited by the company helping us manage the projects (Bovis Lend Lease) to critique the designs provided by numerous architects from a curriculum and learning perspective. It was a unique opportunity to see a lot of design in a short time and to bring the educators’ views on 21st-century learning into dialogue with these architects.

There were some excellent designs, especially from architects who were able to imagine the worldview of very small children entering school: low windows, interesting variety of spaces at low level, careful attention to light and shade. In the secondary school science rooms there was a great effort to have every aspect of the spaces bespeak science: glass walls so passers-by could peer at the exciting experiments happening within, flexible furniture to suit a variety of activities, and murals depicting great moments in science.

What concerned me was that the designs generally began with the building, and furniture and equipment came second. There was not much on show regarding what I would call 21st-century school furniture. Perhaps we have come to think that at the end of the budget we can only afford basic tables, chairs and cupboards.

Bovis Lend Lease picked up my concerns and offered me the opportunity to visit NeoCon in Chicago, a huge international exposition of interior design, to see the latest designs for education furniture, and Steelcase in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to experience its ‘learnlab’ and contemporary classroom environments, and see its new product range in education, libraries and mixed-modality workspaces.

What impressed me was how designers are now trying to address the demands of contemporary learning: recognising the growth of students’ collaborative work in classrooms and the marriage of technology with learning; democratising how people access and share information quickly and seamlessly; and creating flexible multipurpose spaces, compressing real estate and reducing costs.

Impressive for me was the ‘node’ chair by Steelcase, released at NeoCon after two years of solid research into classroom furniture. The chair is essentially a tablet chair on castors. It is easily accessible and has a place for the laptop or other device, a bowl under the seat for the backpack, a comfortable and flexible seat and a tough design – but above all, the node chair is able to join with one, two or three other such chairs to form a ‘collaborative table’ for group work. It can easily be moved around the classroom to any layout for a particular class.

I believe principals are hungry for some breakthrough furniture that will enable teachers to deliver a contemporary curriculum. The node chair is the first real attempt I have seen to get away from the ubiquitous tables and chairs, which are burdensome and time-consuming to rearrange between classroom activities.

And design is not just for classrooms. Presenters at NeoCon recommended a break from boardroom-type tables for staff meetings, promoting instead a new meeting concept where everyone is equidistant from each other, everyone is an equal participant, and everyone can instantly share digital information, all of which promote creativity and innovation.

What about the cost? Yes, these emerging education designs will probably be expensive initially, but ultimately they will be more sustainable. Education bureaucrats and governments can be challenged to equip us properly for our job – and maybe in years to come we won’t even have to buy our own tools of trade, such as our own computers.

A former mentor of mine, the late, great Professor Hedley Beare, in his recent monograph, Six Decades of Continuous School Restructuring, chronicles the struggles teachers have endured to have their profession recognised, ‘to have it publicly recognised as a true profession, and to have its importance to the community and the nation acknowledged’. It fascinated me at NeoCon that it was taken for granted that lawyers, doctors and big business would naturally have the finest quality interior design – but teachers and students can’t aspire to such luxury.

I believe that the Building the Education Revolution has given many schools the chance to think beyond the minimum provision, to design their spaces for learning from the inside out. It has also allowed building companies to recognise that the design for schools must always start with the needs of the learner up front – focusing on the interior spaces and activities therein – before moving to the building fabric.
Engaging data-literate beginning teachers

Gen Y beginning teachers have an edge: they’ve grown up in an era of educational accountability, so when their students have to sit a high-stakes test, they can relate. Judy Smeed explains.

Last year, my daughter Jen graduated from university with education and science degrees and secured a teaching position at a regional Prep to Year 12 school in Queensland. She has graduated into a very different profession than the one I experienced as an early career teacher several decades ago: a world of accountability, high-stakes testing, publication of school data, risk management and data-driven learning. An understanding of these concepts and the ability to interpret education data are essential for the new teacher—and these are skills principals should try to recognise when engaging with data-literate graduates.

Because of their diverse employment backgrounds, young graduates can make an important contribution to the profession in the current climate of accountability. Many young graduates have been required to work as part of a team to achieve targets set by management as part of their employment conditions. Thus, unlike many more experienced teachers, many young graduates are accustomed to having their work observed and having their performance data analysed. As a profession, we need to recognise these competencies in our beginning teachers.

ASPECTS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

What then should graduates know about high-stakes accountability testing? It is important that they realise accountability is not a localised phenomenon; that it is more than just meeting targets.

Maurice Kogan, in *Educational Accountability*, writes about the philosophical and the mechanical types of accountability. By the philosophical, Kogan is referring to the overarching guiding objectives that underpin an organisation, while the mechanisms are the practices within the organisation.

In much of her work, Lorna Earl considers accountability in terms of the moral and the forensic. She defines moral accountability as being knowledgeable and fair in teaching and interactions with students and parents; and forensic accountability as providing information or justifications in some written form such as an annual report, a press release or even a student’s report card.

Lisa Ehrich, in ‘Principals as morally accountable leaders’, posits moral and professional accountabilities for teachers – the moral referring to the ethics of care, justice and learning; the professional to the accountability of teachers being responsibility for a wide-ranging set of responsibilities within their daily professional lives.

Accountability in the form of high-stakes testing is the mechanical or the forensic and currently such accountability takes considerable time and energy in schools. However, the philosophical and moral forms of accountability are still also important in schools. In reality, this moral accountability has always been part of teachers’ work. They have long been accountable for maintaining good order in their classrooms and carrying out various duties that extend beyond their teaching of the curriculum. It could, therefore, be argued that teachers are already comfortable with the moral or philosophical aspect of accountability. It is the forensic and mechanical aspects that, in recent years, have experienced a rapid growth and have exerted an ever-increasing pressure for schools to act differently. It might be, though, that through their past work experiences, young...
graduates are indeed already comfortable with the forensic or mechanical forms of accountability.

