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**Peter Karmel,  
the economics of  
education and second  
thoughts on education  
funding**

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child: The dilemma of  
educational purpose**

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College medal**

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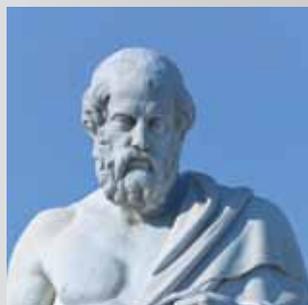
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# The purposes of education



This edition of *Professional Educator* explores the very highly contested topic of: What is education for? In much the same way that the purposes of life itself will never be fully agreed upon, there will also always be debate about what we as educators should be trying to achieve for the students in our care. This is a most timely and needed debate, given there are some concerns about the impact of testing on curriculum width in primary schools and given the strength of the human capital framing that underpins national schooling developments.

The Melbourne declaration provides quite a good starting point, I always think, for broader and important discussions about the purposes of schooling. Are schools about educating all, about preparing

critical and informed citizens, about producing future workers of various kinds, about producing good people, about providing opportunities for all? These are matters traversed in this edition of *Professional Educator*.

Robin Ryan's article on Peter Karmel - one of the most influential figures in the history of Australian education, traces to its origins the idea that education has a significant economic purpose. We are so used to hearing that it is up to schools to remedy inequality and/or that education must ensure our international economic competitiveness that we scarcely notice any more. Indeed, most educators would concur that a major role of schooling is to promote equality and battle its opposite.

There is no doubt that until the educational level of its citizenry reaches a certain level, the economic development of a nation is hampered. However, once that level is surpassed more education does not, despite all the claims, assure more growth. We are used to hearing that the poor performance of schools is hampering national competitiveness, but we never hear that schools should be congratulated when economic times are good.

There is no doubt that a better education helps individuals improve their life chances. These opportunities are what teachers hope to offer their students. Society however is more than the sum of all its parts, that is, its citizens. Major social inequality cannot be 'fixed' by increasing the educational attainment of individual students. In a society where there are major inequalities in how different jobs are remunerated and good stable full-time employment is not available to all, no amount of schooling will address the problems that flow from them. These are economic issues that can only be addressed through economic solutions.

Even more important is the extent to which educational outcomes are themselves affected by economic and social conditions. International research has demonstrated that higher levels of inequality predict lower levels of educational performance. It is perhaps significant that as Australia has become an increasingly more unequal society, rankings on PISA and other international tests of student attainment have declined, despite pressure on schools to fix the economy and assure excellent outcome for all students. This is the lesson to learn from PISA: more equal societies as measured by the Gini coefficient perform better overall and have a very limited socio-economic-based tail of performance. PISA demonstrates that we can have both equity and quality. Wilkinson and Pickett's bestseller, *The Spirit Level*, also confirms these findings.

Perhaps it is time to consider education's purpose beyond it being an engine for driving national productivity. We also need to acknowledge that more equal educational opportunities demand a complementary array of social and economic policies. The articles that follow will open up debates about these important matters.

**Professor Bob Lingard PhD FASSA**  
National President

# Educating the whole child: The dilemma of educational purpose

Educating the whole child (or person) is close to a mantra for many in education – and it seems to make eminent sense. But what do we mean by ‘the whole child’? And by extension, what is ‘part of a child’? More importantly, how do notions of part and whole work when it comes to someone’s life? These may seem frivolous questions, too deep or distant to have any real educational relevance. Yet I suggest they are central to education, and they are intimately entwined with questions about the purpose(s) of education. My intention in this article is to embrace these questions, and by doing so to problematize the way we conceive of purpose in education, requiring a shift in the way we understand how education works for the sake of the whole child.

The journey through school for most young people is one made up of many parts. We see each school subject as a part; each co-curricular activity as a part; and there are numerous other ways to breakdown life in school into various component parts. Schools are pretty good at dealing with parts: adding new parts, perhaps removing other parts, arranging parts in timetables and calendars and other logistical structures. However, understanding the coherence that holds these parts together as something whole is often fraught. How is it that these parts make up a whole? And how do they connect with life?

Adding to the complexity of this picture of school is that some parts align more closely with each other – like subjects/activities which emphasise: (1) acquisition of curricular facts; (2) comprehension of social issues and perspectives; (3) development of vocational skills and competencies; (4) freedom to pursue interests. These alignments are not exclusive, and there is a lot of overlap. However, each can be seen to broadly express a different purpose for education, resulting in a sense of confusion and conflict around the issue of purpose that is so deeply engrained it is generally accepted as a normal condition of school.

Others have also seen this pattern of multiple purposes accompanied by confusion and conflict. In a large scale study of schools engaging with parents, teachers and students, John Goodlad (1984) identified four goal areas of schooling. Likewise Herbert Kliebard’s (1986) historical examination of the struggle for the curriculum highlighted four ideological interest groups, each of which pursued a different purpose for education. Also similar is Michael Schiro’s (2008) analysis of curriculum through which he suggested four curriculum ideologies. The important point to note is the broad similarity across these various schemes (see table below).

These purposes, or variants of them, pervade all that we do in schools. As teachers we perhaps think that we can simply choose amongst them, but this does not work either – because each is pressing for attention in all educational work, whether we like it or not. A more fine-grained analysis of teaching reveals the resulting *compromises* that teachers must make in order to deal with conflict and confusion amongst this multiplicity of purposes. Through an investigation of teaching over the course of the twentieth century, Larry Cuban (1993) arrived at the phrase ‘teacher-centered progressivism’ to capture these compromises. Not teacher-centered or student-centered, not traditional or progressive, but teacher-centered progressivism. Yet such compromises do not solve our problem because the outcome is merely a mixture (playing on the technical definition of this term used in chemistry) where nothing truly combines, leaving us with a mishmash – like a jar of hundreds and thousands. This is the nature of the compromises that accompany confusion and conflict, an insight that John Dewey (1902) perceived regarding the educational situation more than a century ago.

Goodlad (1984) – four goal areas	Kliebard (1986) – four ideological interest groups	Schiro (2008) – four curriculum ideologies
academic	humanist (liberal)	scholar academic
social and civic	social meliorist	social reconstruction
vocational	social efficiency	social efficiency
personal	developmentalist	learner centered



► This concept is in error: it is a limited view of life. Life isn't merely activities, nor is it simply subjects or topics – it is more than that. Life is occupational: occupations are the lived wholes of human life, they are who we are. In this way an occupation is "a continuous activity having a purpose" (Dewey 1916, p. 361) as well as being "an organizing principle for information and ideas; for knowledge and intellectual growth" (p. 362). Occupations are ways of being a person – and at the same time they are ways of doing and ways of knowing. Occupations thus offer a deeper understanding of education as this connects with life – beyond just pedagogy (what we're doing) and curriculum (what we need to know).

