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Connecting for change

Shining a light on what needs to be
done to address education inequity

The national curriculum +

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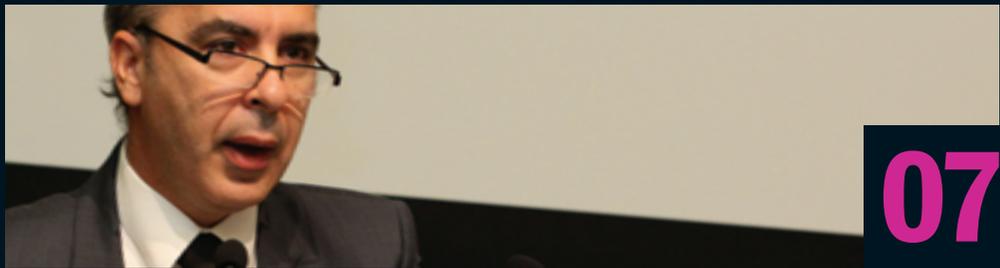
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Time for an era of accountability



The ACE National Conference may not have produced a magic bullet to solve all education inequity, but it did shine a light on the work that needs to be done, writes Margaret Clark MACE.

As I commence writing this editorial we are just packing up at the end of the ACE 2011 National Conference “Equity in Education – Connecting for Change”. People are rushing around, saying their goodbyes and there is still a big buzz in the air that hasn’t stopped since the first morning tea break.

I am trying to stay a bit on the margins so I can process some of the highlights and understandings that have come to me over the last two days while they are still fresh in my mind.

There are two things about this conference that I can guarantee. Firstly, the insights and learnings of others will be many and varied. This was a conference jammed full of rich pickings and different things will resonate with different people. Not all of this was top down either. Many delegates at this conference were PhD students, researchers, practitioners with fascinating life histories and seasoned educationalists who have lived through, and been part of,

important phases in Australian education.

Secondly, this was not a conference that was designed to provide delegates with answers. There will be no excitement around a brand new magic bullet program that will make all the difference, nor was there a list of motherhood statements drawn up, or easy truths outlined, as conference findings.

For me the take home things that grabbed me were about accountability, in particular accountability for equity in education.

One understanding common to all speakers is that in spite of many concerted attempts to address the social determinants of education inequity, progress is not in any way commensurate with effort. This may seem to be so obvious as to be not worth mentioning but I think it is important because it sets the context within which accountability for education equity needs to be understood.

If, as many economists seem to →

→ suggest, it is all about the teacher, then all we need to do is establish the right demand and supply framework to drive teacher excellence. The best accountability framework would give high priority to data about teacher 'value add' on their students learning. However even in this conceptual framework, one would need to look at whether this would be adequate. What learnings would we want to measure? Who should be accountable for ensuring that the highest need students get the highest quality teachers? What data would measure whose relative performance?



Tom Alegounarias

Even within this simplistic account about what matters, it is clear that our current accountability framework would not measure up in any way.

And of course it is not that simple.

The other end of the spectrum in terms of understandings about equity is that schools cannot overcome the entrenched and complex social determinants

One understanding common to all speakers is that in spite of many concerted attempts to address the social determinants of education inequity, progress is not in any way commensurate with effort.

of education outcomes. This is a recipe for pessimism. While not underestimating the complexity and entrenched nature of the challenge, all of the presenters made it clear that while education on its own could not bring about a world where school outcomes bore no relationship to student social determinants, we could make a big difference and we could work in concert with others to address issues that are outside the ambit of schools.

Tom Alegounarias, Chair of the NSW Board of Studies, threw out a challenge to the conference to not let our understandable distaste of simplistic or crude econometric models of accountability and their known perverse outcomes place us in a position where we are seen to be anti-accountability (see page 7). We need to become informed advocates of intelligent accountability, especially if we are serious about equity. Seen in this way, the problem is not that we have too much information out there, distorting perceptions and practices, but that we have too little.

This was underscored

by speaker after speaker. Professor Bob Lingard noted that Australia is more unequal in 2011 than at any point over the last 50 years and that for advanced economies like Australia the best economic investment lies in reducing inequality, not making the rich even richer (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*). We need better accountabilities, he concluded, that include: Opportunity to Learn or input accountabilities; horizontal accountabilities across different equity groups; temporal accountabilities which take account of and address the history of



Bob Lingard



Catherine Branson

Indigenous inequities; and accountabilities that address all the key elements of the Melbourne Declaration not just literacy and numeracy. This is a very extensive list.

The Opportunity to Learn (OTL) concept was part of an equity campaign in the US, where school spending is even more unequal than in Australia. The OTL campaign sought to get state governments to commit to reporting against OTL standards that were designed to address school quality. This included equal quality

of teachers across schools (measured by school profiles around length of experience, proportion of advanced standing qualifications, proportion teaching out of subject/ level of training, absenteeism and turnover rates), school building standards, library and ICT resources, science labs and so on.

It is telling that while all US states signed up to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements, that committed them to 100 per cent success in getting all

students to make adequate yearly progress by a given deadline, no states signed on to being able to comply with OTL standards. Clearly it is politically easier to sign on to known unachievable targets if they are in the future. To agree to being transparent about equal resourcing is more problematic. In Australia we jettisoned input accountability some time ago that holding governments and systems accountable for outcomes is far superior. Yet glaring differences in the teacher profile across schools continues under the radar because the extent of it is unknown.

The argument that the accountability framework should cover all the key commitments of the Melbourne Declaration has the potential to open up the field of focus very considerably. What should all learners know, understand and be able to do and how might we know how successful we are at ensuring this for all learners?

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Branson QC, President of the Australian Human Rights commission reminded us that Australia has obligations under international conventions to teach human rights, but the current draft of the Australian national curriculum does not give this a coherent whole of curriculum focus (see page 13). There is no point in measuring an output (how well students know, understand and are able to act within a human rights framework) when the inputs (what is taught) are known to be weak.

The SBS “Go back to where you came from” series, reminded us in a very dramatic way that, as a society, we do not have a strong and resilient human rights culture. In this program we saw people, with strongly held anti immigration views (7 out of 8), who shifted position just through coming face to face with those who desperately require asylum.

This suggests that important issues in Australia can frequently be decided through strongly held positions based on poor factual knowledge and an inability to imagine, at a visceral level, experiences vastly different from our own. An increased emphasis on teaching about human rights across the curriculum and teaching the capabilities that support human rights action and understanding is clearly vital from an equity point of view.

On the plus side for accountability advocacy, we now live in a data rich education world and there is no reason why we can't work to ensure that the data that drives policy and practice works for us, rather than in perverse ways. Dr Brian

Croke, Executive Director of the NSW Catholic Education Commission reminded us that when Tony Vinson's report on concentrated social disadvantage in Australia (Dropping off the Edge, 2007) was written, the access to data was much more limited. Whatever we may think about the uses and misuses of the MySchool website it gives policy makers and researchers in Australia access to extremely valuable data.

We were privileged to hear from two retired principals, Bernie Shepherd and Chris Bonnor who have been furiously crunching the MySchool data to analyse, among other things, the

OECD. That is, regardless of socioeconomic background, students attending schools in which the SES background is high do better than if they are enrolled in a low SES school. Our hierarchy of schools has complicated any possible solutions by concentrating and compounding disadvantage.

How can accountability for education equity address this? Can we really expect highly concentrated low SES schools to carry the weight of overcoming disadvantages created by the policy parameters that have led to the high level of school segregation (and to increased inequity). Surely this makes a mockery of such

to which socioeconomic background and school SES background influences educational outcomes across all key commitments of the Melbourne Declaration. Part of that journey requires the sort of detailed analysis that is now potentially available using the *myschool* data and the identification of gaps in the data (such as around teacher quality). Bernie and Chris gave us a glimpse of the complexity of data crunching required. It is interesting that none of this work has so far emanated from official channels such as DEEWR or ACARA and that for most researchers the way the data is accessed makes it impossible to undertake these sorts of school type comparisons.

In fact it has been designed to make such comparisons impossible, on the grounds that this will preclude the development of league tables. Yet no schools were individually shamed by the reports we viewed. We should not have to rely on the ingenuity and dedication of two retired principals, working on a voluntary basis, to make available the sort of information essential for thinking about the nature of our inequality challenge in Australia.

Margaret Clark, chief executive officer, Australian College of Educators.

Our hierarchy of schools has complicated any possible solutions by concentrating and compounding disadvantage.

extent to which, in Australia, demography is still destiny. Their graphs tell a story of policy failure – a NAPLAN hierarchy that relentlessly maps to the ICSEA hierarchy, but also of a hierarchy of school types and a growing concentration of enrolment with low SES concentrations increasing across non selective government schools.

The mainstream talk has always been that the equity challenge is to overcome student effects through increasing teacher quality and needs based funding. But this ignores that what we are also seeing in the Australian data is a very significant level of school effect. The impact of our school SES (or ICSEA) on performance is amongst the highest in the

an approach.

It seems to me that we have a long way to go before we can say we can map out the data that can best be used to hold schools, systems and governments accountable for ensuring that we make measurable progress in reducing the extent



Chris Bonnor



Weighing and distributing the good of schooling

Tom Alegounarias used the ACE National Conference to challenge teachers not to dismiss the important role of evidence and data in narrowing the equity gap.

To teach, why else if not ‘to make a difference’? Or, put less gently by American education reformer, Horace Mann, ‘Doing nothing for others is the undoing of ourselves’ – the highest of 19th century morality sentiments, with equity at its heart, and still the foundational mythology of mass education.

And an appeal to high sentiment is appropriate for the issues at hand. While the teaching profession is more important than ever before, I don’t sense the confidence or clear purpose that might accompany that standing.

What is equity and how does it align with or relate to the increasing public demand for effectiveness and transparency? These are core questions for the profession and events like the ACE National Conference indicate that they are being renegotiated, or at least subjected to scrutiny. The profession and new teachers in particular, deserve to be confident that there is at least the prospect of ‘making the difference’.

There is an important role for educational leaders to ensure that this is the case. That the policy positions and points of principle that we espouse have been tested.

The emphasis in a lot of literature for a long time has been that teaching can make a difference. Richard Teese has written about the temptation in educational thinking to deny that failure is linked to social background: refusal to accept that there are marked and persistent

social patterns in achievement seems to be based on a fear of demotivating teachers in poor schools.

No one wants to provide a pretext for resignation, but anything we can say will necessarily be overwhelmed by the impact of reality encountered once at the chalk face. At the same time, there is a sense of expectation that schooling can make a difference and a professional necessity to aim to. So it’s no time to be indulging in the intellectual advantages of pessimism, but let’s not deceive ourselves either.

Can we still say in earnest that our education system ‘... is the great equaliser ... the balance-wheel of the social machinery’ – Horace Mann again – when it might be said that we are a highly efficient means of reproducing existing inequalities? And now we have the high achievement/low equity narrative. A quick Google will reveal this as the shorthand description for our system to emerge from international comparisons. This is supposed to suggest our report card is mixed, but the characterisation should be unacceptable to any system and any profession worth its name.

Long a feature of how education systems work, the last 20 years has seen an explosion of statistical data informing international comparisons. And while it might seem highly reductive to characterise the complexity of seven different education systems along with their combined efforts to address disadvantage, the numbers do tell a story.