Much of Jen’s energy as a teacher will be put into preparing her students for high-stakes tests. Though she and her friends did not sit the National Assessment Program – literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) – it has only been administered since 2008 – they are very familiar with the state high-stakes Core Skills test for Year 12 students in Queensland who wish to attend university. Because of their experiences as school students in the current era of accountability, these Generation Y graduates may have a better understanding of what their students are going through than do Baby Boomer teachers, who finished their schooling well before the introduction of this particular state test.

Recently, the results of the high-stakes NAPLAN were published in the local statewide newspaper. The data indicated each school’s percentage of students in each year level at each school who achieved above the national minimum standard. In many schools, more than 90 per cent of students were performing above the national minimum standards in the NAPLAN tests. The news was good, and therefore, maybe, a little uninteresting. Yet many of these schools were considered to be the traditional high-performing schools. Jen, however, teaches in a regional school. The performance data of these and Indigenous schools told a different story. The stark reality is that young graduates and early career teachers may be entering into a world of haves and have-nots; and the publication of high-stakes testing data tends to reinforce this.

As an off-shoot of accountability, the publication of high-stakes educational data exerts immense pressure on schools and in particular, principals. When I pointed this out to my final-year university students, there was almost a communal shrug of the 22-year-old shoulders. What do you expect? The government puts up the money.

RISK MANAGEMENT OF DATA

Even though Jen will be teaching in a religious school, it is still an institution which relies heavily on government funding. Therefore the school can and will be called to account through testing and the subsequent publication of data. The challenges for young graduates and other more experienced teachers will be to use high-stakes data to assist them to identify deficiencies and risk-managing against poor data.

Many of Jen’s more experienced colleagues in her new school will probably think that risk management is something new. In fact, as Anthony Giddens points out in his 2000 book Runaway World, in the original Portuguese, the root of the word ‘risk’ means ‘to dare’. Unlike the Portuguese sailors who took a positive approach to risk and sailed in search of far away places even at the risk of falling off the earth, teachers nowadays tend to view risk negatively.

Personally, this saddens me. As a geography teacher, the spontaneous visits to the creeks that form the boundary of so many Australian schools were a wonderful teaching and learning experience in bygone days. To take their students on similar excursions, Jen and her fellow graduates will have to fill in a multitude of forms to gain the necessary school and parental permission.

Douglas Stewart and Andrew Knott in Schools, Courts and the Law, refer to this process as hazard identification in order to note and to minimise risk. Mary Douglas, in Risk and Blame, expands on this notion: rather than minimisation, she suggests that risk is seen as a danger and should therefore be avoided at all cost.

Such risk management in schools has led to what Lee-Anne Perry and Erica McWilliam, in their paper, ‘Accountability, responsibility and school leadership’, describe as ‘a reductionist view of education, one defined in terms of scores, market appeal and conformity’.

In reference to the curriculum, this reductionist approach focuses on high-stakes testing. Stewart Ranson, writing in the Journal of Education Policy, suggests that in a reductionist situation, accountability is no longer ‘merely an important instrument or component within the system’, but ‘constitutes the system itself’. The young graduate might even be moved to wonder whether testing is an instrument of assessment that informs the teacher, or whether it has actually become the curriculum?

Therefore, as Perry, principal of a large school in Queensland points out, ‘Risk and risk management are part of our lives today and are embedded within the norms of our institutions, including
schools.’ Therefore, she argues, it is important that institutions respond appropriately to managing these risks.

Further to Perry’s challenge, I suggest that principals should encourage young teachers to seek adequate knowledge and to apply skills they brought with them to the teaching profession.

In order to risk-manage their classroom data, beginning teachers will have to call on an array of skills that have not traditionally been associated with teaching. They will need to analyse and interpret educational data. Further, they will need to be able to implement strategies to address what they uncover from the analysis.

Universities need to give graduating students these analytical skills so they have the confidence to make sound educational decisions. Some of the skills they need are: being able to perform basic numerical and statistical operations; being able to organise and re-organise data; being able to identify trends, spot anomalies and apply the data to the relevant part of the curriculum; and being able to address problem areas back in their teaching. In this current accountability climate, failure by the universities to give their graduates such skills could be interpreted as shirking responsibilities to the profession.

TIPS FOR PRINCIPALS DEALING WITH DATA-LITERATE GRADUATES

If universities do present the profession with a data-literate graduate, how then should principals accommodate this new addition to their staff? Will their talents and expertise be left as an untouched resource or will they be given responsibilities in the school around data analysis and implementation? Principals need to be aware of their graduates’ skills; to include beginning teachers in discussions on data and ask specifically for their interpretations; to position them on school data or statistic committees; and to encourage staff to draw on their knowledge and expertise.

In the current climate of accountability, the beginning teacher needs to possess an array of additional and different skills from those needed by their professional predecessors. Jen and her fellow graduates will need to draw on such knowledge and skills to make successful starts to their careers. Indeed, given their diverse employment backgrounds, young graduates may be able to make an important contribution to teaching and learning in our schools.

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Hailed by some as an innovative initiative to address educational disadvantage and lamented by others as an insult to the teaching profession, the Teach for Australia (TFA) program introduced this year has not been short on controversy.

The program recruits university graduates of degrees in arts, law, finance and engineering – in short, any field other than education – to become teachers in schools that, based on socioeconomic profile or academic results, are considered to be disadvantaged, and which volunteer to participate in the program.

This year, the program selected the top 45 graduates from more than 750 applicants to the program. These ‘associates’ were given six-weeks’ intensive initial training at the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education, then placed as beginning teachers in disadvantaged secondary schools in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

TFA participants commit to the program for two years. During this time, they have an 80 per cent teaching load and study part-time for a teaching degree.

At the end of two years, participants will be fully qualified as secondary school teachers and graduate with a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching from the University of Melbourne. They can continue to teach in secondary schools across Australia, or can leave teaching and pursue other careers.

The program covers participants’ study costs, and participants are paid a salary comparable to other new educators in the state or the school in which they are placed.

Schools take TFA recruits in addition to their normal quota of teachers.

The program receives funding from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations as part of the New Pathway Into Teaching Initiative under the Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality.