Yet when we consider schooling through this occupational lens, especially secondary schooling, we see a fairly limited range of occupations on offer (even when including co-curricular activities). The main school-based occupation is that of student, pupil, learner. To get the gist of this occupational meaning one must really think about what it is to be a student – putting yourself in the shoes of a student – and experiencing life again from this perspective. Remember what it was like to *be* in Mr Smith's year seven science class? This was one of your occupations, revealing the level of nuance at which occupations operate. Seen in this occupational way, it can be argued that the main purpose of schools is to educate young people to *be* students. Being a student fits neatly into Dewey's account of how an occupation functions educationally.

*It calls instincts and habits into play; it is a foe to passive receptivity. It has an end in view; results are to be accomplished. Hence it appeals to thought; it demands that an idea of an end be steadily maintained, so that activity cannot be either routine or capricious. Since the movement of activity must be progressive, leading from one stage to another, observation and ingenuity are required at each stage to overcome obstacles and to discover and readapt means of execution. (Dewey 1916, p. 361)*

“ The general end-in-view for being a student is successful completion of the assessment, which is usually some form of test to be judged by teachers. ”

The heart of the issue gets back to that of purpose, which in everyday educational terms is discussed as student engagement. Purpose is central to every occupation. Dewey describes a purpose as an "end-in-view" where this means the purpose is tangible or "close" (1938, p. 158). A purpose must be close enough that it is actually in view in a living sense, within an occupation – it can't be so distant as to be beyond the horizon of the lived occupation. Here lies the problem with being a student. The general end-in-view for being a student is successful completion of the assessment, which is usually some form of test to be judged by teachers. However, for most adults the purpose of being a student doesn't lie within being a student, it exists *beyond* being a student – in adult life.

The message for adults, for educators, is that life is not merely a constructed accumulation of parts made up of sequences of knowledge and skills. Life is lived occupationally; it is 'built' from birth to death as many and various social occupations. We thus learn knowledge and skills in occupations, whether we are aware of it or not. Educating the whole child means understanding the whole child through this lens of occupations, for it is these that provide purposes as ends-in-view: the tangible reasons for needing specific knowledge and skill. Therefore occupations offer the seeds of educational opportunity, as Dewey was aware.

*The problem and the opportunity with the young is selection of orderly and continuous modes of occupation, which, while they lead up to and prepare for the indispensable activities of adult life, have their own sufficient justification in their present reflex influence upon the formation of habits of thought (Dewey 1933, p. 51).*

The purposes of education cannot be achieved when adults believe that who young people are can be set aside until after school – thereby elevating various forms of being a student to the main way of being a person at school and creating a raft of problems for young people related to purpose! In order to move on from our adult fixation on young people spending years being students only – aimed at a future in the adult world that only adults can really see. We must see young people for who they are *now* and support them *through* those occupations which will add to their life's growing repertoire and carry them forward to a future they can grasp. This is the way through the dilemma of educational purpose, as it is the way to educating the whole child.

John Quay

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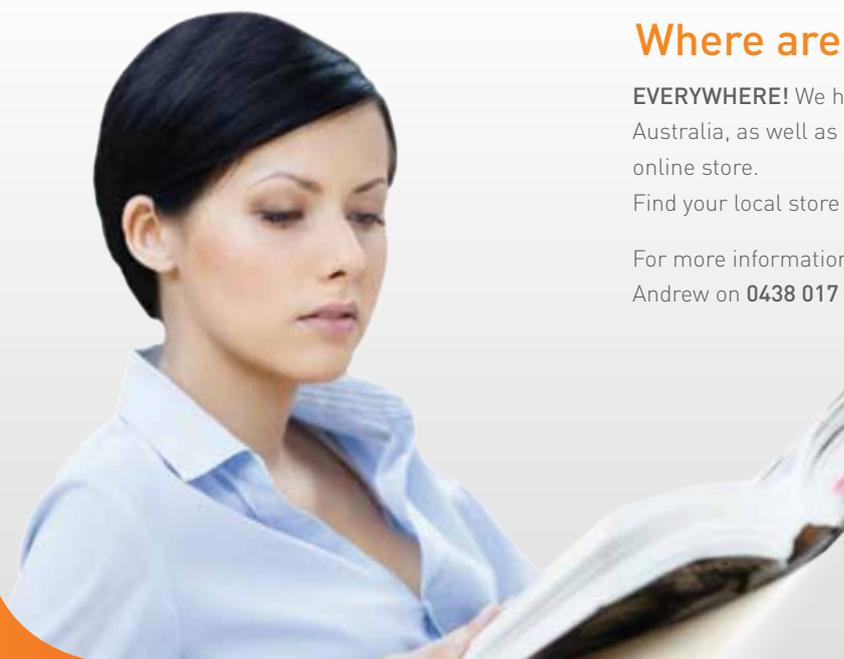
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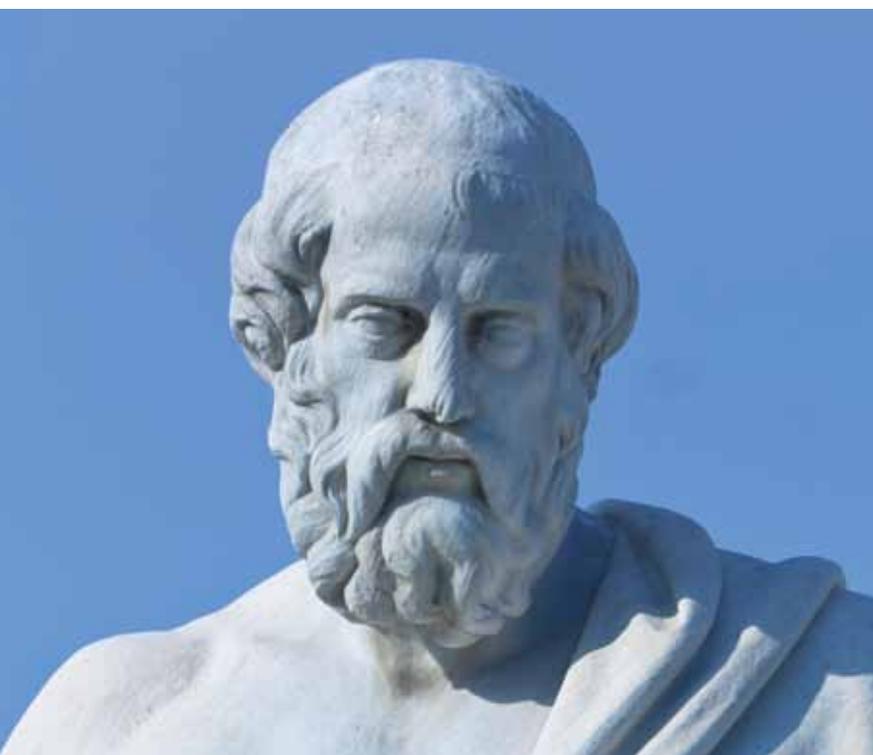
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# Plato coming back: A reflection