- Let's recap briefly. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) says that for 15 year-olds in Australia:
- about 23 per cent of low socioeconomic status (SES) students did not achieve international proficiency standards in reading, mathematics and science compared to only 5 per cent of high SES students;
 - about 40 per cent of Indigenous students did not achieve the standards

much of the media spotlight, it is the explicit focus on low SES outcomes in COAG's productivity agenda that is of greater significance.

Economists like Productivity Commission Chair Gary Banks like to call it human capital: the bundle of attributes that determine how productive people are in their workplaces and in society. People, like physical capital, require resources and time to add to their development and to fend off depreciation.

And as educators we have always known that, though our language is, thankfully, less prosaic.

The focus on human capital puts education, along with health, as the major long-term public policy concern. And it is an agenda that may not tolerate the uneven distribution of achievement that is now a recognised feature of our system. It is an approach that is increasingly focused on the

We lack a rigorous and understood ethical frame for what constitutes appropriate comparisons of student learning trends and differences to highlight policy interventions.

- compared to 12 per cent of all Australian students;
- about 28 per cent of students in remote and very remote areas did not achieve the standards compared to 12 per cent of metropolitan students; and
 - on average, low SES 15 year-old students are 2-2½ years behind high SES students.

But low SES students enrolled in schools with a high proportion of students from low SES families are nearly four years behind students from high income families in high SES schools.

So, whence our first shards of light? Australia's relative prosperity, our international economic competitiveness is being reassessed in the context of the Asian economies that have themselves identified mass, whole-of-cohort education systems as a foundation for long-term growth.

In this context the low equity part of our equation is resonating strongly with the need to find ways toward increased productivity. It's not the first time the performance of our education system has been at the centre of debate about the country's economic performance, but in the past, the attention has often been in the context of finding scapegoats for wider economic concerns. While spending in the school building stimulus and investment in ICT have captured

quality of education also. As modern economies and dynamic labour markets need people with more sophisticated knowledge, skills and competencies, there is awareness that the minimum standards must nonetheless be very high.

The case for a higher and more even distribution of achievement is now supported by increasing amounts of serious research linking education outcomes to a country's economic welfare. Steve Dowrick's meta-analysis of existing empirical studies internationally, suggests that an additional year's education can yield an increase in a country's GDP of 0.2 percentage points above trend. Over four decades, this would amount to GDP being 8 percent greater than otherwise (Dowrick 2004).

There are big payoffs to be had from improvements in educational outcomes. For example, Hanushek and Woessman's international comparisons of student performance and economic growth find that 'one standard deviation in test scores ... is associated with a two percentage points higher average annual growth rate in GDP per capita over a period of time'. Also from Hanushek and Woessman: a modest goal of having all OECD countries boost their average PISA scores by one quarter of a standard deviation implies an aggregate gain of OECD GDP of \$90-120 trillion dollars. Importantly,

they also show that the effect is disproportionately positive when the gains are among low achieving students.

The Productivity Commission estimates that, together with improvements in early childhood education and higher educational attainment, increases in literacy and numeracy could raise aggregate labour productivity by up to 1.2 percent. There is no doubt that this sort of analysis is distracting for policy makers outside education. Treasuries, education's financiers, looking to arrest the slide in productivity gains, recognising the threat to our relative standard of living from the rising economies, will pause to consider the importance of educational investment and the need for a better, more equitable distribution of attainment.

This argument at this point in our history represents a clear and present urgency to address educational equity and the distribution of attainment in our schools. And yet, among educators, among teachers, teacher educators, teacher activists, in educational policy forums, it has to be admitted that this argument, the productivity dividend, just does not warm the blood like wine. Teachers and educators accept the arguments, generally, but the arguments aren't ours. They aren't the basis of our call for equity. Not beyond the pithy high quality/low equity line.

Why is this? Why are we reluctant to focus on, analyse and then exploit the issue of educational equity in terms of the range and distribution of attainment numbers and their economic impact? If I'm overstating the case, I will at least argue that there is ambivalence to an approach that quantifies and measures or weighs the amount of learning. I'd say we're suspicious of the terms of this proposal. What of ourselves are we giving away in return for the jewels and finery of our new friends in Treasuries and Cabinet rooms?

The consideration: To pay a price
I doubt many of us are unhappy that equity and education has been moved centre stage. But there is undoubtedly wariness within the education community about the explicitly economic rationale

that is driving this interest.

An example is in the recently published and excellent new book, Australia's Curriculum Dilemmas: state cultures and the big issues, edited by Melbourne academics Lyn Yates, Cherry Collins and Kate O'Connor. In Cherry Collins' chapter on the history of assessment forms in different states, the Federal Government's education reform agenda of the late 1980s is seen to have been driven by 'an economic manager's perspective, not interested in education for the benefit of children per se but in evidence of value for money'. Schools were seen as an economic entity that serve 'the perceived needs of a nation'.

At the heart of this is the ambivalence or rejection of testing and in particular external systemised whole-cohort approaches to testing. NAPLAN, for example, is seen as the culmination of historical efforts by successive governments to turn reporting as well as assessment into a policy tool. NAPLAN is an "assessment technique to bring schools into line with this new conceptualisation of their task as generative points in an economy. NAPLAN is not simply about monitoring in order to assist schools struggling with learning-challenged students but rather, following similar schemes in the US and the UK, to turn

rewarded above all else'.

I think it's undeniable that there is a view that hard-nosed politicians, with their corporate managerial philosophies and their attendant industry of 'economistic think tanks, consultants, measurement experts and monitoring mandarins' are pitted against 'educators'. I have to say however that I find the distinctions between the perceived econocrats and educators a little unsettling and unrealistic. Before drawing a line between us educators and those that hold the purse strings, I want to feel certain that our interests can't be made to coincide.

The teaching profession takes its role as the guardian of children's interests seriously. Tensions arising from reform are not often the result of simplistic opposition, but the result of professional caution. This inherent conservatism helps protect children from the whims and fads, fashions and ephemera of passing political caravans. And while self-interest will always play a part in a profession's engagement with those outside its membership, I feel confident in saying that unlike other professions, teaching has never been allowed the luxury making a case on self-interest alone.

Therefore, while issues such as MySchool and the various uses of NAPLAN, and before that various incarnations of basic skills testing, or questions of standards against norm referencing, are often a focus of the discussion, they are not, in my view, the underlying problem.

There are some fundamental issues that go to what schooling is about that trouble teachers. I want to argue that there is reluctance among

us educators to accept education and its outcomes as something that can be attained, measured and distributed.

There is an underlying concern among many, and threaded through much of our commentary, that if education is accepted in these terms then we are accepting a definition of education that defines it as a material thing, and a positional good, rather than an intrinsic good. There is a concern, not an unreasonable one, that if education is presented as a commodity, it is more likely to be treated as one. It can be made relatively scarce and therefore →

We need to build more depth of expertise and a richer, more complex discussion on the issue of measuring progress and analysing comparative data at all levels of the profession.

schools into competitors through public reporting of data in an open market. It is a ... 'politically imposed assessment regime', still resisted strongly by teachers and their unions and by many school communities".

Or this opinion piece by the University of Western Sydney's Joanne Orlando: NAPLAN is not only a standardised test but an ideology working its way through the Australian education system that 'transports classrooms back to the 19th century, when rote learning and the regurgitation of rudimentary facts were

→

subjected to competition.

For this reason many educators or educational perspectives are sceptical of a view of education that sees its attainment as measurable in the first place.

If education is measurable, it is a good that serves the purposes of social class, in that the most advantaged are more likely to attain it, or already have it.

If education is measurable, it is less like a process of growth and more like a product.

If education is measurable, it is more about how much you have than participation and democratisation.

The definition of equity is at the heart of this. The Chair of the federal government's Funding Review, David Gonski, has tallied 40 different definitions of equity. So I won't try to impose a definition on my argument today. But I will assert that there is a common thread to criticisms of systemised assessment and measurement processes, that they are economic and therefore reductionist, rather than expansive and inclusive, of various and critical perspectives.

Even if those are not the words used, the economic rationalists are seen above the stage skirting, jerking the educational testing and reporting puppets. At the same time there is a continuous, relentless policy development toward quantifying and analysing outcomes of social processes, and schooling is not being left out of that. I won't even try to explain the process, though ICTs are manifestly implicated in the inexorable growth of assessments and evaluations in all areas of public policy.

My view is that the profession has generally been dragged reluctantly to the part of the educational debate that focuses on identifiable and measurable attainment. From the moment the word 'outcomes' became an organising point for teaching and learning priorities – late 80s I think – there was a scepticism about it. We did eventually make it our own, delightfully confounding conservative commentators, but we shouldn't forget that at one stage outcomes and indicators were a plot to reduce our work as teachers to a dismal mechanistic instrumentalism.

When I worked in equity programs I was always arguing with those opposed to the

idea of equality of educational outcomes, when this was seen as disregarding our cultural pluralism. We now stand, a little bewildered and conflicted. Arguably the strongest discourse in the profession is around resistance to the simplification and potential abuses of outcomes data. And the dangers are of course real. But at the same time at many levels teachers and schools are making appropriate and constructive use of comparative outcomes data.

What we don't have is our own cogent, coherent and commonly understood perspective of the benefits, along with the dangers, of analysing and comparing student learning data or systemic or policy reform purposes. We lack a rigorous and understood ethical frame for what constitutes appropriate comparisons of student learning trends and differences to

conducted we seek to emphasise their diagnostic applications, even though many tests are of limited diagnostic value, particularly at the student level. But that is where we seek to corral their application. The summative value of external assessments, the measure of final attainment, is a sort of a loud, garish relative. We're reluctant to be associated too closely with any data that purports to sum up a level of achievement or pattern of attainment, no matter how popular it appears to be to outsiders.

I noted the way our spokespeople became pretty quick experts at standard deviations and error margins recently as we, quite correctly, sought to warn against the potential abuses of data comparisons. But generally we are seen, rightly or wrongly, to engage with the issue of

measurement only to resist it.

The result is that there is now an implied and sometimes explicit stand-off between the educational community and the community's overmasters – government policy makers and financiers. The policy makers think more in terms of the range and distribution of attainment. This is, as we have noted, an increasingly significant aspect of Australia's

Before drawing a line between us educators and those that hold the purse strings, I want to feel certain that our interests can't be made to coincide.

highlight policy interventions.

For such an important issue at the heart of policy reform, there is within the profession very little discussion of the role of evidence and data, particularly empirical data relating to student learning, that can be aggregated and analysed for policy purposes. Not one that is shared and understood to whatever degree across the profession in any case.

By contrast, we are I think clear about our concerns about unfair, or more precisely invalid, comparisons. We now crave hard-nosed empirical research when we can get it, (and it must be said, when we agree with it). But this is partly because of the still disproportionate amount of educational research that is qualitative.

While we now generally accept the usefulness of diagnostic assessments, both internal and external to an individual class or school, at all levels of schooling, we were seen generally to resist this development. And teacher preparation still completely underestimates it and school-based teacher induction almost completely ignores it.

When external assessments are

prospects for continued non-mining prosperity. And they are eager to establish structures and processes that they see as motivators for achieving improvements.

The recent visits by the celebrated American educators Linda Darling-Hammond and Dr Yong Zhao have highlighted the negative repercussions of large-scale ill-considered assessment programs that are thus motivated. And yet we know that external assessments can be instructive, if not necessary, reference points for effective teaching as well as for signalling policy reforms for equity. That is when equity is understood, at least in part, as being about a share of learning outcomes.