The program will expand next year to about 65 trainees. Other states are also considering adopting the program.
Teach for Australia organisers contend that, by attracting outstanding graduates into teaching, the program is helping to improve student outcomes in areas of educational disadvantage. They also contend that the program is raising the status of teaching.

Critics, however, have countered that the program degrades the profession by allowing unqualified people to teach, and have also pointed to the mixed success of similar programs overseas.

Here, two educators present their views on the pros and cons of the program.

Learning while teaching

The Teach for Australia program provides an alternative pathway to encourage the best and brightest into teaching for the benefit of students in disadvantaged areas, writes Rhonda Di Biase.

How can we best attract and prepare effective future teachers for the demanding and complex job that is teaching? And how can we improve learning opportunities for all students, regardless of background? Educators have long sought to answer these questions, but the Teach for Australia (TFA) program is thinking of these questions in new ways.

Questioning existing assumptions is what gets us beyond where we are to somewhere better. The TFA program provides an alternative pathway into teaching. The program aims to transform outstanding recent graduates and young professionals from fields other than education into exceptional teachers and inspirational leaders to help confront educational disadvantage in Australia.

After a rigorous selection process (which involves an interview and class plan presentation), these ‘associates’ commit to teach for two years in educationally disadvantaged schools. At the same time, they also undertake two years of ongoing, masters-level academic study to complete a Postgraduate Diploma of Teaching through the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education (MGSE). This commences with a six-week, in-residence intensive training program in which they complete a third of their degree before they begin teaching. They continue their studies over the two years, punctuated with ongoing intensive training blocks. Associates are continually monitored by in-school mentors and educational advisers, and they receive ongoing feedback and support.

The TFA program also provides new thinking around the age-old debate about the link between theory and practice. The unique partnership between TFA and MGSE provides a relevant and meaningful way to link theory and practice. Theory is highly relevant for TFA associates because they are learning in the context of daily practice, where the knowledge from theory is immediately applicable and useful. Associates use theory to make sense of practice and their understanding of theory is informed by their experiences. The program’s strong mentoring component means there are frequent and ongoing opportunities to link practice to expert knowledge.

The TFA program challenges the traditional divide of universities being places to learn about teaching and schools being places to learn how to teach. Linda Darling-Hammond, in her book Preparing Teachers for a Changing World, writes about the challenges in learning to teach. She describes a well-documented issue: the problem of enactment. Beginning teachers may have knowledge about teaching, but when it needs to be enacted in real classrooms this knowledge often remains inert. Current views of teacher education focus on the importance of learning in context, where pedagogical theory is integrated with practice. Since TFA associates are learning while teaching (with the support of expert teachers), this link between theory and practice can be made in the appropriate context, and thus knowledge is enacted in real time.

The complex nature of teaching means that teachers must be able to do a wide variety of things, often simultaneously, and this cannot
be scripted ahead of time. This is why the TFA approach so clearly links theory and practice; theory is used as a means to better understand experience and practice as it occurs.

This is reflected in the feedback from participating schools. Lyndel Hebden, a metropolitan campus principal, sees the strength of the program as ‘being able to build collaborative teams, within the school and support network provided through the program. There is a strong peer-coaching element that means the associates are constantly supported.’

Hebden also praises the associates’ awareness of pedagogy: ‘I can see they read something and look at how it applies to their teaching. In connecting theory and practice they ask: Is it happening? Could it be happening? Should it be happening?’

Lynn Emmerson, a regional principal with three associates at the school, says the associates came ready to enter the classroom: ‘After the initial six weeks of training the graduates were excited and passionate: eager to hit the ground running. They had been immersed in theory and had this pedagogical knowledge at their fingertips, ready to use in their classes. They also come highly competent in their subject area knowledge.’

In my role, I explicitly help facilitate the link between theory and practice with associates. In observing classes or co-planning with associates, theory can be integrated with practice naturally. One associate notes the need for building a toolbox, based on theory, that allows for informed choices to be made in class. Another associate explains that theory is only relevant as it relates to practice and so has helped him make sense of his experiences.

Through my work in schools I see, first hand, the contribution associates are making in their schools. Sue Lynch, an associate in-school mentor, recently said: ‘By having TFA associates in the school, we have access to new ideas and current theory. Their presence is providing us with the opportunity to reassess our own practice by working with new and enthusiastic teachers. In the process of helping them, we are also helping ourselves.’ I have seen the efforts of associates as they learn the complex work of teaching and join collaboratively with their colleagues to develop their skills.

The high level of innovative ideas, generated for use in classes and in initiating and supporting projects in the school, is clearly observable. I have seen idea after idea being discussed, analysed, revised and implemented.

Associates also display incredible initiative outside the classroom. James Gutteridge, an associate at Moooolpna Secondary College, worked with a group of students to enter Tournament of the Minds.

‘One of my proudest achievements this year is building a team of students and seeing them win their regional final,’ he said.

‘It was a huge commitment, with lunchtime sessions preparing the students with problem-solving, teamwork and creativity skills. It was a big achievement because the win is much bigger for the whole school than just the team of seven students.’

Reflective practice is an important professional skill that associates have displayed in abundance. As teachers, we may strive for the elusive perfect lesson. A reflective practitioner always sees new ways to improve. From my experience, associates have high expectations and a relentless desire to succeed. There is always another dimension that could make a lesson better. As with any beginning teachers, associates face inevitable obstacles, yet partly due to the emphasis the TFA program places on resilience during the selection process and through ongoing support, associates persevere in the face of these challenges and overcome them.

The merits of the TFA program are not presented to discredit existing pathways into teaching. Indeed, the mission of TFA is discrete in its purpose and pursuit of educational equality in Australia and it should be seen as complementary to the existing pathways.