KIERAN EGAN

## Introduction

Reflecting on the moral purposes of education can lead too easily to generating an image of an ideally educated person. This is, of course, a dangerous route because everyone's ideal image is rather different from everyone else's (and usually looks like the image-generator in light disguise). Even naming the main components of one's conception of a well-educated person gets one into immediate trouble, and conflict with those who do not share one's view, or who want to allot different values to the various components. Notoriously, any attempt to describe the moral condition of the well-educated person—apart from all the philosophical problems in trying to pin down an acceptable notion of 'moral'—will run into disagreements about what are taken to be the sources of moral behaviour. That is, to put it crudely, some conceive of moral behaviour as requiring some transcendent beliefs to anchor morality and other do not. I am reminded of G.K. Chesterton's poem "The song of the strange ascetic," which includes:

*If I had been a Heathen,  
I'd have crowned Neaera's curls,  
And filled my life with love affairs,  
My house with dancing girls; . . .*

*But I, I cannot read it  
(Although I run and run),  
Of them that do not have the faith,  
And will not have the fun.*

Chesterton seems to have believed that the constraining of behavior to what he thought of as moral only sensibly happened if one believed in a Christian God who had laid down the rules. Today, with the large-scale rejection, or perhaps rather sloughing off, of traditional religious faiths in much of the western world, there is nevertheless in many people a sense that moral behaviour and an ideally well-educated person requires some form of transcendent, more reliable bedrock for everyday actions than pragmatic relativism.

In general, reference to something more reliable than our conventional forms of behaviour has involved the belief that the everyday world accessible to our senses

is not all there is, or that it is a front for deeper meanings. It may be a front made of illusions or disguises which hide another different reality below or behind it. Or it may be a front that is not so much a disguise or illusion as a starting point into deeper recesses not immediately apparent on the surface.

The sense of the immediately accessible world as an illusion or disguise of a different and 'more real' reality behind it has a long heritage, as has the related belief that overcoming the illusions and recognising reality is a condition for any adequate moral life.

Chuang Tse long ago, in what is perhaps his best known playful reflection, suggested that we are like a man who is asleep. In sleep that person may dream, and may even dream that he is dreaming. But when he wakes, he realises that it was a dream. And so for us, perhaps some day there will be a great awakening when we will realise this everyday world was just a strange dream. A little later, some way from Chuang Tse, another mystic, jokester,

dreamer, and philosopher, Plato, suggested a similar image. Our life is like that of prisoners looking at the shadows on a wall, imagining that those shadows are all reality. But, by releasing the prisoner within us, we can come to see that reality is more abundant and rich, and as different from the shadows of everyday experience as a dream is to reality. Moral agency requires being properly awake, able to deal with reality.

## Plato

What remains a little peculiar about Plato is the direction his inquiry into the world beyond our senses took. Many mystics and philosophers struggled to articulate their vision to their disciples, but Plato's insights led him to put into practice an aggressive educational program designed to turn the mind of the student from the conventional and confused view of the world to a perception of the truth about reality.

He imagined this process taking most of a person's life. It begins in youth, when the child's mind is defenseless against illusions. Like most great educational thinkers, Plato was less concerned about how to get students to learn but rather how to get them to unlearn the errors they accumulate in their early years. This old assumption seems recently to have become common again—and is now taken as a great insight produced by modern empirical research that shows how students' fallacious folk-knowledge of physics and other sciences is rarely adequately displaced by a their school science classes. It's always naughtily amusing to see modern researchers, ignorant of the history of their area of study, rediscovering ancient ideas and trumpeting them as their own most modern findings.

Initially, Plato says, our minds are dominated by the appearances of things. We assume the world is the way it first appears to us; how it seems is how it is. The stories we are first told about the world are those we mostly die believing. If children are told the world is flat and rides on the back of a turtle, they will interpret their experience in these terms; if they are told they are on a vast orb spinning in endless space, they will

believe that. For Plato, the first task of education was to begin disturbing the conventional beliefs children pick up in their earliest years.

Later, when students approach adulthood, they need to engage in the kinds of careful inquiry that can help to shuck away all false assumptions, and discover the nature of things. This will require many years of study along with a kind of sanctity. Plato's educated person is more like our modern notions of a combination of the monk or nun with the scholar.

What is a little odd to us today is his insistence that the moral life can be achieved through an austere study of mathematics and the sciences, while he expresses considerable suspicion of the arts' ability to aid us in such a development. Today something like the opposite is assumed. That is, the arts are assumed to provide the stimulus to the kinds of sensitivities and sensibilities that help to carry us in the directions of moral life. The study of the finest literature is supposed to bring to life, within students, ways of seeing deeper meaning in the world and their experience. (Mind you, if this is the case you would expect English professors to be the finest exemplars of these particular virtues. A look at any typical English department in a university will show the absurdity of such a proposition. Also, it is salutary to bear in mind Anthony Burgess's fable *A Clockwork Orange*, in which the central character's love of the finest music stimulates him to sadistic atrocities.)

Plato's concern, however, is never with simply mastering the facts of a subject, as though accumulating knowledge by itself would somehow produce an educated person. (A.N. Whitehead says that such a program would more likely produce the greatest bores on God's earth.) Plato argues that disciplined knowledge is required so that we can break down the illusions of our early understanding. That is, one primary requirement in Plato's morality is a precise and careful knowledge of the way things are. The scholarly virtues of precision, care, and meticulous honesty are rare enough at the best of times, but ►

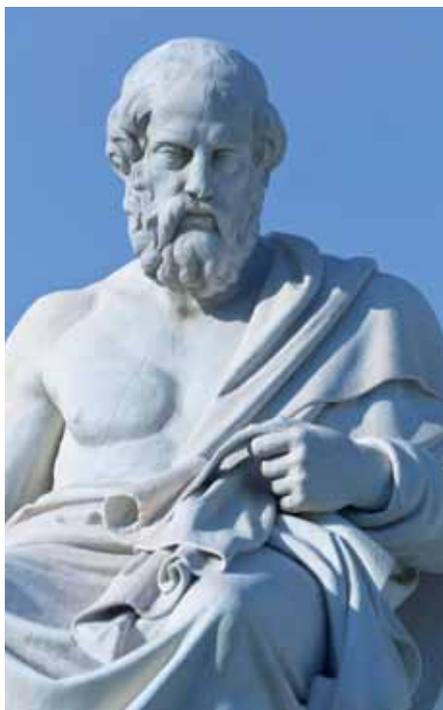
“ Many mystics and philosophers struggled to articulate their vision to their disciples, but Plato's insights led him to put into practice an aggressive educational program designed to turn the mind of the student from the conventional and confused view of the world to a perception of the truth about reality.”

are nevertheless bases for moral life in his scheme. He acknowledges that this educational process isn't everyone's cup of tea, but he thinks it is the best human life has to offer, and following the path through rough ground is consequently worth a bit of trouble.