We must embrace proactively and without qualification the view of equity as a better distribution of the range of learning attainment at all levels, equality of outcomes by another name. Inherent in that is that we as a profession discuss, design and lead the development of the panoply of tools that allow for effective, reliable and valid assessment and reporting, and analysis for that purpose.

The important professional issue is validity. To what purposes can which data be validly applied? Reliability is one question, validity is another. Validity is often a question of professional judgment and context. There is very little focus on this important area of professional expertise in teacher education or teacher professional development.

We need to accept that at the heart of the profession is the ideal of improving the distribution of outcomes, when they are a valid measure of progress, and to be seen to be driven by this, and therefore design the measures of our own success. After all, teachers have always been the indispensable actor in the business of obtaining, interpreting and using evidence of student achievement. The difference is that now there is a broader interest and more sophisticated appreciation of this role. We can choose to see this as an opportunity.

The reluctance to move proactively to design the educational achievement project will leave us continually in the wake of the policy debate, because no one is going to wait for us to resolve our ambivalence. We know from experience that genuine engagement of the profession is paramount to the positive success of any reform agenda. While a stand-off exists, it is my view that it is in our interest to break forward and make the difference, and be seen to make the difference, by building the argument for effective and transparent measurement into professional learning and discussions.

Teaching and learning, directed or constructivist, explicit and cooperative, with assessments that are diagnostic and summative, internal and external, by professional judgment and objective response – all put to the explicit service of building a better distribution of attainment, that we then analyse and interrogate and present to ourselves for reflection and adjustment of our practice. This is our work. To do this we need to build more depth of expertise and a richer, more complex discussion on the issue of measuring progress and analysing comparative data at all levels of the profession, including for the purposes of classroom teaching, and crucially, from within teacher education.

So, I am not arguing that we accept imposition of crude assessments or crude comparisons of student attainment. I'm not saying that we should stop complaining about the inadequacies of current

assessments such as NAPLAN when misapplied or that we should be sanguine about the capacity of ill-considered policy mechanisms to narrow learning. We shouldn't. We should be principled and resistant.

We must continue to understand the difference between education and training, and that a whole well-educated person is not an aggregation of tested parts. Most importantly, we must remain concerned that measuring student attainment can overwhelm and distort the actual purpose of teaching, so that we only teach what we can measure. I don't want the garnish to finally eat the steak.

But the important qualifications and disclaimers should not disguise or defeat the point. That is, that measuring the attainment and distribution of that attainment, not only within schools, but across schools and systems, and transparently analysing differences and similarities, is an inalienable responsibility of the profession. The rejoinder to this argument is always that we know already about equity and the distribution of outcomes.

My view, and my experience in bureaucracies, is that we know that low SES and low educational achievement broadly align. Nothing else. From within the bureaucracies data is found to support the argument that needs to be made on any given day. There is very little aggregation, and analysis of differences, or similarities across locations or practices or policies. Not systematically, and not in a way that can underpin reliable reform.

Certainly there is not enough analysis to allow the profession to challenge or to confirm the regular exaltations that a new policy or approach or teaching product or process will achieve better outcomes. Engaging more confidently and proactively on data relating to student achievement will be recognition that we understand the policy bind that we are in. And that is that there is currently a political benefit in imposing reporting and accountability frameworks on the profession, because we are seen to be resistant to measurement and transparency.

Of course with so much at stake, the debate should be lively and the language sometimes robust. But we might play our part better if we are less dismissive of the efforts or good intentions of others who enter the fray. We need not assume that economists who have a professional interest



What they said...

"We need to be data informed, not data driven." **David McRae**, (above) conference convenor

"Education must lead people to think beyond their immediate circumstances and thinking into their future and give themselves a position in that future." **Dorothy Hoddinott**, principal of Holroyd High School

"Equity doesn't set a date. It just sets targets. This problem has to have a due date." **Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney**, Faculty of Education, Flinders University.

"Excellence that is devoid of equity is a diminished excellence." **Professor Trevor Gale**, Faculty of Education, Deakin University.

"Curriculum is a normalising process – we want all kids to be the same. Some students are closer to that norm." **Rob Gilbert**, School of Education, the University of Queensland.

For more coverage of the ACE 2011 National Conference see the next issue of Professional Educator.

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Leading Curriculum Change

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is working closely with The University of Queensland to design and deliver a 'flagship' professional learning program available to up to 2000 Australian teachers.

Leading Curriculum Change will enhance teachers' knowledge, skills and confidence to effectively lead curriculum change, particularly local implementation of the Australian Curriculum. It will be a unique opportunity to learn with teachers from across Australia in a national professional learning community. Teachers will experience a high quality, evidence-based, interactive online professional learning program that is designed by experts, for adult learners.

The *Leading Curriculum Change* program:

- is aimed at building teachers' capabilities to lead curriculum change and enhance implementation of the Australian Curriculum
- is designed and delivered online to support all teachers at any time and in any place, including those in rural and remote school communities
- provides access to highly regarded national and international experts, academics, practitioners and literature
- offers teachers a unique opportunity for national professional conversations through interactive online communities of practice
- provides an opportunity to accrue credit for post graduate courses.

All teachers who have a formal or informal responsibility for leading curriculum change in their schools are eligible for this program. The program is designed for teachers who teach at all year levels, in all government and non-government schools, in any state or territory of Australia. Principals will be involved as sponsors of participants, ensuring that action learning plans are aligned with school and system priorities.

For further information about AITSL's Professional Learning Flagship Program: *Leading Curriculum Change* and to submit an expression of interest as a potential participant of the program, please visit the AITSL website www.aitsl.edu.au/lcc or contact lcc@aitsl.edu.au.

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Building a respectful society

Strengthening human rights education in the national curriculum will have immediate benefits for students as well as enormous long-term benefit for society as a whole.

Human rights education can play a pivotal role in creating a fairer, more inclusive and more respectful Australia. It also has immediate benefits for the individual student including better learning outcomes and enhanced social and emotional wellbeing.

Yet, the draft national curriculum contains little reference to human rights.

“The current development of a national school curriculum is a unique opportunity to ensure that all young people in Australia learn about their rights and the rights of others and in turn contribute to the process of creating a human rights respecting culture in Australia,” President of the Australian Human Rights Commission Catherine Branson QC told the ACE National Conference.

However, she said, effective human rights education cannot be achieved through the “simple introduction of human rights content in an already over-burdened curriculum”.

“Instead, it requires that the environment within which students learn reflects human rights values. It is when human rights values are embedded in content and in pedagogy that human rights can translate into our attitudes, behaviours and actions.”

Human rights education also needs to go beyond ‘civics and citizenship’ education.

“If we want students to acquire more than just knowledge about human rights

and to actually adopt values and attitudes that reflect human rights then human rights education needs to be a cross-cutting and visible element of the curriculum that relates to and provides an interpretative framework for students’ daily lives.”

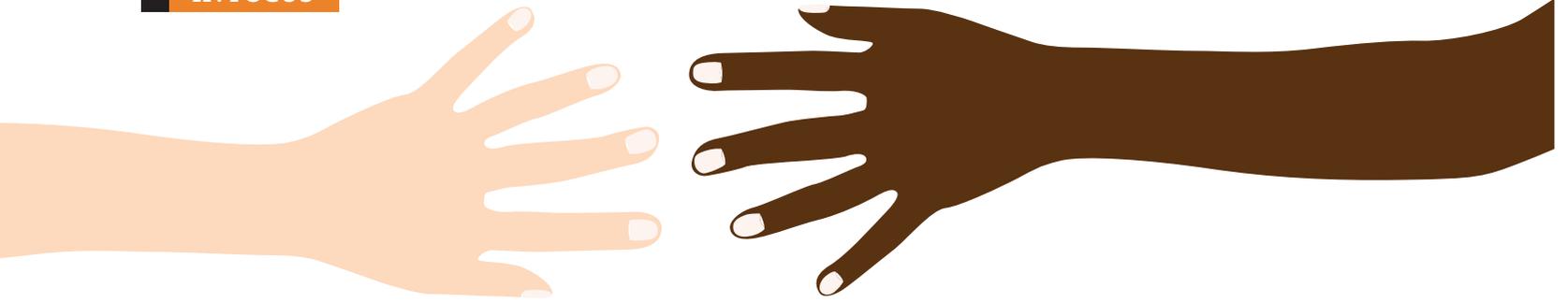
While Branson said Australia should be proud that it is a nation where most people enjoy the protection of their human rights, we do fall short of protecting human rights for everyone – including education. Children with disability from low income backgrounds and indigenous children have significantly lower levels of access to education from preschool through to tertiary levels.

On the whole, she said, people found it hard to identify with, and therefore feel empathy for, those considered as different. This is seen in the divisive debates surrounding asylum seekers. But, using the SBS series ‘Go Back to Where You Came From’ as an example, Branson said when people had a greater understanding of others and put themselves in their shoes, they were then able to empathise.

“Exposure to the lived experiences of asylum seekers changed perceptions of participants and the audience in a way that the words of public figures or politicians could not,” she said.

“This then is a form of human rights education in action.”

However, not everyone can take part in →



→

such a television, so what does formal human rights education look like?

Human rights education is not only about providing knowledge on the basic freedoms and protections to which all people are entitled and the mechanisms that protect them, but also about imparting the skills needed to promote, defend and apply human rights in daily life, Branson said.

“Human rights are best protected when they are embedded in the way we think and therefore in the ways we act. If we don’t believe in human rights, then no law, no charter, no parliament and no court will save them.

“It will be our educators that will be our most powerful partners in protecting these rights.”

The importance of human rights education as a tool for advancing protection and enjoyment of rights in Australia was recognised in the first, and second, recommendations arising from the National Human Rights Consultation in Australia in 2009. “...education be the highest priority for improving and promoting human rights in Australia,” it stated.

According to the Australian Human Rights Commission there are three major elements to human rights education: the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the development of respectful values and attitudes and changed behaviour, and the motivation of social action and empowerment of active citizenship.

Critical to all successful human rights education is its ability to connect with its audience, Branson said.

“As human rights educators, it is our job to use practical examples and activities that instill an understanding of what human rights values mean in students’ daily lives – to make human rights a part of their own lived experience.”

“Our mindset, attitudes and behaviours

are set early in life and these are heavily influenced by our environment, including our school education. This demands that we engage children in discussion around their rights and the rights of others at a very young age.

“Human rights education in the national curriculum provides an opportunity to impart human rights knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to all young people in Australia.”

Incorporate human rights values into students’ daily lives is a concrete way to prevent bullying and discrimination, and it has also been shown to improve

(Program), which encourages schools to place the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of its ethos and curriculum.

In doing so, it has improved self-esteem, behaviour and relationships, reduced bullying and discrimination, increased discussion and engaged children in planning and reviewing their own learning, according to a three year qualitative study of the program, undertaken by researchers at the Universities of Sussex and Brighton.

The first evaluation of the project since its launch in 2004, the study found

that its introduction was accompanied by a fall in truancy and an improvement in results at schools with a high proportion of children on free school meals.