The Victorian Institute of Teaching, in *Professional Practice* in November 2009, described an international study looking at motivations that people bring to teaching. That study concluded that teacher education and employing authorities need to consider the different career trajectories that people bring to teaching. TFA is already doing this through its defined mission, robust recruitment process, unique teacher education model, progressive leadership and alumni programs. How theory and practice are linked through the program, and the anecdotes about
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Blanca Camacho
Project Director
Corporate & Vocational Program
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Australian Council for Educational Research
In 1969, teachers at Victoria’s Northcote High School stopped work for six weeks because the government of the day sent an unqualified person into the school’s classrooms as a teacher. In 1970, teachers at Murrumbeena High School stopped work for three and a half weeks on the same issue. In 1971, teachers at Maribyrnong High School stopped work for eleven weeks. Teachers at other schools took similar action.

They were committed to professional standards for teachers. They believed that children were entitled to fully qualified teachers. As the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association put it 1969 in its advertisement in Education Week, titled ‘What he doesn’t know will hurt him’, ‘The only way to guarantee a first-class future in this world of ours is a first-class education. Yet this is what thousands of Victorian schoolchildren are denied. Very often they are being taught by untrained and unqualified teachers.’

Teachers saw the threat and they responded.

In the end, they won recognition of the professional status of teaching and a professional registration system, nowadays under the control of the Victorian Institute of Teaching, a body half of whose governing council members are elected by registered teachers. It seemed at the time that the final battle had been won, that the understanding of the need for professional qualifications in education, heavily influenced by representatives of the profession itself, was so obvious that no threat to it could occur in the future.

This year, however, saw the Teach for Australia (TFA) scheme trialled in Victorian schools ahead of potential rollout to other states next year. The scheme gives university graduates a six-week summer course on teaching and places them in schools in full charge of classes. They are not like normal student teachers who must have a fully qualified teacher in the classroom with them. TFA students, despite having only six weeks’ training, are in sole charge of a class, just as an actual teacher would be.

We know that in the past the teachers’ unions called stopwork action when unqualified people were put in charge of classes. Now, they do nothing. Imagine what the reaction would be if the government decided that the shortage of doctors would be covered by six weeks’ training for graduates of other disciplines. The Australian Medical Association (AMA) would hit the roof. It would not allow such a scheme to exist.

Of course, the AMA would not have to react at all. The medical registration authority would block any government that suggested six-week training
courses to create ‘doctors’. It would understand the need for fully qualified people only to be employed as doctors and would not register unqualified people. Sadly, the Victorian Institute of Teaching, whose establishment I passionately advocated, has given TFA students permission to teach.

In any case, no government would suggest six-week courses for would-be doctors. The public outrage would be immediate and deafening. The public understands that medicine is a profession and that its practitioners must know what they are doing. We can wonder at the silence of the public on the imposition of TFA students in the place of real teachers in our schools.

The TFA program only places students in disadvantaged schools. Ostensibly, this is because these schools are hardest to staff – but in practice it means that the children of the middle classes are still entitled to have real teachers, while disadvantaged children, who have the most to gain from quality teaching, are offered something less.

If it is possible to train a teacher in six weeks, we ought to abandon all Diploma of Education and Master of Teaching courses and train every teacher in six weeks. Look at the saving in time and money in such an approach!

It is more likely that teaching is a demanding occupation whose practitioners need a high level of skill and knowledge, and that such skill and knowledge cannot be gained in only six weeks. Teaching is more than an acting craft, in which the actor presents a lesson to an audience. A teacher needs to master the subject matter being taught and to be a contributor to the overall life of the school – to take part in educational discussion within the school, with some awareness of educational theory, sociology and psychology.

Teach for Australia is modelled on the United States’ Teach for America program. While the Australian program does not follow the American model to the letter, and the Australian organisers have made attempts to respond to some of the major criticisms of the US program, the common premise of both programs is that adequate teacher training can be provided in six weeks.

Evidence from the United States suggests that its Teach for America scheme is not such a success. David Berliner, Regents’ Professor of Education at Arizona State University, explained the failings of that scheme in the Sydney Morning Herald last year.

‘The news that Australia is following the United States in introducing a program which puts untrained teachers in the classroom came as a real shock to us here,’ he wrote.

‘Simply put, you are being conned. Teach for America, the model for your national program, is not effective in helping students in poverty learn more, though it is very effective at raising large amounts of money.’

Professor Berliner quoted studies that showed that students of Teach for America students made about 20 per cent less academic growth a year than students of fully certified beginning teachers. Yet again, Australia has been caught out by following the practices of school systems whose results are worse than our own. In the 2006 results in the Program for International Student Assessment, Australia’s average score in reading was 513, compared with the United Kingdom’s 495, and in maths 520 compared with the UK’s 495 and the US’s 474. The tables for science are constructed differently, but Australia is 12 countries ahead of the UK and 27 countries ahead of the US.

If the knowledge and skills required to be an effective teacher really can be taught in six weeks, then we need to abolish all current long-term teacher training. If they cannot, it is a betrayal of our children that we put people with six weeks’ training in charge of them.

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Chris Curtis taught in Victoria for 33 years and held leadership positions, up to acting vice principal, for 28 of them.
The review of school funding arrangements established by the Commonwealth Government is due to report in 2011. The review, the first comprehensive government evaluation of school funding structures for more than 30 years, will determine how schools in Australia are funded in the future and lay the foundation for ongoing investment in the sector.

According to a policy paper by Dr Andrew Dowling published by the Australian Council for Educational Research in 2008, the current funding system for Australian schools is ‘unhelpfully complex and exceedingly opaque’. The system is comprised of different types of funding from Commonwealth and state levels of government for government and non-government schools.

Within this context, it seems timely to consider how schools have been funded in the past, particularly changes to federal arrangements over time and the impact of these changes on the capacity of schooling to deliver better quality and more equitable outcomes.

With the Commonwealth government’s review of school funding underway, it is timely to revisit the history of funding arrangements. The University of Melbourne’s Jack Keating and Kira Clarke explain.

The Schools Commission and school funding
THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE KARMEL REPORT

One of the seminal documents in the history of Australian schooling was *Schools in Australia* produced by the Interim Committee of the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Released in 1973, the document is outside of the professional memory of most Australian school teachers. However, it remains an important landmark in the history of Australian schooling and one that precipitated developments and helped to shape issues that are very much in the minds of teachers today.