Along with the intellectual disciplines come physical and moral disciplines. Students cannot gain the benefits of a moral life if they are cowards. Physical courage is required, and he outlines a program that will encourage this. Central to moral development is the recognition that there are things worth suffering for and worth dying for. These disciplines will ensure that "we will not defile our souls" and that all will be well with us when we cross the river of Lethe. "Then we shall be at peace with Heaven and with ourselves." This is his promise as one of the fruits of successfully fulfilling his educational program, and those are the words with which he concludes his *Republic*, and its search for how justice can be made supreme in human affairs.

### Education and the moral life in a postmodern age

All that may be fine for ancient Greeks, you might think, but what relevance can it have to a world of Kmart's, Macdonalds, and postmodern irony? Well, today we are no less concerned that students understand the world and their experience in more than the conventional terms they will pick up from everyday life in society and from modern public media. Indeed, educational institutions seem often to be at war with a crude materialism and cruder cultural forms encouraged by the 'entertainment industry.' If by moral life we mean recognition that human experience offers richness and intensity beyond the surface of easy gratification currently so readily available, how are we to make its appeal as great as that easy gratification? Perhaps, after all, that richer intensity isn't everyone's cup of tea, and those who gravitate towards it are the only ones who are likely to enjoy it, so why bother trying to proselytize the mass of students who are satisfied with the surface sensations of experience. And, anyway, isn't this an appallingly élitist and unpermissible way



of talking in a democratic age? If that lengthy and intensive study, discipline, and refined virtues are the price maybe the moral life can be left to those few who are turned on by such austerities.

The great ally in the battle to encourage students to discover and explore the disillusioned life and carry our minds beyond the ubiquitous illusions encouraged by typical Hollywood products and those of other media assumed to be the arts. If we get them reading poetry rather than hearing the lyrics of the latest pop songs or country music, or listening with joy to Schubert rather than ubiquitous pop music, then, it seems to be believed, we will be leading them in the direction of a richer appreciation of their world. And if we get them writing and composing their own poetry and music, then, it seems commonly assumed, we are educating them well in the direction of a more intense and rich human experience. Before going further with these assumptions, it may be worth pausing to reconsider Plato's objection to them.

His first objection was that these arts are themselves illusions, diverting us from the deeper, more serious tasks of understanding and experiencing the

reality of our world and experience. We might also add the *reductio ad absurdum* mentioned above about English professors. If this view of the arts were true, then the artists and writers of our time would be the exemplary exponents of this form of moral existence. Perhaps one sees the marks of a deeper understanding of the nature of things in artists as a whole than one does in, say, bank officials as a whole? I'm not convinced that is really the case. The expectation that it is true that artists are closer to more intense human experience than bank managers seems to me rather a hangover from one of the cheaper images promoted by Romanticism. Of course the very best poets, say, might exemplify some of the virtues we are looking for, but so might some of the best bank managers.

But how are we to bring it about today? Some of its constituents seem clear enough to go to work on devising such an educational program. It must begin by encouraging children to question the conventional beliefs they form about the world and experience. It will need also to introduce them into the variety of ways people have struggled to make vivid a range of intense human experience, and to introduce them into the delights of scholarly virtues, like precision, caution, careful and intense observation, and delight in discovery. It will need to open to them the pleasure of self-sacrifice for the good of others, with no expectation of return. It will need to engage them in the strange pleasures of discovering the past and how it shaped the present.

Yes, that's right—the curriculum! The problem is how to bring that mass of material to life in new minds. I think we have given up on Plato's program too easily, and that ease was perhaps helped along by forgetting the part about courage, precision, and the virtues of scholarly life. People remembered only the knowledge and forgot the virtues it takes to learn it adequately. And, of course, if we ourselves lack the virtues whose value we hope to persuade students into taking on, what hope is there?

## Conclusion

For Plato, virtue and knowledge are tied together, and so the pursuit of truth is centrally a moral enterprise. This is something Plato is supposed to have been plainly wrong about; he made a category mistake which later philosophers have pointed out. But the obverse part of Plato's belief at least seems true. Egotism and selfishness in their various forms, and other moral inadequacies, breed illusions and confusions whose result is the impossibility of attaining the kind of understanding of which Plato presents us with an idealised picture. While the love of truth is perhaps, as A. E. Housman put it, "the faintest of all human passions," one might have greater sympathy with Plato's point by seeing it in the terms Iris Murdoch uses:

Truth' is not just a collection of facts. *Truthfulness*, the search for truth, for a closer connection between thought and reality, demands and affects an exercise of virtues and a purification of desires . . .

Thought, goodness and reality are thus seen to be connected" (1992, *Metaphysics As A Guide To Morals*. London: Chatto and Windus p. 8).

Plato built this observation into a complex educational program, and we might give more attention to his ideas in light of our own conspicuous lack of success in generating in modern students much sign of morality, love of truth, and the disciplines that understanding the world requires.

Kieran Egan

“ I think we have given up on Plato's program too easily, and that ease was perhaps helped along by forgetting the part about courage, precision, and the virtues of scholarly life. ”

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# Q & A

## with Stephen Dinham

Professor Stephen Dinham OAM FACE is President-Elect of ACE. He is a former ACE NSW Branch President and a recipient of an ACE Fellowship (1999), the Sir Harold Wyndham Medal (ACE NSW, 2005) and the Sir James Darling Medal (ACE Victoria, 2010).

### PE: How did you become involved with ACE?

**SD:** I joined ACE in 1989, my first year as an academic after having been a high school teacher for 14 years. I hadn't been greatly aware of the College until then although in the same year I had my first refereed article published in *Unicorn*. I joined one of the western Sydney regional groups and not long after joined that group's committee. I've been on ACE committees ever since.

I was elected to the New South Wales Chapter (now Branch) committee in 1994 and became NSW President in 2000. That same year ACE was asked by the New South Wales Minister for Education to develop a new Quality Teaching Award (QTA) to recognise and research exemplary teaching and I chaired the committee responsible for the QTA until I left NSW in 2007. This award was based upon the professional standards for teachers developed by ACE, AARE and ACSA under the leadership of the redoubtable Dr Paul Brock AM FACE, a great friend and outstanding educator who was a key member of the QTA steering committee. These awards covered teachers from early childhood through to university levels and from all sectors. This was ground-breaking work devising a standards-based process to assessing teachers' performance which was both developmental and judgemental. We utilised referees'

reports, portfolios and most importantly, site visits where we watched teachers teach, something many other awards fail to do. The other aspect was the research derived from the process which was published widely both through ACE and internationally. We had a terrific cross-sectoral steering committee for these awards and the QTA soon became the benchmark in the profession. There are now many more awards available of varying rigour and credibility and the NSW quality teaching awards have ceased, but the lessons learned continue to be utilised.

### PE: What has been the attraction with ACE?

**SD:** I have been involved with many other professional associations but ACE appeals because it is a 'broad church', as a former national president Dr Ken Boston AO FACE termed it. The fact that the College covers all sectors and levels of education makes it unique in the Australian educational landscape. The ongoing attraction for me with ACE has been the outstanding quality of the membership. Almost without exception I have found College members to be highly professional, talented, committed and generous with their time and expertise. The calibre of its membership is the College's most valuable resource. Another attraction has been the influence that ACE has been able to bring to bear in education through its research,

publications, policy work and advocacy, although this influence has waned somewhat and needs to be renewed.