In a study of 31 schools, researchers found that there was “little or no shouting” and that conflicts between pupils escalated far less frequently than they had done before the schools adopted the new approach. Fixed-

term exclusions decreased in 13 schools, stabilised in three, and five reported no exclusions, the study says

The award scheme was also found to have compensated for the educational disadvantages stemming from child poverty. Three of the four schools with over 50 per cent of children eligible for free school meals increased their attendance, attainment and reduced fixed-term exclusions.

Of the 14 schools that had 20 per cent of pupils on free meals, eight improved their attainment, seven improved their attendance and six reduced exclusions.

“Equipped with human rights knowledge and skills, and motivated by human rights values and attitudes, students can find the confidence to lay claim to their own rights, as well as to defend the rights of others,” Branson said.

As human rights educators, it is our job to use practical examples and activities that instill an understanding of what human rights values mean in students’ daily lives – to make human rights a part of their own lived experience.

learning outcomes.

“Research in Australian schools shows that where education around values is embedded in the content and pedagogy of the classroom, there is evidence of improved student engagement with schooling, better learning outcomes, and enhanced social and emotional wellbeing. As a result of values education, schools have reported increased empathy, tolerance and respect, and increased student confidence to address bullying,” Branson said.

“Schools have also reported a reduction in disciplinary measures, an increase in school attendance, and positive shifts in classroom and playground relationships as well as relationships at home.”

In the United Kingdom, UNICEF has been pioneering a program called the ‘Rights Respecting Schools Awards’

The Australian national curriculum: empty words

or a real opportunity?

The development of a national curriculum is a golden opportunity that can't be wasted, writes Guy Claxton.

The new curriculum is based on the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. There are two main goals. One is to do with 'equity and excellence'. The other is that 'all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens'. Look a little further, and you find that being a successful learner doesn't just mean having done well on the exams; it means 'having developed their capacity to learn...being creative, innovative and resourceful...able to collaborate and communicate ideas'. Being a confident and creative individual means 'being enterprising and showing initiative...and having resilience and empathy'. And so on.

What an exciting and challenging prospect. Schools are to become places that explicitly coach and develop these qualities, systematically, for everyone. History is no longer just knowing about the boatloads of convicts and the process of colonisation; these subjects are to be used as mental exercise machines for the development of empathy. No more dusty textbooks, but deliberate training in the very 21st century skill of being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes – someone who lived at a very different time, and thought very different things, from today's 12-year-olds in Parramatta. How do you do that training? Guided visualisations, probably. Imaginative writing that tries to observe the same event through the eyes of different

protagonists? I would expect so.

Mathematics becomes not just learning how to add fractions or solve simultaneous equations – almost nobody needs to be able to do that in the 21st century. So if we are still going to 'teach' them, the new curriculum must mean that these become vehicles for developing the qualities of resilience and collaboration, right? How interesting. Presumably students are going to be set genuinely hard and ill-defined problems, and left to struggle with them in groups, so they can learn how to become more and more resourceful and independent of the teacher. Teachers will learn to back off; to teach less and allow room for those valued qualities of mind to develop – because, for sure, you can't make someone resilient by giving them gently graded problems, or by making them afraid of making mistakes. Nor can you give someone initiative or imagination just by talking about them, any more than you can get fitter by reading a book about jogging.

We have ducked this opportunity to rethink school in the UK. By the time the documents had been through the hands of the bureaucrats, all the interesting bits had been bleached out; they didn't understand them. And instead it was more tests and



Professor Guy Claxton

syllabuses, just like the past 100 years. A change of government, as in New Zealand, and the exciting, demanding ambitions of the new New Zealand curriculum are quietly forgotten to death. You're not going to let this golden opportunity slip through your fingers in Australia. Are you? ■

Professor Guy Claxton is Director of the Centre for Real-World Learning (CrL) and Professor of the Learning Sciences at the University of Winchester. He is the originator of the educational Building Learning Power program (helping young people become better real-life learners) and consultant (learning and creativity) for the New Zealand Ministry of Education and the South Australian Department of Education.

Claxton will be presenting 'Building Learning Power – Schools that Teach Confidence, Curiosity and Creativity' on September 22 at the University of Canberra. He will explore the latest research on 'the science of learnable intelligence', review what works (and what doesn't) in building students' learning power, and highlight some of the 'smart' things that schools are doing in the UK, Australia and around the world. Registrations for this ACE on the Spot event, hosted by The ACT Branch, close September 16. For more details go to <http://austcolled.com.au>.

The importance of being aligned

Will the national curriculum meet Australia's needs in education, society and economy in the 21st century? By **Brian Caldwell** FACE.

I think the development of an Australian Curriculum is one of the most exciting and worthwhile projects in Australian education in many years. We are one of only three of 21 nations around the Asia-Pacific that do not already have one, the others being Canada and the United States.

I will not refer to the subjects in the national, nor will I debate their merit. My purpose is to highlight the importance of securing alignment of education, society and economy and the roles that must be played in designing and delivering the national curriculum. I will explain how this alignment was relatively stable in the past and how the sheer speed of change in the 21st century demands constant re-alignment if schools are to serve the nation well. While supporting intentions for the national curriculum, I will argue that other aspects of the reform agenda may be counter-productive in the years ahead. Uniform standards-driven system-oriented approaches will have little success. We must build capacity on a school-by-school basis to update these alignments within the framework of an organic constantly-refined national curriculum.

Education, economy and society

There are two fundamental alignments that must be achieved (based on those set out in Chapter 1 of Caldwell & Harris, 2008). Figure 1 illustrates an alignment between education, economy and society that schools are expected to address. The national curriculum has an important role to play in setting up the

alignment. The 'compelling vision with high moral purpose' was described as 'success for all students in all settings'.

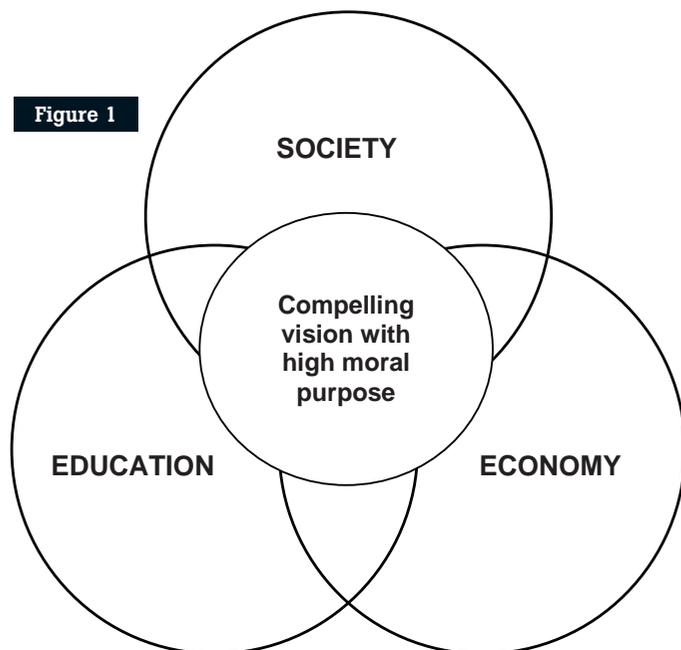
A typical disjunction between the three is illustrated in a statement that is often heard along the lines that 'I want to live in a society not an economy'. However, a quality education and a strong economy contribute to a vibrant society.

The alignment has been strong in the past. An example is the alignment of schools and society in an agricultural economy, a situation that continues to prevail in communities in many countries. A similar alignment was evident in industrial times to the point that the curriculum was determined to a large extent by the requirements of

factories and management in education reflected a 'factory model'. Such an alignment is still important in many countries. New alignments are necessary for education in a knowledge economy in which the technologies of learning have been transformed. Such alignments are not easy to establish and sustain.

Passion, trust and strategy

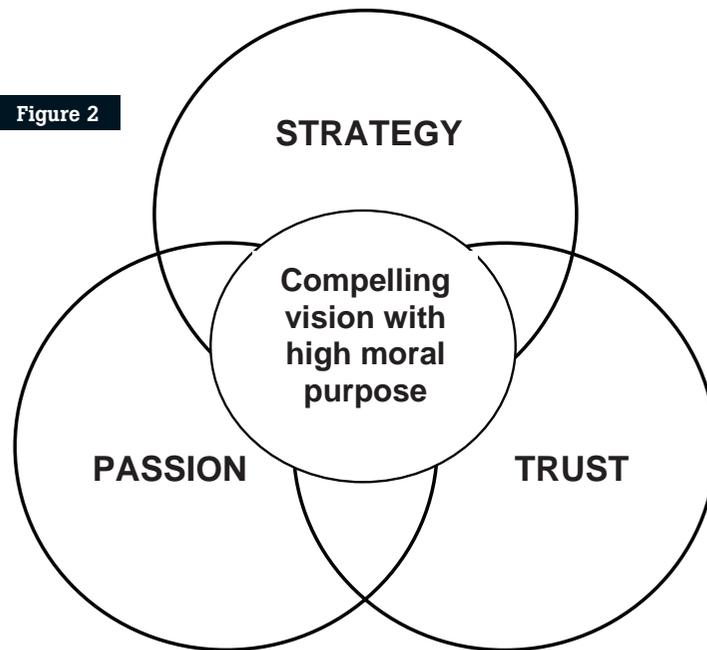
The second fundamental alignment is between passion, trust and strategy, as illustrated in Figure 2. This alignment may be viewed as a precondition for success in the first alignment in Figure 1. Passion, trust and strategy must be aligned with the vision. No amount of passion will suffice if well thought-out strategies are not designed and delivered.



Passion in policymaking is ineffective if it does not engender trust. Those charged with policy implementation should be committed to the vision and the strategy. Determining the extent to which there is a relationship between passion and trust is an interesting way to analyse the impact of policy and practice in education.

Bill Clinton wished to be known as the 'Education President'. I suspect Barack Obama wishes the same. Kim Beazley wished to be known as the 'Education Prime Minister' should he have been elected. I suspect Julia Gillard wishes the same now that she has been. I have no doubt about her passion. The key questions are: Does she have the strategies to channel this passion to achieve the vision of success for all students in all settings? Do the public and the profession trust her to deliver?

Figure 2



Achieving the transformation of schools

In *Why not the Best Schools*, Jessica Harris and I proposed a 10-point 10-year strategy for achieving the transformation of the nation's schools, with transformation defined as significant, systematic and sustained change that secures success for all students in all settings. This was set out in a chapter entitled 'Strategies for an education revolution'.

1. A national curriculum is designed that is broad enough and sufficiently adaptable to ensure the professional judgement of a highly-skilled profession will prevail at the school level ('national curriculum')
2. Initial teacher education is transformed to ensure all teachers have a master's degree and remain at the forefront of knowledge and skill through continuous professional development ('teacher education')
3. New structural arrangements are designed to ensure diversity of programs in the post-compulsory years in an effective constantly-changing alignment of education, economy and society ('program diversity')
4. National testing of all students is minimised as the highest levels of knowledge and skill are developed by teachers and those who support them ('national testing')

5. The wider community including business is seriously engaged in design and delivery with public and private funds deployed through networks of foundations and trusts ('community engagement')
6. Transparent needs-based mechanisms are designed to ensure the efficient deployment of public and private funds ('transparent funding')
7. Innovative approaches to governance are introduced along the lines of publicly-funded no-fee charter schools to ensure that public schools maintain their appeal to parents ('innovative governance')
8. School ownership ceases to be a factor in determining the amount of public funds that are disbursed to schools ('school ownership')
9. Higher levels of school autonomy in the public sector are achieved within a framework of accountability and choice ('school autonomy')
10. Most schools in the public sector are rebuilt or redesigned to make them suitable for learning and teaching in the 21st century ('school design')

I prepared a report card on progress in the 'education revolution' in September 2009. The score was 43 out of 100. It rose marginally to 45 out of 100 in March 2010. We have not repeated the exercise, believing that the idea of an 'education revolution' should be abandoned, but not

the intent as far as securing success for all students in all settings is concerned. However, I suggest that good progress can be made if there is alignment among the 10 strategies.