The report of the Interim Committee, known as the Karmel Report, initiated a number of initiatives from the Commonwealth government. The most significant of these was the establishment of an ongoing recurrent and capital funding program for non-government schools. Since this time, the funding has increased such that the vast majority of non-government schools have advanced from a situation where they gained meagre levels of public funding to a situation where they are mostly publicly funded. The Commonwealth has also changed its role, from one in which it had minimal involvement in schools to a situation where in 2009-10 it spent more than $16 billion on schooling, not including the massive investment in school buildings through the Building Education Revolution Program.

While the Commonwealth had invested in school education prior to 1973, its response to the Karmel Report marked a watershed for two reasons.

First, it was the starting point of an ongoing and growing involvement of the Commonwealth in schooling that changed the constitutional
settlement of 1901 that defined schooling as a state responsibility. The Karmel Report also addressed issues other than non-government school funding and since its release the Commonwealth has been involved in programs related to gender, migrants and new arrivals, Indigenous communities, rural and regional communities, early childhood, vocational education and post-school transition. Its role in school education has continued to grow, and its recent initiatives – national curriculum, literacy and numeracy testing and the My School website – are built on the foundations that the Schools Commission helped to establish.

The second reason is the impact of the Commonwealth upon the structural characteristics of Australian schooling. The Karmel Report was issued at a time when large elements of the non-government sector were in crisis. The Catholic school sector, which made up more than three-quarters of all non-government schools, faced major budgetary problems and falling enrolments. Commonwealth funding largely resolved this crisis and was a major factor in reversing the enrolment declines, such that from the late 1970s there has been an enrolment drift of approximately 0.4 per cent from the government to the non-government school sector. This drift continues and has now led to something of a crisis in the government sector.

This is most manifest in secondary education where many government schools have increasingly concentrated enrolments of students from low-income households and high levels of learning needs. This sense of crisis within the government school sector, and memories of the long-term struggle to achieve public funding within the non-government sector, have ensured that the debate over school funding remains very much alive in Australia. The Commonwealth is now attempting to address the issue through its review of school funding.

FEDERALISM AND SCHOOLING

Two major settlements in Australian history did much to shape Australian schooling. The first was in the form of the education acts passed by the six colonial parliaments in the 1870s and ‘80s that limited public funding to government schools. The church schools, including the Catholic schools, had to find their own resources. The second was the 1901 Constitution that appeared to preclude a Commonwealth role in schooling.

The proposition that these two settlements and their simultaneous and interrelated collapse in the 1970s had largely shaped the structural characteristic, much of the debate, and much of the policy and program evolution of Australian schooling is the basis of a three-year Australian Research Council Linkages grant on Federalism and Schooling in Australia. The project is a partnership between the Foundation for Young Australians, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Whitlam Institute at the University of Western Sydney and the University of Melbourne.

The objective of the project is to understand the impact of federalism on quality and equity in Australian schooling and investigate how federalism should best be steered. As part of the project, a series of public seminars is being conducted on various aspects of federalism and schooling. Three have been held in 2010 and significant figures in the history of federalism and schooling, such as John Dawkins, the Minister of Education in the Hawke Government, have addressed the seminars.

The most recent seminar, held on 3 September, was addressed by Professor Ken McKinnon who was the first chair of the Schools Commission from 1973 to 1981. He gave a paper on the Schools Commission and school funding. He was joined by Peter Annett, the former director of Catholic education in the Australian Capital Territory and deputy director in Victoria; Whitlam Institute Director Eric Sidoti; and the University of Melbourne’s Professor Brian Galligan, one of Australia’s leading authorities on Australian federalism.

THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION AND SCHOOL FUNDING

Professor McKinnon pointed out that both the Coalition and Labor at the federal level had been reluctant for the Commonwealth to enter the area of school education prior to the Karmel Report. The advent of the Commonwealth role was at least in part a combination of political opportunism and need. He pointed out that there were other issues that confronted the Schools Commission apart from the indigent state of many non-government schools, and that the initiatives of the commission and the government were in the context of an overall pattern of under-investment in schooling and the emergence of more specific sets of issues and educational needs.
With the states facing major budgetary pressures, the idea of Commonwealth funding was not strongly resisted. The wider scope of programs was directed towards more specific needs and social groups, and a consultative approach drew support from the wider school education community. According to Peter Annett, the Catholic sector at the time was in such a parlous state that the then director of Catholic education in Victoria had proposed closing the state’s Catholic secondary schools.

This is not to say that the issue of funding was not without its tensions. Across the non-government sector there was considerable debate over whether funding should be on a needs basis or on a consistent per capita rate for all schools and students. The resolution of this issue in favour of a needs-based funding regime was through a combination of the work and collaboration of the commission members – such as Jean Blackburn, Joan Kirner and in particular Father Frank Martin, who was the Catholic sector representative – and the will of the Whitlam Government. The other tension, of course, was within the government school sector where it was felt, with some prescience, that public funding for non-government schools would lead to enrolment declines in government schools.

The experience of the Schools Commission suggests that political will is an important element in the issue of school funding. Professor McKinnon recalled that he put to the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, the proposition for a more fundamental reorganisation of the delivery of educational services. This would involve a clearer separation of policy and operational responsibilities. Administrative effectiveness could be delegated to regional representative bodies so that the relative needs of schools within each region could be more equitably assessed. This would effectively have led to a more consistent or integrated system where the differences between publicly funded government and church schools were minimal, as is the case in most other countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Despite Whitlam’s own predilections, as described in his 1985 memoirs, The Whitlam Government, he felt that the time was not ripe for such consideration. Without the political will the commission could not usefully discuss the possibilities, let alone initiate what would have been what would have been a ‘raucous political debate’. A proposal for a consistent funding regime for all schools was endorsed by the Schools Commission, but was not taken up by government. As Professor McKinnon noted, one can only ponder what might have been if the political and budgetary situation of the government had been different.

THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION AND THE FUNDING REVIEW

The topic of the recent Schools Commission seminar was essentially historical. A purpose of history is to inform and enrich current and future debates and options. At the very least, the Schools Commission experience shows us that the issues of school funding and governance are closely linked. A lot has changed since the Karmel Report and since the end of the Schools Commission. Apart from anything else it is doubtful if the current or any future national government would allow a statutory body to have such a prominent role in school funding.

In his address to the Schools Commission seminar, Brian Galligan wondered whether there are seminal points in time that provide the opportunities for major advances in policies and institutions, such as the funding and governance of schooling. Professor McKinnon’s experience was that this was the case in the early- to mid-1970s because of a combination of the crisis in schooling and political need, and opportunity. The opportunity was not fully realised, however, because of a combination of the size of the reforms that were needed, budgetary circumstances, and lack of political will.

This leads to the question put by Eric Sidoti of whether we are approaching another period of historical opportunity in the area of school funding and governance. Crisis within the non-government sector was one of the drivers of the reforms in school funding that were initiated through the Schools Commission. Is there a growing crisis in the government school sector, or more broadly in public education that can help to drive more adventurous reforms in school funding and move Australian schooling away from our current highly complex and inconsistent funding systems across the levels of government? If so, can this crisis drive sufficient levels of political will to achieve reform?

For references, go to http://austcolled.com.au/publication/professional-educator

Professor Jack Keating leads the Education Policy and Leadership Unit (ELPU) within the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne.

Kira Clarke is an ELPU research fellow, working on the Federalism and Schooling in Australia project.
Harvesting and hunting
Recruiting the next generation of teachers

Gone are the days when locally grown teachers would automatically take jobs in local schools. Catherine Doherty and Pernilla Widegren explain why education authorities need to think about headhunting teachers with international experience.

Who are Australian universities preparing teachers for? Ten years ago, the answer was fairly straightforward – teacher education programs delivered graduates primed to teach the local state curriculum to the local state education authority and its religious and independent counterparts. Country service was considered a routine part of the teaching career, but again, pursued within state boundaries to protect career progression.

Our research, including an interview study with pre-service primary teachers, suggests that such projected mapping of spatial boundaries around careers is increasingly specious, given the emerging global employment market for teaching professionals, and the more global outlook of the next generation of teachers.
Global imagination

To illustrate the emerging global market for teaching graduates, we offer the experience of one of the authors, Pernilla Widegren.

After finishing school in Sweden I was looking for an adventure and decided to study for a year in Australia, choosing a Bachelor of Education in Brisbane, Queensland. After what turned into seven years in Australia I had found a ‘home away from home’ and became a dual citizen in the process. Now my options were as good as any other Australian citizen. But with my studies coming to an end, returning home to start my career seemed increasingly attractive. Staying within Australian borders, or more so, Queensland borders, for my first appointment could well have required leaving the home I had made in Australia with house and partner to do country service, before finding a position in my area of choice.

In contrast, returning to my other home – Sweden, where there is no points system or country service – offered greater options of where to work and live. Although strict regulations surround Swedish teaching degrees, my Australian Bachelor of Education was approved in full by Högskoleverket, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, and no further studies in Sweden were necessary to fulfill Swedish teaching qualifications. My educational background with an Australian teaching degree attracted the attention of many and within the first two weeks back on Swedish soil I had eight interviews booked with both public and private schools, and signed a contract for a full-time teaching position at Elevverket – a lower primary school in Djursholm, Stockholm, which markets itself as a school that incorporates English in the early years. The school is located in one of the most affluent areas in the outskirts of Stockholm, and many of its students have cosmopolitan backgrounds. I now teach English in Grades 1 to 3 as well as provide an advanced English class once a week for students who have lived overseas or have an English-speaking parent.

John Urry, a sociologist of mobility, offers a metaphorical distinction between ‘gardening and gamekeeping’ that helps us rethink how local systems might profit from the public investment in teacher preparation. Where previous models grew and harvested teachers locally, the global competition for professional skills forces systems to consider more active strategies to lure and retain roaming talent into less bounded territory.

The irony in the current state of play is that Australian teachers are increasingly subject to competing state and national regulatory frames. Attempts to develop national professional standards have prompted state efforts to assert their own. Similarly, the debate around national teacher registration has served to produce more parochial forms of state registration. Rather than enhance portability and mutual recognition, as developments such as the Bologna Process and European regionalisation have pioneered for other professions, state registration bodies stipulate experience in their particular state to retain state-based registration. As both national and state regulators flex their muscle within their respective zones of influence, we would suggest that such petty territorial struggles are increasingly irrelevant to the next generation of teachers and how they imagine their careers.

The gamekeeping metaphor invokes the idea of poaching, which aptly describes the role of private recruitment agencies from the United States and the United Kingdom in particular. Pre-service teachers routinely receive emails and other promotional approaches from such international recruitment agencies. These agencies are eager to sign students up before they graduate, offering tempting conditions and relocation support, as well as the life adventure that members of this generation typically seek. Newspapers and campus notice-
boards carry advertisements for teaching positions in exotic locations. The Australian graduate, as a qualified English-speaking teacher, is an increasingly valuable commodity in the global market given the attention to English in other nations’ curricula. This means that local employers might now need to compete to attract and retain them.

Some would argue that education is necessarily an intensely localised enterprise, but that deserves more scrutiny. While local relevance has been an important principle for curricular reform, there is added pressure and legitimacy for global perspectives in the curriculum as local economies are exposed to global conditions, and ongoing migration realigns our cultural horizons and allegiances. The mobile teacher should no longer be considered as deficient for lacking local knowledge. Rather, they bring valuable resources in terms of knowledge and life experience of a broader world. As diversity within the nation shrinks with the coming of the national curriculum, the profession might look to the internationally mobile teacher as an energising source of diverse experiences and perspectives.

Others would argue that initial teacher preparation needs pre-service teachers to be prepared in the local state curriculum in order to undertake practicum experiences, but that deserves more scrutiny, too. Local educational markets can offer branded curriculum, such as the Steiner or Montessori approaches or the International Baccalaureate, alongside the local curriculum. Education faculties offer rural, remote, interstate and international practicum placements to local students, and play host to international students who never intend to teach in the local sector. The Australian population includes many individuals with dual citizenship for whom ‘home’ offers a choice. Thus producing credentials to local orthodoxies might miss the point.