### PE: What challenges does ACE face today?

**SD:** Most professional associations and unions are experiencing declining membership and an aging profile and the College is no exception. The challenge is to remain relevant, influential and to add value to Australian education at all levels from the individual member through to the nation as a whole and most importantly, to influence in a positive way the educational outcomes and opportunities of young people.

There are other challenges closer to home associated with membership including the financial viability of the College. ACE has been forced to downsize to some degree and now occupies office space in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. This relationship is more than just a landlord - tenant arrangement and has been mutually advantageous. It is our aim for this collaboration to further develop and strengthen.

It is no secret that 2012 was a very difficult year for the College and it is pleasing to see improved financial and governance performance in 2013 and a heightened level of activity at all levels. The National Office has a small

staff under an experienced CEO in Catherine Pickett and is working hard to restore stability and financial viability to the College with pleasing results. The National Board under the leadership of Prof Bob Lingard has also worked very hard during this period to put the College on a sounder footing whilst state and territory branch committees have continued to promote and support the College. However, it is the grassroots of the College that is vital to its survival. Our regional groups and committees do a wonderful job in promoting education, fellowship, professional learning and in recognising the outstanding contributions of their colleagues. We need to grow the membership at the local level and to offer to younger educators the opportunities provided by the College for members to contribute and to grow as professionals. If every member and fellow of the College could sign up one new member during the coming year our financial situation and what we could achieve for our members and the profession would improve dramatically.

Australian education is at a crucial juncture and I've written elsewhere<sup>ii</sup> about our loss of confidence and how we are being distracted by a fixation with the performance of other nations on international measures of achievement. Governments and educational systems seem to have stopped listening to educators and are taking their lead from the corporate sector, economists and others. There has recently been a change of government federally and what this means for education is unclear.

It is vitally important for the College to strengthen its work in the policy and advocacy spaces. We need to argue from a position of evidence in order to counter some of the half-baked misinformed solutions to the so-called problems of education. There is no doubt that we have slipped on world rankings to some extent but our performance overall is still admirable. We can't rest on our laurels and we need to build on a foundation of what we know works in Australian education contexts without slavishly, unthinkingly seeking to copy Shanghai or Finland. We still have much to be proud of in Australian education. Blanket criticism

and stigmatisation of teachers, schools and education generally achieves nothing of a positive nature.

There is a view gaining traction that corporate approaches, freer education markets and competition will deliver us better educational outcomes. This has yet to be proven anywhere else but we can expect to see charter schools, so-called free schools and academies - in effect publicly funded for-profit private schools - as has occurred in Britain, the US and now New Zealand. The evidence of the benefits of such approaches is either lacking or questionable but the main consequence seems to be middle-class flight from public education. Corporate role models, values and practices being pushed for education are of questionable value, particularly when one considers the overall performance of the corporate sector in recent times.

### PE: What needs to happen?

**SD:** We need to stop regarding education as a cost or commodity and start thinking again about education as an investment in the personal, social and economic prosperity of the nation.

*“ We need to stop regarding education as a cost or commodity and start thinking again about education as an investment ... ”*

Educators need to find their voice in the current debates and the College is well placed to facilitate this process. In 2003 ACE brought together 15 professional associations to develop a *National Statement from the Teaching Profession on Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism*. In 2013 we are reconvening a range of professional associations to revisit this statement in the light of developments over the

past 10 years and to chart key future developments based upon this progress and the current context.

Returning to the challenge of membership I think we had been too focused on trying to formulate strategies to attract members and to market the College rather than thinking of the contribution potential members might wish to make to education through participation in ACE. It is not always possible to speak up as an individual in one's professional role, but it is possible to speak collectively and powerfully through a professional association such as ACE.

In the next few years it is vital for ACE to reconsider its mission and to fulfil its responsibility to speak on behalf of the profession in collaboration with other professional associations. It is a reality that ACE and these other associations have lost their seat at the table when it comes to policy and decision making in Australian education. If we can't reverse this trend the College will have become an irrelevance and an anachronism and it is likely that education will be steered into dangerous waters because the profession has been silent, ignored or silenced.

However, I am confident that this will not be the case and that our membership will provide the necessary momentum for ACE to move forward and to be increasingly influential in the complex debates over, about and within Australian education. We cannot afford to fail.

<sup>i</sup> See McCulla, N.; Dinham, S. & Scott, C. (2007). 'Stepping Out from the Crowd: Some Findings from the NSW Quality Teaching Awards On Seeking Recognition for Professional Accomplishment', *Unicorn Online Refereed Article*, ORA 51, pp. 3-32.; Dinham, S. & Scott, C. (2003). 'Benefits To Teachers Of The Professional Learning Portfolio: A Case Study', *Teacher Development*, 7(2), pp. 187-202.

<sup>ii</sup> Dinham, S. (2013). 'The Quality Teaching Movement in Australia: Losing Our Confidence, Losing Our Way and Getting Back on Track', Phillip Hughes Oration, Australian College of Educators, ACT Branch, Canberra, 28th February. Available at: <http://austcolled.com.au/article/2013-annual-phillip-hughes-oration>; Dinham, S. 'The Quality Teaching Movement in Australia Encounters Difficult Terrain: A Personal Perspective', *Australian Journal of Education*, 57(2), pp. 91-106.

# The changing purposes of schooling

DON WATTS



I have been involved in education for 75 years, the period since, at the age of 5, I commenced my adventures in education at Dalkeith Primary School in Western Australia. I spent 1942, amid concerns about the possible invasion of the West Coast, at Mukinbudin Primary School in the northern wheat belt. In 1943, I returned to Perth and East Claremont Practising School, a demonstration primary school associated with Claremont Teachers' College. From here in 1946, I moved to Hale School, an independent school with very ordinary facilities at that time, and teaching staff who were either very old or young having returned from war-service. Some were completing their studies at Teachers' Colleges. In 1951, I went to UWA to study physical sciences eventually emerging with a PhD degree and a research scholarship at University College London.

My parents had both left school for work at the age of 14. My brother was 15 years older than I and had a degree in languages and a Dip ed before I entered secondary school. Most of my peers were first generation university bound.

My parents had great respect for all my teachers, as did I. When, from time to time, my exuberance led to behaviour demanding sanctions I never told them because I did not think it wise to risk earning a second dose. Both my parents had a view that, like my brother, I would proceed to UWA to do something of my choice, excluding medicine that was not then available in 'the West.'

In the 20 years I describe I discovered some very ordinary teachers and some who were quite outstanding. None, did I feel, was other than a good person and all were trying hard. I guess the attitude of our generation was that where the teaching had deficiencies we simply had to apply ourselves a little more. There was never any feeling that we were not on the same side. It strikes me that in many schools you do not find this spirit today. In particular, there is evidence that many parents accept no responsibility for their role in creating attitudes that reinforce the difficult role of teachers in the complex school environment of the 21st century. It seems to me that on the whole teachers are doing a better job than parents in adjusting to the culture of 2013.