For example there must be alignment between national curriculum and each of teacher education, program diversity, national testing, community engagement, transparent funding, school autonomy, and school design. The first strategy, on national curriculum, is 'A national curriculum is designed that is broad enough and sufficiently adaptable to ensure the professional judgement of a highly-skilled profession will prevail at the school level'.

This strategy demands that teachers be prepared in a way that ensures they have the capacities to make these professional judgements ('teacher education'); that different offerings and emphases are provided in different settings rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum delivery ('program diversity'); that teachers have the capacities to test (and assess) well to the extent that the need for national tests is minimised ('national testing'); that the community (broadly-defined) is engaged in the design and delivery of the national curriculum ('community engagement'); that transparent needs-based funding mechanisms ensure that schools have the resources to deliver the curriculum ('transparent funding'); that schools and their teachers have the →

→ autonomy and the capacities to achieve the foregoing ('school autonomy') and schools are rebuilt or redesigned to ensure that the national curriculum and associated pedagogies can be delivered ('school design').

Even though I unequivocally support the development of the national curriculum, there are aspects of what is unfolding that I suggest make it difficult when it comes to achieving these alignments. Apart from the limited alignment with other strategies described above, the fact that the curriculum is an online resource, which if printed runs to thousands of pages, is both strength and weakness. It ensures it can be easily and continuously changed in response to the necessary alignments and re-alignments of the kind illustrated in Figure 1 (education, economy, society). Ongoing online matching to curriculum resources is impressive. On the other hand, where is the high level of wisdom and judgement that should be the defining characteristic of a profession? What do we make of the fact that the Finland curriculum across all subjects and across all grades is less than 100 pages?

The 21st century skills

Another issue is the extent to which the national curriculum addresses the so-called 21st Century Skills. While many people reject the nomenclature, the 21st century skills are generally considered to include those in the Cisco (2008) report *Equipping Every Learner for the 21st Century* which proposed that all learners:

- Are to acquire a range of skills including problem solving and decision-making, creative and critical thinking, collaboration, communication and negotiation, and intellectual curiosity
- Receive tailored instruction
- Connect to their communities
- Continue learning through their lives

My best reading of the national curriculum is that these 21st Century skills are addressed but they will continue to be eclipsed because of two fundamental if not devastating mis-

alignments, one related to assessment and the other to plans to pay bonuses to high-performing teachers.

Mis-alignment case 1: Assessment

In my view a kind of fraud is being perpetrated on the public as far as national tests are concerned, and state and territory governments as well as the opposition in each jurisdiction are complicit. The public can do little other than agree with the view that students should be tested well and parents should know how well their children are doing against standards. The states and territories along with non-government school authorities can do little other than agree to implement them given the funds attached and penalties that apply if they do not.

Before continuing I should make clear that my analysis is not 'party political'. I have consulted for ministers of all persuasion or their departments in Canada, where I worked for 13 years, and in most states of Australia as well as the Commonwealth. Frankly, I think

to assessment than Australia, if our preoccupation with NAPLAN and *myschool* is taken as an indicator. A recent discussion paper of the Ministry of Education makes this clear. In my view it is one of the finest statements on the nature and purpose of assessment to have been produced in recent times. Here are two excerpts that highlight the importance of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Assessment information consists of quantitative and qualitative data. The nature and content of the information will differ depending on the immediate purpose for its collection and the level of the sector at which it is collected. A range of rich assessment data will be captured and shared at the school-level. Subsets of information will be made available with appropriate qualitative and quantitative context to other agencies in the education system to enable them to fulfil their roles. (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 50)

The Ministry maintains that the publishing of raw, highly aggregated assessment data without qualitative context information will both undermine this collegial environment and subvert the reliability of the assessment data collected. The Ministry of Education considers that it is not appropriate to compare schools on a simplistic and misleading basis. This is a consistent position held by successive Governments in New Zealand and dating back at least to the 1998 Green

Paper entitled *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools*. (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 50)

Creating alignment in assessment: A scenario

It is incumbent on me to suggest a better way to achieve alignment. Here is a narrative for an alternative future that describes how we might reverse current and likely trends as far as impact of high stakes testing is concerned while we nurture innovation and creativity:

It is 2020. There is now a higher level of transparency and more assessment in Australia's schools than in the past. However, approaches associated with

There must be alignment between national curriculum and each of teacher education, program diversity, national testing, community engagement, transparent funding, school autonomy, and school design.

all ministers and their governments are committed and passionate about education. I subscribe to Rudyard Kipling's famous adage; 'I always prefer the best of everybody, it saves so much trouble'. The issue is not the passion; it is the alignment of passion, strategy and trust as illustrated in Figure 2.

Returning to the story, the contrast between what we (and countries like England and the United States) are doing and other nations are doing is interesting, as illustrated by New Zealand.

New Zealand

New Zealand is a top performer in PISA. It has a better balanced approach

NAPLAN and the My School website at the start of the decade, when every student in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 was required to do several 40 to 50 minute, mostly multiple choice 'high stakes' national tests each year, have been abandoned. A united profession and the public at large soon realised that expectations had not been realised and the scheme was becoming increasingly and seriously dysfunctional. It inhibited rather than supported the transformation of schools. There was marginal improvement in student achievement in the early part of the decade but results soon flat-lined. There was anecdotal evidence of 'gaming the system'. Changes in levels of achievement against national standards are now, in 2020, monitored through periodic testing of samples of students in jurisdictions around the country.

Long-overdue reforms in teacher education starting in 2011 meant that teachers became expert in skilful assessment, diagnosis of need and immediate support of their students in an unprecedented and comprehensive approach to personalising learning. Every school has teachers and other professionals on call who give immediate support to their colleagues to ensure that no student falls behind. A re-modelled national agency prepares tests that schools can choose if they wish, but the high level of professional skill ensures that most schools design their own and use an array of approaches to assessment. This agency works through each jurisdiction to monitor schools to ensure they are doing this well.

Parents obtain real-time online reports of how their sons and daughters are progressing, and online comparisons of schools in My School were phased out from 2012. They were of dubious validity, difficult to understand and the subject of seemingly endless debates among academics, policymakers and practitioners.

Teaching to the test and the narrowing of the curriculum are dysfunctions of the past. The curriculum has been broadened to address the range of knowledge and skills demanded in the 21st century. Schools have far more autonomy than

in the past, with many opting for an international rather than national curriculum, but they operate within robust frameworks of accountability. Innovation and creativity flourish and there has been a resurgence in the arts and science. New world-class facilities have been an important factor in attracting able people to the profession. There is a passion that has not been evident for several decades.

Above all, the focus must be on building the profession and learning the lesson from well-meaning reform efforts in other places, such as England.

Mis-alignment case 2: Teacher bonus

The second case of mis-alignment moved to centre stage over the last fortnight in the Prime Minister's announcement about a teacher bonus scheme.

In my view the scheme is poorly designed, has no successful counterpart in comparable countries, and is almost certain to be abandoned or postponed. It is astonishing under these conditions that \$425 million was set aside in the Commonwealth budget for 2011-2012 as an initial payment on the final cost of \$1.3 billion.

The intentions may be commendable. After all, there can be no disagreement that high quality teaching is the most important school-based factor in accounting for student achievement, and that high quality teaching should be recognised and rewarded. However, this scheme will not achieve these intentions, and ministers at state and territory levels and non-government authorities should reject it or insist on major redesign.

It cannot be implemented in the time frame announced by the prime minister. A total of 25,000 teachers or 10 percent of the workforce will receive their bonus in 2014 based on appraisals in 2013. This means that 250,000 teachers must be appraised according to an agreed and valid framework. No such framework exists. The Australian Institute for

Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has been charged with developing one and has to its credit secured agreement on a set of teaching standards. There are 37 standards, with a different set for each of 4 categories of teachers, creating 148 different standards. There are currently no agreed evidence-based approaches to determining how each standard will be measured. Implementation in 2013 will likely be no more than a hastily-contrived tick-the-box approach that will de-professionalise rather than enhance the profession.

International experts on school improvement give such schemes the thumbs-down. Canada's Michael Fullan (University of Toronto), whom I consider to be pre-eminent in this field, concluded that 'performance-based merit pay is a nonstarter' and that 'when common sense tells you it

won't work, when no research exists that backs up the claim for merit pay . . . it is time to give up the ghost [of merit pay]' (Fullan, 2010, pp. 91 and p. 84). He noted that performance pay is not used in virtually any other profession.

Fullan has been the chief education advisor to the government of Ontario in Canada, one of the best performing systems in the Program for International Student Achievement (PISA). Along with Alberta, another province in Canada, it is not far behind Finland in PISA. Neither system has adopted or plans to adopt a bonus system or merit pay (nor has Finland).

It is extraordinary that the prime minister announced the policy with the words 'we will build the system to measure great teaching, we will monitor teaching performance' when her government neither owns nor operates a single school. To get her policy up she must secure the agreement of every state and territory and every non-government school authority. This agreement is unlikely.

The Prime Minister also raised the possibility that scores in NAPLAN and information on the My School website might be used. This is bizarre. Apart from concerns about the validity of scores and comparisons, with evidence that many schools are now 'gaming' the system, there is no provision for assessing

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→ the performance of teachers in areas other than literacy and numeracy, for example, in the arts. Apart from that, Australia needs to re-think NAPLAN and My School in the light of experience in other nations, notably the United States which, as Professor Linda Darling Hammond has pointed out, is backing away from narrowly-focused high stakes tests cited by Patty, 2011, p. 5).

The public and profession are crying out for coherence (alignment) in public policy on education. If the prime minister wishes to achieve this she ought to connect a reward scheme to another policy, namely, delivering a higher level of autonomy for government schools, and sending the funds to schools for local decision-making in ways that make sense in particular settings. The criteria for allocation of bonuses in highly disadvantaged settings will differ in significant

ways to those for schools in highly advantaged settings. Moreover, to return to Fullan's criterion of common sense, some bonuses will be shared among a team of teachers at a particular level or across a school, since it is the collective effort of many teachers that secures improvement or outstanding performance.

The tragedy is that this poorly-conceived policy will have little effect on the overall levels of achievement of students and will further demoralise the profession that is tired of top-down command-and-control approaches to school reform.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I reiterate my support for the national curriculum as far as intent is concerned. I appreciate the debates about its scope and content. My chief concern is how it aligns with other strategies for the

transformation of schools, and this has been disappointing, not because of the efforts of ACARA but because the suite of strategies to achieve that transformation do not cohere in the ways I have illustrated. I do not doubt the passion of the Prime Minister or leaders of other governments. The effort from here on must be re-design and alignment within a broad national framework rather than a highly prescriptive, carrot-and-stick, command-and-control approach. Above all, the focus must be on building the profession and learning the lesson from well-meaning reform efforts in other places, such as England.