Mobility has been one of the major attractions of the profession, but the mobile disposition can no longer be contained within state boundaries. Where in the past young teachers planned on country service as a rite of passage, our interviews would indicate that they now typically imagine a stint overseas as a life chapter. They expect this chapter to come after first ‘finding their feet’ in local settings.

Thus, after preparing and inducting this next generation, local education sectors might expect to lose younger teachers to more exotic locations – some exploring family connections abroad, some following financial incentives, and others intoxicated by the opportunity to travel. In short, other educational systems will profit from their local priming. It then remains for the local system to attract them back, in order to profit in turn from their ‘value-addedness’ following international experience. Rather than penalising such breaks in local service, systems could recognise international experience as an opportunity not a threat, then sponsor or reward such routes in order to garner the systemic benefits.

The remote school stands to be the ultimate loser in these new mobilities, no longer being the destination of choice for a life adventure. The fallout of this effect is already evident in some states’ recruitment of teachers from less advantaged countries to fill ‘hard-to-staff’ vacancies – in essence, poaching other countries’ talent. Such expediency undermines the premise of the ‘home grown is best’ rhetoric policing boundaries elsewhere, for example, around recognition of migrant teachers’ qualifications.

Generation studies suggest the emerging generation has new values, motivations and orientations when it comes to work, pursuing lifestyle over vocational commitment. Members of this generation will remain in the profession if it delivers the life experiences they hope for. Rather than follow a business-as-usual template derived from different times, we suggest the sector reconsiders the value of interstate and international experience. For teacher education programs, this means developing more comparative curricular design, exposing pre-service teachers to different solutions to the same problem, so they as informed professionals can play more than one tune. For employers, this means more active strategies of gamekeeping. Rather than penalise teachers with global experience with loss of full registration or entitlements, systems could work to attract such mobile professionals back to share what they learn.

REFERENCES

Dr Catherine Doherty is a senior lecturer and research fellow in the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology. Her research interests lie in the sociology of education, in particular with issues of cultural and transnational identities in education.

Pernilla Widegren is a recently qualified primary school teacher with dual citizenship, two languages, a transnational social network and a global imagination. She undertook the research that informs this article as part of her honours project at the Queensland University of Technology. She teaches at Elevverket, a primary school in Sweden.
Doing Early Childhood Research: International perspectives on theory and practice is the second edition of this successful research book. Designed for novice and early-career researchers, it focuses on a range of theoretical perspectives and methodological issues relevant to research with young children – and indeed educational and social research in general. It is not specifically a 'how to' book; rather, it highlights bigger-picture issues around thinking about, planning and implementing research.

There are many good books about research in education, but Doing Early Childhood Research has an edge because of its multidisciplinary focus and recognition of the many and varied contexts for early childhood development and learning. It takes a wide focus, rather than concerning itself solely with schooling and school settings.

While this is not so much a book about the very practical aspects of doing research, the questions for reflection at the end of each chapter lend themselves to use with teacher researchers or research students in educational or social research methods subjects in higher education. They are ideally directed at students and other beginning researchers thinking through research issues and dilemmas in a structured way.

In part one, on 'the nature of research', two chapters stand out: Karen Martin's chapter on Indigenous research and Margaret Coady's on ethics. Martin writes about the importance of considering key assumptions, positions and relationships in research around Indigenous issues. Flagging critical race theory, colonial theory and Indigenist theory as vehicles for challenging traditional research about Aboriginal peoples, she stresses the importance of finding authentic ways of looking at researcher positions and research relationships within a framework of Aboriginal sovereignty. Coady's chapter on research ethics in the early childhood domain and with young children and ethnic minority groups in particular, is most thought provoking. Ethical issues are complex by definition, and this chapter spotlights sensitivities and informed consent issues very thoughtfully. The claim that traditional ethics approval processes struggle with qualitative methodologies is well made. Ethics committees take note!

In part two, on 'analysis and design', chapters by Alan Hayes and Linda Harrison provide especially useful insights into research design and thinking around implementation and analysis issues. Importantly, Hayes and Harrison draw on major Australian studies – Growing up in Australia: The longitudinal study of Australian children and the Sydney Family Development Project – to illustrate key points and consider scope and scale issues. Reminding readers that 'statistical significance is not the same as practical significance' never goes astray.

Part three is on 'the research process in action'. In terms of broader research issues, Iram Siraj-Blatchford's discussion on mixed methods is thought provoking, albeit a bit dense at times. Describing ideas or publications from 1999 as current is a bit far fetched, but her discussion raises points to ponder.

The field of early childhood research – certainly in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom – is generally multi-modal. There has not been the same slavish valuing of 'scientific', neo-psychological and medical models of research to the extent that seems common in North America. Nor have there been the same ill-guided attempts to generalise from clouds of correlations to small, unique and diverse groups. In Australia, communities are so diverse that they lend themselves to small-scale studies that embrace a range of epistemologies and methodologies as well as larger-scale, so-called, ‘gold standard’ research. Early childhood research must retain its diversity and employ whatever methodologies are needed to probe, understand and value children's uniqueness and family diversity while simultaneously informing policy and practice to improve outcomes for children. If small-scale, context-specific research answers specific questions and provides models for improvements that are unique to that context then its value must be acknowledged and assured.

Professor Alison Elliott is the Chair in Early Childhood Education at the University of Sydney.
The results of the 2010 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), released by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority in September, show that Queensland and the Northern Territory are beginning to catch up with other states in terms of student performance on the tests.

This is the first year in which NAPLAN has been able to provide a comparison of the same group of students over a two-year period.

Students from the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victoria had the highest scores, on average. Queensland and the NT showed the greatest average improvement, but still lag behind. In the NT, for example, 40 per cent of Years 7 and 9 students still do not meet the national minimum standard for writing.