The most remarkable difference between learning in both schools and university in the 1950s and 1960s was the understanding that what you learn today will be a necessary prerequisite of what was to follow. What was taught in one year had to be learned well because this learning was to form part of the building of an inventory of knowledge that would become a necessary foundation of your future learning.

Sometimes as I look back the connections seem tenuous. When I sat for the Junior Certificate at the end of Year 10, I presented in four languages, English, French, Latin and German, along with two mathematics and two physical sciences. How I finished up with a collection of four languages I have no idea, but I have never regretted these experiences. I gained a real grounding in grammar, which I never found absorbing in English classes. I learned a bit about national differences but, above all, I gained a knowledge of how to learn and to self-motivate when the task was difficult and the other disciplines of mathematics and physical sciences provided little challenge to me.

I found the processes of education absorbing because of the way in which longitudinal relationships were obvious

in the development of understanding. I trusted the processes of schooling because we had glimpses of how knowledge was structured and built.

My observation of schooling today is that the discipline that links the development of learning as sequential processes building on accumulated knowledge and understanding has been lost. It might be possible to present some subjects as isolated experiences sampling from an endless smorgasbord. However, it seems to me that mathematics, the physical sciences and languages must be developed and taught through processes that recognise and then benefit from imbedded sequential processes. To ignore sequentiality and not to use accumulated knowledge as an advantage creates false views about what is difficult.

It is easy to see the influences that led to this difficulty in developing depth of understanding through planned use of sequential knowledge. It stems from not having teachers who have studied these disciplines and prefer to prepare lessons that are part of a series of stand alone experiences that do not reflect the nature of these disciplines and their historic development. An understanding of this history shows clearly how our current knowledge flowed from logical growth in understanding which led to new challenges and new knowledge.

At the end of Year 12, I sat for external examinations in seven subjects (English, French, three different mathematics subjects, chemistry and physics.) In Western Australia, these examinations were largely under the control of the UWA. All these subjects were specified as prerequisites to studying these disciplines at the university level. Today, entry to university specifies very few prerequisite requirements and many accumulate enough credit for university entry from presenting in only four or five subjects, a number of which are examined at lower levels. A good percentage of the young are less challenged academically today than those who completed schooling in the 1960s.

Over the years universities have given up their control over the learning outcomes of twelve years of schooling. Standards

are set through statutory bodies that, using false values about the connections between standards and discrimination, have lowered the expectations of 12 years of schooling. After years of complacency about these trends a number of States are, at last, expressing dismay about the learning background of those seeking to qualify for teaching careers. The problems and the current solutions, as expressed by the New South Wales Government, while presented as a way of improving the talent of those entering teacher training, one more likely simply to diminish the size of the recruitment pool leading to an undersupply of teachers.

It is time that Australia realised that those who qualify to train as teachers are simply the obvious tail in a school-leaving population which has studied in a system demanding little in standards.

“ I suspect that some 20 per cent of the young entering Year 4 at school are lost because of deficiencies already obvious to teachers and not acted on. ”

There is no doubt that elements of discrimination were obvious in the systems that operated when the universities controlled the specification of end of school standards. However, what we now have is a schooling system that secures the privileged in a system of lower standards.

I suspect that some 20 per cent of the young entering Year 4 at school are lost because of deficiencies already obvious to teachers and not acted on. These deficiencies clearly establish a foundation for discrimination. How can we expect children who display such discrepancies after three years in schooling to thrive in their fourth year while, at the same time, making up the objectives expected but not mastered in the three previous years? What possible logic leads us to accept

that it would be discriminatory to provide children with a second chance to master essential competencies, thus creating renewed confidence and an ambition to continue to learn?

There is little doubt that without unambiguous objectives for, say, the first three years of schooling, perhaps 20 per cent of each cohort are already accumulating deficiencies that will continue to multiply. It is in the interests of this group of students that each be given a year in school proving their readiness to move to the next challenges with the competencies demanded by the next stage of schooling.

I offer the figure of 20 per cent of this population as provided in discussions with teachers involved in the teaching at this level. It appears to me that there is no cumulative testing procedures in use that would provide a measure of readiness to use the sequentially related elements of prescribed learning.

At the end of the primary school, there should be further rigorous testing against the expectations established as the prerequisites of secondary schooling. The young provided with testing systems and knowledge about the standards expected will respond.

Progressively our schools have been indoctrinated with the view that to examine rigorously and to diagnose learning deficiencies is damaging to the child. The alternative of allowing progression upwards through school without forthright assessment is the foundation of discrimination. Children who have obvious learning deficits and their parents must be made aware that there are as many reasons for the young to find learning difficult as there are children in a class. A year invested in providing an opportunity to gain competence is the least Australia can do. In a creative environment with good teaching an extra year invested in creating learning confidence is the only respectable path to the achievement of equitable outcomes.

The system of complacency built into the primary schooling in Australia simply assures the young that, no matter how seriously they treat learning in the

future, they will not make up ground, unless of course, the rest of the class is forced to stand still. No one gains from this philosophy.

While we continue with a philosophy that no one will be disadvantaged by not learning in the first three years of primary school, the corollary is that no one can be advantaged either. It is equally true that, perhaps 20 per cent within the same classes are not challenged and become complacent about school. The notion that holding 100 per cent of each age cohort in classes presented with the same learning challenge will never be equitable. It fails both ends of the achievement spectrum.

Prior to 1973, all States had a solution to the broad spectrum of learning achievement existing after 10 years of schooling and Australia presented a real alternative for those who had failed to flourish during these years. Many were

at war with the dynamics of schooling and appreciated the new environment of technical schools that provided training oriented to employment but, of at least equal importance, were able to admit to deficiencies accumulated in first years of schooling and to look to have another go. When I was studying at university I was always impressed by the achievements of those who used the Technical School as a path to succeed at the university level.

The current Labor alternative of supplying training options within the school curriculum fails to understand that this group simply wants out of school and the experiences that it represents.

The biggest waste is the discrimination against those who thrive in schooling as it is. Our systems in all States show little concern for those who present at school each year without truly challenging learning options.

Our children are empowered to aspire unrestrained for success in any sport and, of course, opportunities exist for our children to flourish in music and the arts. It is incongruous if those who excel as scholars are restrained to develop in a system designed for the average. This system fails those who are inspired to do better and, tragically, fails those who are experiencing learning difficulties.

It is encouraging that our culture has found a way to address our failures in meeting the needs of those who are truly disabled. It is time we found a way to recognise formally the loss of national productivity that arises from the complacency imbedded in our approaches to schooling.

The solutions simply demand innovative approaches to creating diversity in our schooling systems that differentiate the needs of our children, none of whom are average.