Peter Hyman wrote about the relationship between policymakers and professionals in 1 out of 10: From Downing Street Vision to Classroom reality (Hyman, 2005). Hyman was speechwriter and policy advisor to Tony Blair for 10 years before leaving Number 10 and taking up an appointment as a classroom assistant at Islington Green School.

Hyman was very clear in his view of the way forward since he had worked in both worlds. He suggested that policymakers ought to have greater confidence in professionals and be less prescriptive. 'For lasting change to occur in public services, politicians need to show more humility and bring on board the professionals' (Hyman, 2005, p. 390). 'Government must take the need to let go more seriously, and to empower the frontline. It must produce a climate where frontline public servants do not become risk-averse. This means less dictating, less putting up pots of money to be bid for – ambitious

targets yes, accountability yes, but also back creativity and imagination' (Hyman, 2005, p. 385).

This is the way forward for Australia.

Brian Caldwell is managing director and principal consultant at Educational Transformations and Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne. This is an edited version of a presentation Caldwell at the Oxford 2011 Conference on the theme 'Australian Curriculum and 21st Century Learning' hosted by Oxford University Press, Clifton Melbourne.

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Laying a strong foundation

Embedding vocational education and training in the national curriculum has the potential to break down barriers. By **Annie May**.

High school students wanting a career in the trades will soon have as clearly a defined and valued pathway to achieving their goal as fellow students with more academic pursuits, with VET to take its place in the national curriculum.

Announced as a Labour government election promise in July of last year, with funding confirmed in May's budget, the National Trade Cadetships (NTC) aim is to "ensure that every student gets the opportunity to maximise the value of their school education". This includes those students who don't wish to go on to university.

Under the initiative, from 2012 students in years 9 will be offered the cadetship as an option under the national curriculum. It will progressively be offered to years 10-12.

Two streams of the NTC would be available including one stream which lays the foundation for further training and a second, a pre-apprenticeship stream, which will focus on specific trade or occupation area.

NTCs will be nationally recognised and will provide credit towards an apprenticeship or further training and will also contribute towards state based senior awards, in the same way as other approved subjects under the national curriculum. The NTCs will be developed by the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority,

in partnership with Industry Skills Councils and with states and territories.

On announcing the scheme, Prime Minister Julia Gillard said it would provide a clearer pathway for trade careers "equal in quality, value and rigour to traditional academic pursuits".

Making the NTC part of the national curriculum would improve the status of

vocational education and training (VET) in the eyes of students, parents, school teachers and employers, says Jim Barron, CEO of Group Training Australia.

"If successful, this scheme has the potential to reposition the role of VET to play a central role in the early education of young people, rather than a peripheral one," he says.

There have, however, been concerns raised over duplicating existing programs. Most recently this issue was raised by Victoria's acting Minister for Education Peter Hall when the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood and Youth Development (MCEECDYA) met in Melbourne on July 8.

"The national cadetships program risks duplicating existing state-based trade incentive programs and will result in increased administrative burden, particularly in larger states" Hall said in a statement.

While acknowledging this risk, Barron says what makes the NTC scheme different to other programs is that it provides "genuine pathways" into a full time apprenticeship.

"I think the reason why the government went down this path is that despite other programs being in existence, a lot of them in many respects are duplicating each other. They are also untargeted, not properly resourced, and not connecting the dots – not building genuine pathways into a full time apprenticeship," says Barron.

"Figures suggest current VET in schools programs have fallen off the pace a bit. The number of enrolling students in the programs isn't high, and continuing to fall off in some states, and they have lost a level of industry support.

"I don't think it's [the NTCs] trying to reinvent the wheel, I think it's trying to take what's already in existence, take the best of what is working and impose an across the board national approach to this. Inserting it in the national curriculum will hopefully ensure that."

Current programs have also failed to break →



← down jurisdictional barriers.

This challenge was acknowledged by School Education Minister Peter Garrett during a workshop on the scheme held in April. "...there has been a concerted push to integrate more VET programs into schools over the past 15 years. However, I think we should all acknowledge that we have not yet melded the 'VET way of doing things' and the 'school way of doing things,'" he told the stakeholders gathered.

Trying to embed VET within the school system has been an ongoing battle for the past 20 years, says Barron. Barriers included having appropriately trained teachers, proper resourcing and being consigned as an afterthought.

"The encouragement and facilitation of VET at in schools is often limited by the culture in some/majority of schools which generally values and promotes academic learning; and the willingness of these schools to be more flexible in their approaches to structure and timetabling.

"There is no doubt that over the years there has been some patchy engagement in addressing these issues. Some states have been very good, while others less than good."

At the April workshop, Megan Lilly, Director of Education and Training at AiGroup, said the issue of 'parity of esteem' between the NTC pathways and more traditional academic pathways would be a continuing challenge.

Little progress, she said, was likely to be made on this issue "unless school principals see the NTC as part of their core business and it is reflected in school funding agreements."

"...the NTC needs to be embedded in the heart of schooling, not just seen as an add-on," she said.

All agree that quality needed to be at the forefront of the scheme. This requires having teachers, whether from school or the VET sector, with appropriate qualifications and experience to teach foundation skills and the industry content.

The capacity of school teachers to acquire the skills, knowledge and experience they need to deliver the programs, and to work with trainers and employers to ensure a high quality

outcome for students was vital, said Lilly, given this is a new development for which few have been trained.

The government also sees the scheme as a way to create a more skilled workforce and address emerging shortages.

Baron says if embraced by the school sector and employers, it has great opportunity to do both.

Critical factors for successful VET in school programs were recognised in the report "Enhancing the retention of young people to year 12 especially through vocational skills". Commissioned by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and produced as collaboration between the Australian College of Educators and the TAFE Directors Australia, the report also identifies impediments and provides a framework that can be utilized to guide the development of new vocational programs or evaluating existing ones. It could also shape the monitoring and reporting of outcomes from projects and programs in the VET in schools arena in which government funding has been invested. The report can significantly assist ACARA and the partners in developing the NTCs.

"At the end of the day, not everyone that does a VET course at school wants to end up doing an apprenticeship. But by embedding VET in the school system early on, it has a wider reach.

"If embraced and well resourced, once put in the national curriculum

AREAS IDENTIFIED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS IN NEED OF ATTENTION

- The divide between competency assessment in VET, and quality of learning assessment in schooling.
- The struggle to obtain credible work experience for students in school, complicated by OH&S issues.
- The small numbers of suitably qualified specialist VET teachers.
- The differences across jurisdictions in recognising VET in school courses in senior certificates and the confusion this can cause employers.
- Ensuring the cadetship scheme is not just another VET option among other activities already underway, but a structured program within the national curriculum.

every student will have the capacity to undertake it."

Group Training Australia is working with the government and stakeholders in designing the rollout of the work experience component. Up to 50,000 additional structured work experience places will be offered.

Barron says it's GTA's job to get industry to "buy into" the scheme.

"Once you embed it into the curriculum, hopefully a lot of barriers will fall away. If this scheme is done right, it will set up VET in schools for a very successful next decade." ■

Professor Denise Bradley to head NTC advisory panel

Professor Denise Bradley has been appointed as chair of the new National Trade Cadetship Minister's Advisory Panel, which will guide the development and implementation of the scheme. "Her expertise and on-the-ground experience will be invaluable as she carries out this important role, helping to ensure that students who want to pursue a career in the trades are able to do so with clearly defined, high-quality learning pathways in our schools," said Minister for School Education Peter Garrett, when announcing the position. The other members of the panel are yet to be appointed, and will include members

of industry, education, the Vocational Education and Training sector, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, parents and unions. Garrett said the panel will be asked to provide guidance and advice to Government on the best ways to prepare school students for further vocational education and training, providing school-based vocational learning, and ensure ensuring that vocational school learning is given equal value as more traditional academic pathways.

Emeritus Professor Bradley AC FACE was also recently awarded the ACE 2011 College Medal in Sydney in July.

See opposite page.

The highest honour from the Australian College of Educators:

The College Medal



The College Medal is an annual award that is designed to recognise outstanding contributions to education in any field, level or sector of Australian education; and raise awareness among educators and the general public regarding the College's role in advancing the education profession.

The President of the Australian College of Educators, Lyndsay Connors presented the 2011 College Medal to Emeritus Professor Denise Bradley AC FACE at the President's Dinner on Wednesday 13 August, Sydney.

Bradley AC, former Vice Chancellor and President of the University of South Australia from 1997 to 2007 was the third woman ever selected as a president of an Australian university. She has made a significant contribution to national education policy over decades. She was a member of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) from 1986 to 1988, a member of the Higher Education Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) from 1988 and its Deputy Chair from 1991 to 1994. In 2002 she was a member of the Australian Government's Higher Education Review Reference group.

In 2008 she chaired the Expert Panel which reviewed Higher Education in Australia and recommended a new framework for Higher Education. The key recommendations of the Bradley Review have been adopted and are bringing about wide reforms.

Her other significant roles have

included the following:

- foundation Director of the Australian Universities Quality Agency
 - President and Chair of IDP Education Australia Limited
 - Treasurer of the International Association of University Presidents
 - Member of the Board of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
 - Member of the Board of the Australian - American Fulbright Commission
 - Chair of the South Australian Training and Skills Commission
 - Member of the Board of the Business/ Higher Education Round Table
- Bradley is currently Interim Chair of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA); Chair of the Australian Health Workforce Advisory Council (AHWAC); a member of the Education Infrastructure Fund Advisory Board; a member of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO; a member of the NSW Partnerships Evaluation Committee; and Chair of VERNet.

Throughout her career, Bradley has been an outspoken advocate for the entitlement of all Australians to a quality education from their earliest years.

As a feminist, she has fought against the conditions that prevent girls and women from realising their potential and participating actively in all spheres of society. She has been prominent in the struggle to broaden access to and participation in education for all; and,

in particular, to removing barriers to participation in higher education by those from less advantaged groups in society.

In 1995 she was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in recognition of her service to education and to educational policy in schools and universities, particularly in relation to access and equity for women and girls.

She was awarded a Centenary Medal, the award created by the Australian Government to commemorate the Centenary of Federation and to honour those who have made a contribution to Australian society or government. In 2005 she was named the South Australian of the Year for her significant contributions to that State.

She has been awarded Honorary Doctorates by Australian and overseas universities.

Bradley has been a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators since 1982 and was its President in 2008 and 2009. At that time she oversaw significant structural changes in the governance arrangements that enable the College to respond rapidly and effectively as a national body representing all sectors of education.

On Australia Day 2008 Bradley was made a Companion of the Order of Australia, Australia's highest honour, in recognition of her service to higher education through leadership and sector-wide governance, to the promotion of information-based distance learning and to the advancement of educational facilities internationally.



Leading on Asia literacy

At a time when Australia's urgent need for Asia-literate citizens becomes more and more obvious, many school principals are taking up the challenge, writes **Kathe Kirby**.

Few can argue now with the reality that the future of young Australians is inextricably connected to Asia for economic, social and global reasons. Our need for citizens who are knowledgeable about Asia's societies, geographies, histories and languages isn't just an add-on, something it would be nice to pay attention to once we're happy with our NAPLAN tests. It's the key to future prosperity and peace for our children.