The NT and South Australia recorded the lowest test participation rates, due to student absences and approved exclusions. Australian Primary Principals Association president Leonie Trimper suggested that this was due to pressure on schools and students due to the high-stakes nature of the test.

‘It’s far more beneficial for schools to just have students not turn up on the day… Parents can request that their children are exempt from the test; more are now conscientiously objecting against the assessment,’ she told the Adelaide Advertiser.

University of Melbourne Associate Professor Margaret Wu also spoke out against NAPLAN. The NSW Teachers Federation released a 20-minute video of Professor Wu’s analysis of the limitations of the NAPLAN test and the reporting and publication of results.

‘From my point of view, the publication of NAPLAN results at the school level will do great harm to Australian education because of the complexities of the interpretations of the results,’ she said.

The pressure on schools to perform well has also been blamed for instances of cheating by teachers to help students achieve higher scores.

State and territory education departments are investigating more than 50 reports of cheating by schools during the NAPLAN tests.

The principal of Brisbane’s Coorparoo State School was stood down from the school and seconded to work at the state education department after it was found he gave students extra time to complete a NAPLAN test, while three Adelaide teachers were removed from classrooms for allegedly giving out advance notice of NAPLAN topics, doctoring answer papers and inappropriately assisting students during exams.

Queensland Teachers Union president Steve Ryan dismissed criticisms that some teachers displayed educational posters and read questions aloud to assist students during the NAPLAN tests, calling such practices ‘relatively minor issues’.

‘That’s not cheating, that’s just personal support,’ he said.

Students’ results in the affected schools will stand even where allegations of cheating are substantiated.

Meanwhile, the senate inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing is back on track. The inquiry had been put on hold awaiting direction from the Commonwealth government following the recent federal election, but the reporting date has now been scheduled for 24 November.

The inquiry will consider:

• the conflicting claims made by governments, educational experts and peak bodies in relation to NAPLAN
• the implementation of safeguards and protocols around the public reporting of results
• the impact of NAPLAN on the scope, innovation and quality of teaching and learning,
• the value of information about student progress and individual school performance provided to parents, principals and the general community, and
• international approaches to the publication of comparative reporting of results, such as league tables.

The inquiry received more than 270 public submissions.
Waiting for gado gado

A dramatic monologue in one scene.

By Danny Katz.

(Lights up on a tastefully-furnished – some may even say fantastically-furnished – dining room. Sitting at the table is DANNY, numbingly handsome and physically faultless. Opposite, sits his teenage daughter, an attractive girl herself, if not quite her father’s equal in anaphylaxis-inducing gorgeousness. They sit in front of plates of take-away gado gado, but Danny is too excited to eat.)

DANNY

What wonderful news, sweetheart! You’ve decided to drop science and do drama instead for Year 12! What a relief for a parent to hear this! Science is such a pointless nowhereville subject – I don’t think they even offer it at universities anymore. But drama is a sensible, reliable choice for a young person starting out in life, and if you pursue it as a career, it will offer you a lifetime of comfort and stability, Lindsay-Lohan-guaranteed! I mean, look what an education in drama did for me! It made me the dynamic dynamo you see today: confident, self-assured, over-expressive, attention-seeking, with a strangely effeminate air that your mother finds both bewitching and confusing. So I’m all for this subject change sweetheart, go for it, because I remember back to my high school days when I first got bitten by that grotesque little Pacino-faced drama bug too! It was Year 11 and I got a role in the school musical, West Side Story. I was gang member number 12 in the Jets. I was listed in the program under the prestigious category ‘Others’. That’s where I first learnt my basic performing skills, how to act and sing and dance like this!

(He leaps up and launches into a finger-snapping Stay Cool hunched-skipping dance around the table. It looks awesome and not the least bit like a jazz-era haemorrhoidal monkey.)

With those kinds of talent hormones seething from my talent pancreas, there was no question that I should pursue drama for life! So I went to university and did Theatre Studies, learning all the advanced stuff: Stanislavskian technique, Beckettian absurdism, Pinteresque pauses. In fact, I starred in a legendary student production of Harold Pinter’s The Caretaker with one of the longest and most dramatic Pinteresque pauses in theatre history, all during the bit at the end when the audience was supposed to clap. Oh yeah, I was drama-driven, got involved in every uni production, even joined the Gilbert and Sullivan Society and performed a light operetta! Though accidentally I’d joined the Gilbert O’Sullivan Society and wound up prancing around a stage for two and a half hours singing Alone Again, Naturally in stockings and a wig.

After three years I graduated with a highly-esteemed Bachelor of Arts degree, they’re not easy to come by, believe me! And this degree was my entree into the glamorous express lane of theatrical razzle-dazzliness! Within a year I got my first paid acting job, playing Scooby Doo at a children’s theme park, rottsa ruck! Using Lee Strassberg-like acting methods, I immersed myself in the character the moment I immersed myself in my giant Scooby-suit, waggling my Scooby tail, which was attached to a harness strapped tightly around my groin. How the little kids loved to pull on my tail, and I would speak with my funny Scooby voice, going ‘Owwww lettttt go ya rittle kiddies, NO SERRRIOUSLY, IT HURRRRRRTS MYYY GRRRRGROIN, GETTTT ROFFFFFFF’. Oh they loved it when I wept; they cheered and cheered!

Now my meteor skyrocketed! Shot me high, whooooHOOOOO, into a stratospheric life of occasional street busking, unpaid fringe cabarets, a bit of stand-up comedy, and finally seven wonderfully dramatic years of unemployment. So of course I encourage you to follow your heart, my darling, and I will help you get there, help you excel in Year 12 drama, teach you proper drama exam questions like ‘Felicia is an actor but makes her living as a waitress. If Felicia serves 20 tables and each table seats four people, calculate the maximum number of tips required for Felicia to pay her weekly rent.’ Awww what’s wrong sweetheart? Why are you looking so Zellwegger-glum? C’mon, let’s celebrate with this big delicious plate of gado gado!

(They do not move. Gado gado does not get eaten. Fade to black.)
Junior Elementary Math Mastery

By Rhonda Farkota

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By Jessica Grainger

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