Don Watts



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# An unequal playing field



KEITH MCNAUGHT

Central to the Gonski Report was the commitment that every Australian child should be provided with an excellent standard of education, regardless of where he or she lives, and that disadvantage has to be addressed to create an equitable system. Disadvantaged secondary schools, particularly in low socio-economic areas, are often unfairly criticised for their results and performance, without taking in to account that their cohorts, from entry, are innately different from those in other schools.

As an example, one metropolitan, low socio-economic, Australian secondary school analysed their incoming 2013 secondary cohort. Of the entire entering cohort, 65 per cent of students were in the bottom quarter of performance on academic results, with less than 2 per cent in the top quarter. Of the entering students, eight had achieved B's in their primary reports and there were no students with an A-grade on their exit primary reports. This school acknowledges that it is struggling to implement the Australian Curriculum content in all but their top classes. Parents and communities know that these local schools do not offer the same opportunities as other schools. This school is simply not a desired option; on exiting their primary school,

more capable students, and students from more aspirational families, are placed into 'better schools'. Parents have either been willing to pay the cost and place their children in private schools, or alternatively, they have sought out ways to have their children access other Government schools, often through specialist program entry. Bright and eager learners in these schools are often socially isolated, frequently bullied, and most often learn 'not to stand out' by reducing their engagement and outputs.

“ *The impact of the absence of high achieving students on a cohort is significant and cannot be underestimated.* ”

One low socio-economic school in a metropolitan location had 280 Year 11 students and of those, less than 10 per cent were enrolled in ATAR bound courses and subjects. This trend, whilst appearing to be an upper secondary phenomenon, is an outcome of the skewed entry group

phenomenon, which happens far earlier on that educational journey.

The impact of the absence of high achieving students on a cohort is significant and cannot be underestimated. The absence of a core of high achievers within an entering cohort to secondary school will skew the academic performance of the entire group downwards. Lower achieving students are often disengaged and demotivated, leading to behavioural issues which impact negatively on aspirational learners and committed teachers. Likewise, the absence of well behaved, high achieving students has a dramatic negative impact on staff and student morale and pride.

It is critical that these issues are addressed with systemic, well-resourced responses. Schools which can demonstrate that their entry cohort is a negatively skewed one, should be well positioned to receive the types of resourcing and funding that could dramatically change outcomes for their students. These schools require specialist programs and interventions, particularly appropriate pathways that engage and support learners. For example, alternative Year 11 and 12 programs which focus on training programs and pathways to employment have the potential to address at least some of the



inherent issues. Innovative programs can attract and retain committed and dedicated teachers and administrators, who have a deep desire to make a real difference by offering alternative and supplementary programs. Such schools depend on having the highest quality staff, but without adequate resourcing, and the capacity to be creative, these staff will not be retained.

Systems have to be honest about schools which effectively just reinforce disadvantage. These schools must be provided with the necessary independent governance to respond to local needs, and to have the necessary resources and capacity to offer programs that lead to student success. Many parents and their children are collectively demotivated in schooling that fails to recognise that their ambitions are seen as worthwhile. Too often the message in career counselling is that trades and training are pathways

only for less academically able students, and this is blatantly untrue. Success can be defined in multiple ways and often those 'easy to measure' are, in the more global view, some of the least important dimensions. For example, having students interact positively and holding hopeful aspirations for their futures, is every bit as valuable as a reading score on a NAPLAN test.

The disparity between schools, within similar geographical locations, is stark. One dilapidated school is surrounded by fencing akin to a prison; in the other, the grounds and buildings are palatial; the two schools, one public and one private, are 5 kilometres apart. A teacher in one comments that it takes a year 'to lift the shutters' and have students connect with you; they are often defiantly oppositional or incredibly challenging to motivate, in order to engage them with learning.

The impacts on staff retention, between the two schools, parallel their blatant external differences.

The true purposes of education are seen well beyond the school yard, in an equitable society which intentionally, purposefully, and strategically, creates opportunities to overcome disadvantage. International reviews of best practice repeatedly show that schooling is comparable in these locations, and that geographical location does not determine the standard of education a student will receive. A key step to significant structural change, for education to make a difference, is to acknowledge that the dynamics of an entry cohort of a secondary school have enormous impact on future actions and outcomes.

Professor Keith McNaught



Evaluation of the  
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## Elida Brereton awarded *College medal*

Former Camberwell High School principal and ACE National President (2002-2003) Elida Brereton is the recipient of the 2013 Australian College of Educators medal in honour of her outstanding and inspirational contribution to Australian education throughout her career. ►

▶ **The College Medal, ACE's highest honour, was presented at the gala dinner preceding the ACE National Conference in Melbourne on June 20. Elida joins leading Australian educators including Peter Karmel, Walter Neal, Barry McGaw, Ruth Rogers, Lyndsay Connors, Phillip Hughes and Denise Bradley as previous recipients.**

Elida described receiving the medal as a 'fabulous honour'.

"It was unexpected and I'm quite overwhelmed really when I think of being among the incredible people who have received it ahead of me. It is a wonderful honour and I'm very thrilled," Elida said.

This is the third major College honour awarded to Elida. She was previously named Fellow of the College in 1997 and, in 2006, received ACE's highest Victorian award, the Sir James Darling medal, named after the founder of the College and awarded to an eminent Victorian educator, who has made an outstanding and sustained contribution to Victorian education.

Best-known for her 15-year term as Principal of Camberwell High School in suburban Melbourne, Elida has also been an author, curriculum developer, lecturer and, more recently, a consultant and mentor.

Elida began her career teaching geography and history and quickly gained an outstanding reputation in geography, and authored / co-authored seven major geography textbooks.

It was while Elida was Principal of Camberwell High that she first joined ACE in the mid-1990s.

"I was invited to an ACE meeting and I met people there who encouraged me to join," Elida recalls.

"Being part of ACE offered me contact with the private system, which I thought was fabulous. Up until then, being a high school principal, I wasn't mixing with other people (from outside the public system) and hearing other opinions. I was dealing mostly with the state system and the College covered everybody. I was then able to mix with a variety of people from other systems, learn and share with them".

Elida became a very active member of ACE and went on to serve as the National President for two years between 2002 and 2003. During this time she worked with the board and national office team, led by Jim Cumming, to ensure ACE provided a relevant voice for the teaching profession while striving to increase membership and successfully raise the College's profile in the education sector.

Elida gained new notoriety in 2007 when she took a cameo role as fictional principal Margaret Murray in Chris Lilley's hit comedy *Summer Heights High*, an opportunity that came to her by accident.

"After filming most of the show the producers couldn't find a woman actor to play the principal," Elida explained.

"I heard they auditioned about 50 and couldn't find anyone they were happy with. Someone then suggested "why don't you try a real principal who can act?" The producers contacted the Victorian State Secondary Principals Association. A friend of mine, who happened to be in the office when the call came through said "why don't you try Elida out at Camberwell." I originally said no but they were very persistent and I eventually agreed to do it."

Elida's 'cred' with her peers in the education community was already well established, but it soared to enormously high levels with the children at Camberwell High following her appearance in the popular show.