Anyone in doubt about this wasn't at the recent Asia Education Foundation (AEF) Summit where speaker after speaker, from political, business and education sectors, reiterated the message that an Asia literate Australia is urgent. I don't want to rehash their arguments, which interested readers can find on the AEF website (www.asiaeducation.edu.au). Rather, I want to draw attention to some of the responses being made by Australian schools, led by visionary and knowledgeable principals and curriculum leaders.

Since 2008 the AEF has run the 'Leading 21st Century Schools: Engage with Asia' (L21CS) professional learning program for school leaders in partnership with Principals Australia and all peak principals' associations. Participants first complete a one-day workshop, which they leave with a specific toolkit of resources and a personal action plan to use back at school. Ten weeks later they meet again to share and report on outcomes. Over 500 school leaders from across Australia have taken part in L21CS.

Many leaders use the program as an opportunity to form Asia literacy teams in their schools. The best examples of these include school leaders themselves because, as one Tasmanian principal said, 'It was important for me to communicate to staff that this new team would be a normal part of the school's leadership, management and professional learning infrastructure'. Sentiments such as this reinforce the notion that Asia literacy is a vital,

central part of the work of the school.

An audit of curriculum is often an important next step. Many find, as did this New South Wales deputy principal that "our existing resources were out of date, studies of Asia were not connected to school priorities, and cross-curriculum planning and sequencing of studies of Asia did not exist". The audit provides an evidence base for further curriculum development work.

At the same time, though, principals say they often find pockets of strong Asia-related content, or teachers with untapped Asia knowledge and skills. A South Australian curriculum leader, for example, found the audits "...affirming when we worked through them, so teachers felt positive about the school and importance of Asia literacy. At the same time it helped us see what else we need to do." A Catholic school principal in Victoria found that, "Unknown to me, we had on the staff a person who was brought up in Jakarta, two others who had worked on aid projects in South-East Asia and someone who had lived in Pakistan and spoke some Urdu". All were more than enthusiastic about sharing and working on Asia literacy once given the opportunity.'

A related lesson from L21CS is about the importance of engaging staff in the Asia literacy project. Experienced principals know well that even the best ideas in education founder without the commitment of the teachers who have to implement them. One Western Australian principal was "...conscious of the need to assure teachers that we were not going to just add to an already demanding curriculum. I wanted to make sure that teachers would be engaged every step of the way and I was determined that we should work together through small achievable steps".

Teaching and learning of Asian languages in Australian schools is still a vexed issue that we are not delivering on. According to research commissioned by the AEF, fewer than 6 per cent of Australian students at Year 12 study an Asian language. Some L21CS participants

plan action to increase the demand for Asian languages through motivational activities for students such as connecting with the AEF's Asia Literacy Business Ambassadors program.

Another way of doing this is through direct contact with Asia, sometimes through sister school initiatives and through programs such as the AEF's School BRIDGE partnerships with Indonesia, Korea and China. Another Western Australian principal said that, "Our classes have begun communicating with classes in Bali, as they learn Indonesian, and they will hopefully begin communicating with us as English becomes part of their curriculum. The year six and seven children are making a short video [for their Indonesian partners]. There are, of course, many Asia literacy benefits from a sister school relationship

apart from those associated with language learning.

For many school leaders, the L21CS program leads to the incorporation of studies of Asia (and the notion of Asia literacy) in school policy and planning documents as well as curriculum. These

sustainability. Much too often, schools see valuable initiatives wind down because the principal or a couple of key teachers leave.

This is less likely to happen in a situation such as the one reported by a Queensland principal that "...a focus on Asia was adopted as one of seven key priorities for the next three years. Targets were specified together with implementation strategies and timelines, success indicators, responsible staff members and funding sources".

These leaders and schools are doing important work for their students - and for Australia. The wider challenge, though, is for such work to become so common in our schools as to be the norm. When we get to that stage we will be much closer to being ready for what is called 'the Asian Century'. ■

Teaching and learning of Asian languages in Australian schools is still a vexed issue that we are not delivering on. According to research commissioned by the AEF, fewer than 6 per cent of Australian students at Year 12 study an Asian language.

actions do not mean, of course, that the Asia literacy agenda does not need to be revisited over time, but they are a step towards

Kathe Kirby is executive director of the Asia Education Foundation.



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Living, learning, laughing

Tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it. Thus began Richard Gerver in his presentation in Melbourne. With his personal motto of 'Live, learn and laugh a lot' he presented a strong, clearly articulated case for designing and operating schools with the students at the centre of everything. The view that 'schools are for teachers not for students' was aired and explored. So, what exactly does a school about and for children look like?

The role of creativity in developing young minds is a hot topic. In a rapidly changing world, schooling for twenty first century learners needs to be very different. At a time where information abounds and has the capacity to overwhelm and desensitise, our schools increasingly require a heightened emphasis on creativity, collaboration and problem solving.

We need to pose the following questions:

- What are the important dispositions young people require to be successful lifelong learners?
- In an increasingly 'flat world', where boundaries have been removed as communication technologies provide instant and pervasive connection, what are the essential skills, attitudes and purposes which constitute the reasons for learning?

Sir Ken Robinson, one of the world's most influential proponents for the role of creativity in education, argues that what is not required in education are the concepts that underpinned an industrial schooling model – conformity, (reducing kids to be the same), batching (assuming kids of the same age learn at the same pace and will arrive at the same outcome together) and standardisation (narrowing the focus of learning to a predictable level of outcomes

that does not deal effectively with the exception).

In a world where there are up to 2000 graduates applying for each job (UK figures) how can we best educate our young people to maximise their chances of success? While learning can happen anywhere, education is primarily the result of human interaction. So what does a high performing C21 educational institution look like? Yens Rasmussen's 'skills – systems – knowledge' continuum¹ reflects the operations of successful organisations.

Many institutions, once the skills are taught and the systems (rules of the game) are understood, stop development of their charges at that point. Only truly C21 institutions continue by putting energy into further developing the 'knowledge' component. Standing still is not an option. The analogy of a fly buzzing against a window was used – the fly repeatedly bangs against the window to escape while an open door lies off to the side. It does this because it is programmed so to do. The fly will die trying and change nothing in the process.

Gerver noted that many young people consistently feel no sense of empowerment, often angry and performing poorly at school. Schools are too often classed as failing when judged purely on metrics such as PISA are used, tools designed not to be the sole assessment tool of a school. He noted that the highest performing regions no longer use content based curricula and exemplary regions such as Shanghai have skills and competency based programs with a strong focus on action research and collaboration. Often noted is the performance of countries such as Finland, cited for high achievement.

Finland has an education system determined by the education profession

rather than politicians. The highly tertiary qualified educators, with time for appropriate professional learning, support each other to develop a broad 'kit bag' of knowledge and skills – a little like the 'total football' approach where each player is taught to play all positions. Gerver pondered whether it should be a condition of employment that every teacher has to teach in everyone else's class once a year in different subject areas.

Gerver recommends four strategies for schools to develop themselves:

- a focus on discussing the abstract
- a culture of action research
- the ability to have honest conversations
- a school focussed strategy focussed on development of learning

Abstract questions stimulate action research and may alleviate the tendency for teachers to not be as honest as they might otherwise, for fear of criticism. Likewise teachers often feel that what they have developed is not particularly special and have a tendency towards modesty. Abstract questions free the air for a range of responses to be explored in a liberated manner.

Besides abstract prompts, how else can these good ideas evolve? One suggestion is that the meetings to develop future strategies should involve everyone in the school community – leaders, teachers, maintenance, and administrative support. On arrival at a low performing school as a new leader, Gerver asked all his staff "how could we turn our school into Disneyland? Why would we turn it into Disneyland? Could it be/should it be Disneyland? One response was that Disneyland is one of the few places on earth where children will queue for 45 minutes for 2 minutes pleasure. Why do they do this and what elements of this can be transferred to schooling?" An interesting prompt indeed.



Technology and education

Jobs of the future are things we have not even thought of – memory augmentation surgeon, virtual clutter organiser, personal brander. Microsoft is apparently currently exploring technologies which relate to sharing memories by shaking hands! Obama won on the under 25 vote where 99 per cent of that demographic apparently voted for him, thought to be because of his use of technologies. His results for other demographics were neck and neck – education ignores this medium at their peril.

So what do the employers of the future want? According to Prof Henry Jenkins MIT, the 21C skills are:

- **Performance.** The ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery.
- **Simulation.** The ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes.
- **Appropriation.** The ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content.
- **Multitasking.** The ability to scan the environment and shift focus onto salient details.
- **Distributed cognition.** The ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities.
- **Collective intelligence.** The ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal.
- **Judgment.** The ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources.
- **Transmedia navigation.** The ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities.
- **Networking.** The ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information.
- **Negotiation.** The ability to travel

across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms.²

High performing industries are embracing the development of these skills wholeheartedly. Even the labelling of the Microsoft offices heralds continued learning – they are called ‘campuses’. The Phillips Education House in Second Life cut the Research and Development budget as Second Life avatars used and responded to products, rather than paid R and D employees. If we need further evidence of the power of technology to influence young people, consider that the highest charting hits are those from the show ‘Glee’. They have displaced the Beatles with 85 consecutive top charting worldwide hits (so far).

So, in this technology driven world, how do we remain credible as teachers? One suggestion is that professional learning must involve more than teachers’ education interests. Pixar created Pixar University. Once a week employees were expected to explore an area of interest outside their job and that this involvement would be accredited. The creative director met the canteen hand after the canteen hand had just done a hot air ballooning course. On asking him how he felt, he responded “free”: thus was born the animation ‘Up’.

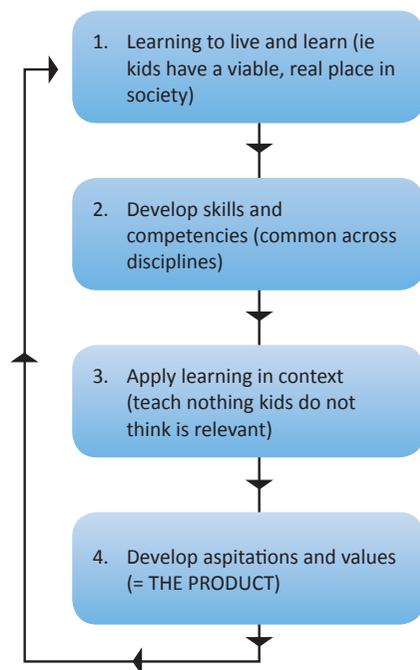
‘Selling’ education

How do we sell education to those that matter most - the kids? School brands are so often focussed around selling a school to the parents. Gerver recommends asking teachers, parents and students: What do we stand for? What behaviours do we exhibit that aligns with the brand? How do you feel when you put on the uniform? When people wear Nike sneakers, they report feeling a little like Hussein Bolt. Gerver asked how our students might feel when they put on the uniform of our schools.

Part of the solution might also be to redefine ‘risk’. We teach getting things wrong as ‘bad’. Today, risk takers are often perceived as irresponsible. You learn nothing new by getting something right. What does risk taking look like? How do we celebrate risk taking? Surely struggle = learning?

Cycle of learning: Living, learning, laughing

Gerver’s Cycle of Learning³ has the following components:



He noted that significant change takes seven years. Indeed we may never see the fruits of our labour. The journey is a long one and to ensure success any reason for change must be clearly contextualised. One thing is clear; everyone in society is responsible for the education of a child.

Richard Gerver spoke in Melbourne on 2 June in an initiative of Eltham College, and supported by the Australian College of Educators.

Annette Rome is director – Teacher Education, Wesley College Institute for Innovation in Education and President, Victorian Branch, Australian College of Educators.

Richard Gerver has been described as one of the most inspirational leaders of his generation. He began teaching in 1992 and rose through the ranks fast being identified by the school’s inspectorate in 1997 as one of the most outstanding teachers in the country. By 2005 he had won the prestigious School Head Teacher of the Year Award at the British National Teaching Awards for his work in leading a school on the brink of closure to becoming one of the most innovative in the world. He was an advisor to Tony Blair’s Government and a co-founder of The Curriculum Foundation. He works around the world sharing his experiences. His first book “Creating Tomorrow’s Schools Today” was published in 2009 and deals with education transformation.

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Mobile learning devices: changing pedagogy

Brett Fitzsimmons looks at the impact the introduction of personal mobile learning devices will have on two key drivers of classroom pedagogy in boys' education; teacher talk and student engagement.

With the rapid development of sophisticated mobile platforms such as the iPod touch and iPad it has been a question of when, rather than if, such devices would impact K-12 teaching and learning.

There is currently very little empirical data with which the rapid introduction to the classroom of these devices and accompanying digital media and applications can be justified. The importance of teacher talk and student engagement in determining the effectiveness of learning in the classroom has been well established; teacher talk is the main means by which curriculum content is transferred and student engagement is essential for effective learning.

Methodology

The impact on pedagogy of the introduction of personal mobile learning devices, such as the iPad, was investigated using a range of observational data of teacher and student behaviour.

Four classrooms, two Year 3 and two Year 6, were observed over a number of lessons using two fixed cameras to record teacher talk and student engagement.

Years 3 and 6 were targeted to establish a representative population of both the middle and upper primary school and to provide a contrast in the curriculum tasks

and learning styles investigated.

Given that the iPad and similar devices were considered "emerging technology" at the time of the study very few students in the group had received significant exposure to them outside of the study, particularly in an educational context. To ensure that all users, including the teachers, were sufficiently skilled in the use of the devices a two-week period of guided exploration where participants were shown how to use the devices was implemented prior to the formal data collection period commencing.

Data Collection

The video data was collected over a six-week period. Each class completed a task using the iPad as a learning tool and a second class at the same year level undertook the same task concurrently using traditional tools. To level data for teaching and learning styles, each class in the respective year level then crossed-over and completed a second task from the same curriculum domain; reading and comprehension for the Year 6 classes and mathematics for the Year 3 classes.

Year 6 Task

At Year 6, a total of 43 students (ages 11 – 13) in two classes of 21 and 23 undertook a literacy task. One class

read a selected text using a traditional book; the other used the iPad to access the book in an ePub format. A range of active and passive tasks such as directed-reading, note-taking and annotating were replicated across the classes.

Three sessions were conducted each week. Students in the iPad group were assigned a numbered device for the duration of the study allowing them to make their own annotations that were retained on the device between sessions. The texts used in the study were 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer', a public domain text from Project Gutenberg and 'The Doublecross', a publication for Pearson Education's BluePrint Series.

Year 3 Task

At Year 3, 41 students (ages 8-10) in two classes of 20 and 21 completed lessons in fractions and decimal 10ths. These topics are part of the standard mathematics curriculum at Year 3 and it is usual for teachers at the school to deliver the content in parallel. One class used the standard textbook and a series of practical activities and the other the iPad.

The teachers in both classes presented the curriculum content using a common vocabulary and methodology that had been designed by the curriculum coordinators.

Analysing the Video Data

Video data was analysed using a coding scheme that identified teacher talk and student participation patterns in the classroom. Student participation was categorised as whole class-teacher lead, small group, or individual.

Five categories for teacher talk were established based on the Singapore Pedagogy Coding Scheme devised by Luke, Cadzen et al 2004 and the sequence of teacher-student dialogue, initiation, response & feedback identified by Myhill, Jones, & Hooper, 2006. The categories were Curriculum, Organisational, Regulatory, Questioning and Feedback.

Discussion

Teacher talk and student engagement are key factors in determining the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the classroom. Teacher talk is crucial for

the transmission of knowledge (Myhill, et al. 2006) and the development of effective learning dialogues, between students and teachers. It provides a context for the development of the higher order thinking and critical analysis skills necessary for forming a deeper understanding (Alexander, 2004).

Overall the introduction of the iPad resulted in little observed change in the total time teachers engaged in meaningful classroom talk at either Year 3 or 6. However, when combining factors that are directly related to the transmission of knowledge or cognitive development of students, as described by Myhill there is a distinct change in emphasis between iPad and non-iPad groups.

In the Year 6 classes, the percentage of teacher talk time for the combined factors of Curriculum, Questioning and Feedback decreased from approximately 90 per cent in non-iPad groups to approximately 78% in the iPad groups. This effectively results in a decrease of 13 per cent in the teacher talk concerned with the key foci of teaching and learning.

The difference is even more noticeable in the Year 3 classes. The percentage of teacher talk time for the combined factors of Curriculum, Questioning and Feedback decreased by approximately 30 per cent in the iPad groups.

A significant contributing factor to

important to the level of student engagement with a task. In the Year 3 iPad groups, there was a 70 per cent fall in teacher talk related to feedback and a 40 per cent decrease in questioning by teachers. The App used for the mathematics tasks provided a basic feedback mechanism, marking student responses correct or incorrect and providing the total number correct; the teachers seemed to assume that the level of feedback provided by the App was appropriate for the task and, as the 'response' component of the IRF sequence was not directed at them, teacher feedback would have been difficult to provide.

Wegerif and Dawes (2004) noted that when students were left to complete computer tasks with little or no interaction with the teacher, task completion was low and little knowledge was gained. In one of the Year 3 iPad classes, students were broken into two groups with the teacher working with a small group of lower ability students. The other students were left to work independently on the iPad through a series of self-directed tasks related to the content presented at the beginning of the lesson. At times, up to 40 per cent of students in the undirected group were off-task, above the mean off-task for Year 3 iPad groups, and well above the off-task percentage for the same group completing similar non-iPad tasks.

Whilst it was clear most of the students were engaged with the iPad, their activities were often not related to the task set by the teacher. As Selwyn (2001) points out 'the underlying assumption that children will quickly and effortlessly adapt to using new technologies' and the perception that they will know intuitively how to interact with technology is misplaced.

Students in Year 3 required constant redirection to keep them on task. They seemed to become easily distracted by the kinesthetic interface of the iPad. In one instance they discover a bug or flaw in the App and quickly decide that it is more important to 'beat' the App, than to engage in the learning task. The main function of the iPad for students appeared to be 'play'.

The use of the Fractions App lead to

The introduction of mobile devices such as the iPad to the middle and upper primary classroom could have a significant effect on the patterns of both teacher talk and student engagement.

the difference between the year groups was probably the nature of the tasks undertaken at each year level. The majority of the iPad tasks in the Year 6 classes were passive in nature, involving use of the device for reading; while in the Year 3 classes the tasks were almost entirely active, mimicking a range of practical exploratory tasks within the existing mathematics curriculum.

Substantive feedback and instructive questioning have been shown to be

many instances of ad hoc collaboration between students even though the class was clearly set an independent task and students understood this. The mobile nature of device allowed students this opportunity.

Feedback and questioning in the Year 6 classes showed little change as the iPad, for the most part, simply took the place of a traditional book.

At both Year 3 and Year 6, the introduction of the iPad required teachers to invest significantly more talk time in classroom

resource management. As with previous devices, such as digital whiteboards, the approach of trying to integrate new technologies into existing classroom structures and current teaching and learning practice resulted in implementation problems that teachers have been required to deal with. It can be assumed that many of the technical problems and usability issues encountered with the iPad will be alleviated as familiarity and experience with the device improves.

Teachers use talk to regulate student behaviour by specifying tasks, initiating responses and determining how and when students respond, as well as implementing a range of behavioural constraints. In the iPad groups at both year levels, there were substantial increases observed in the time teachers devoted to this style of talk; 20 per cent at Year 6 and 80 per cent at Year 3.

Student engagement while completing passive tasks with the iPad is considerably lower at both Year 3 and 6. When required to read from the device or engage in IRF sequencing students found it difficult to 'disengage' from the iPad and often required the teacher to repeat regulatory instructions to achieve the desired change in focus.

At Year 6, a decrease was observed in the percentage of students off-task during active tasks, whereas there was an increase for the Year 3 figure. Again the difference seems to hinge around the nature of the task each group undertook and the classroom layout. The active tasks at Year 6 were principally concerned with using the iPad as a data creation tool with students annotating in the eBook under teacher direction, whereas the Year 3 task

involved considerably more independence with the majority of the students working in a self-directed style their desks.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the introduction of mobile devices such as the iPad to the middle and upper primary classroom could have a significant effect on the patterns of both teacher talk and student engagement.

In particular, it identifies significant changes to the domains of teacher talk

board were far more engaged than those who just received teacher verbal instructions then performed tasks independently on the iPad.

Following from Wegerif and Dawes (2004) findings it is probable that task completion and the development of knowledge during these lessons also declined.

The study also suggests that the model previously used for the implementation of emerging technologies in the classroom by imposing them on existing teaching and learning frameworks needs to be examined. It, therefore, has implications for a range of current pedagogies where it has been assumed the introduction of personal mobile technologies, such as the iPad will be of benefit. Differentiated and collaborative learning that require students to work in a largely self-directed manner may not result in effective

Students in Year 3 required constant redirection to keep them on task. They seemed to become easily distracted by the kinesthetic interface of the iPad.

identified by Myhill et al. and Alexander as being crucial in establishing an effective teacher-student discourse; instructive, questioning and feedback.

It was found that teachers were required to invest considerably more time in talk related to classroom control and resource management when the iPad was used as a teaching tool than was previously the case.

The study did not examine how effective the iPad was as a learning tool in improving student outcomes in either literacy or numeracy. Further research might examine whether the iPad performs differently for visual and kinesthetic learners and if there a difference in the way this information is processed; if the kinesthetic is combined with the visual will there be different outcomes?

This study does indicate that there was a significant change in student engagement when the iPad is used for passive tasks such as reading or during instructive talk by teachers. Student engagement for this style of task was lower than for comparable tasks when the iPad was not used. During active tasks requiring students to work independently, with little initiation or feedback talk from teachers, engagement was also lower when the iPad was used.

During the Year 3 fraction lesson it was observed that students who were presented with a visual model on the

learning.

Further study needs to be undertaken to determine aspects such as how long students remained engaged for when working independently with iPad and whether there is a significant correlation between student engagement and task outcomes.

The report is currently being reviewed by ACE to be published at a later date.

Brett Fitzsimmons is from the Crowther Centre for Learning and Innovation.

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11 August

TEACHING IN A LEARNING CITY: SHAPING THE FUTURE

ACE Ballarat Region
5:45pm - 8:30pm
Aquinas Campus, Australian Catholic University, Ballarat
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5:00pm - 7:30pm
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DIRECTIONS FOR EDUCATION GLOBALLY – IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Presented by Keith Bartley, DECS Chief Executive
ACE SA Branch
7.45-10.20 am
Adelaide Pavilion Conference and Function Rooms, South Terrace, Adelaide
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CHILDREN'S BOOK COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA BOOK WEEK: ONE WORLD, MANY STORIES

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