"They were absolutely thrilled that their principal was in it," Elida said.

Elida retired as principal in January 2010, but remains an active contributor to education. In the first three years

of her retirement Elida spent time working with the Bastow Institute supporting high-potential would-be principals who were placed into schools to contribute to that school while also gaining inhouse experience on the role of a principal. This position saw Elida visiting and mentoring principal interns across regional Victoria, and she remains in touch with some of those she mentored.

Currently Elida is working as a coach with new principals, acting as a Critical Friend helping schools through review processes and enjoying the recent success of her beloved Geelong Cats in the AFL.

The Australian College of Educators congratulates Elida Brereton, a worthy recipient of the 2013 College medal.

“ ...Elida has also been an author, curriculum developer, lecturer and, more recently, a consultant and a mentor. ”

ROBIN RYAN

# Peter Karmel, the economics of education and second thoughts on education funding



Two recent Australian College of Educators Archival Briefs (number 15, December 2012 and number 17, August 2013, where relevant quotations and references are set out) explored the contribution made to thinking about the resourcing of education by the late Professor Peter Karmel. While his work as a statesman of public policy on education has often been explored, these briefs seek to link his work to trends in the academic discipline of the economics of education and the way this seems to have led him to rethink some of his earlier ideas and, indeed, hopes.

## Economists thinking about education

Economists were surprisingly late in paying attention to education as an economic factor. Certainly Adam Smith introduced the concept of human capital and noted the higher returns needed to recompense for the time and expense of extended education; but classical economists by and large ignored education. Generally, classical theory adopted an equilibrium-focused view of the economy and such long-term outlooks as were considered earned the discipline the title of the dismal science.

This homeostatic view of the economy was disrupted by the events of the 1930s and the subsequent Keynesian revolution, but these theoretical innovations concentrated on relatively short-term departures from normal functioning of the economy. After the war, economists

finally returned to Smith's fascination with the causes of long-term growth: the nature and causes of the wealth of nations, as his 1776 title described it.

Keynes' biographer Sir Roy Harrod began in the 1930s to develop Keynes' insights in a way which could be utilised to explore issues of economic growth and, after the war, he and Russian-American economist Evsey Domar independently published theoretical ideas which became known as the Harrod-Domar model of economic growth. This model considered only the factors of the savings rate of the economy and its capital output ratio.

Education and other human factors had no role in Harrod-Domar, but in 1960 Theodore Schultz, in his Presidential address to the American Economic Association, pointed out that empirical studies constantly produced a residual source of growth not accounted for by purely physical inputs, even with relaxation of the rigid assumptions of contemporary growth models. Schultz, who won the Nobel Prize for unrelated work in Agricultural Economics, argued that it seemed reasonable to accept that the unexplained residual 'represents a return to the investment that has been made in human beings'. This address marked the birth of a new academic discipline - the economics of education.

### Peter Karmel and the Buntine Oration

In 1962 the then newly created Australian College of Education began its prestigious series of public lectures, the Buntine Oration, with economist Peter Karmel as first orator. This entry into the

public debate is widely recognised as the starting point of a new, more interventionist and needs-based stance of Australian public policy in education, a point recognised by the Academy of Social Sciences' 1979 review of Australian economics.

Karmel clearly adopted the stance advocated by Schulz, arguing that, while there were many important personal qualities produced by education, it also supported economic growth and thus investment in education paid for itself to an extent that was widely underestimated. Without referring to the new theoretical contributions, he began by stating in words what economists denote algebraically as an economy's production function, which was the starting point for theoreticians who were at that time displacing the Harrod-Domar approach.

Karmel's analysis of Australian data followed Swedish economist Ingvar Svennilson's approach, which Karmel made explicit when he wrote more technically in a Melbourne Studies in Education contribution in 1966, which he referred to as 'Buntine revisited'. This study was primarily statistical rather than theory-based, but resonated with contemporary thinking which placed a positive if varying emphasis on education as a factor in economic growth.

By the later 1960s Harrod-Domar had been overtaken as the standard theory of economic growth by a model independently developed by Australian economist Trevor Swan and American Nobel Laureate Robert Solow in 1956. This exogenous Solow-Swan

growth model focussed on total factor productivity as well the individual factors of production, accommodating improvements stemming from education, although technological change was usually identified as a larger contributor. Some more recent theory, using endogenous growth models, represent something of a return to Schulz' emphasis.

Karmel's use of economic theory as a guide to his public policy thinking must be inferred, as he seldom referred explicitly to his academic specialty, however the 1979 Academy of Social Sciences review, which took a somewhat jaundiced view of human capital theory, was in no doubt that 'the flowering of Karmelism' had led to excessive concentration on education quality and equality in the literature, just as 'the enormous increases in educational expenditures [could] be traced to Karmel's Buntine Oration'.

### An alternative track

A different strand of the economics of education appeared in the 1970s alongside the education for growth focus. Derived from the work of 1972 Nobel winner Kenneth Arrow by future (2001) Laureate Michael Spence, it began from considerations of information asymmetry in labour markets and argued that education acted as much as a screening or filtering device as a contributor to economic development. Spence did not rule out benefits to the economy from investment in education, just as Arrow insisted that it would be wrong to conclude that education involved nothing but signalling to employers. However, both concluded that overinvestment in education was a real possibility.

Whether or not he took note of these theoretical developments, Karmel by the 1970s was beginning to think along similar lines. This derived from his (and the community's) increasing concern about unemployment, especially youth unemployment, and his unwavering commitment to equality of opportunity. It seemed to him that there was little point in clamorous demands that education must 'do something' about youth unemployment: he believed that education in itself could not



“...while it would always be beneficial to an individual to engage in education, as more individuals do so higher qualifications might be needed simply to maintain relative position; a failing of the labour market, not of the education system.”

solve fundamental labour market failures but might change the roster of the employable, leaving the most disadvantaged behind even for jobs which did not require higher levels of education.

Karmel gave an early indication of his thinking in the 1976 Sir John Morris Lecture conducted by the Adult Education Board of Tasmania. As well as supporting the then novel concept of recurrent education, he argued that, while it would always be beneficial to an individual to engage in education, as more individuals do so higher qualifications might be needed simply to maintain relative position; a failing of the labour market, not of the education system.

He made a similar point in the Commonwealth education department's house journal in 1977: that action within the education system alone will not create jobs but may lead to the more employable pushing aside the less employable. He also referred to what he perceived as unfairly attributed disappointment with education, noting at a 1980 conference how 'the high hopes for education in the 1960s and early 1970s have in some quarters been replaced by despair'.

### The quality of the education review

In an interview for the College's Oral History Project, Karmel reflected on a significant shift in community attitudes to education in the 1980s, leading to demands for increased accountability

and culminating in a preference for narrow vocationalism by the 1990s. When Karmel gave the 1981 Archer Memorial Lecture at Caulfield Grammar, his own old school, founded by W.M Buntine, he regretted that the Australian community 'appear[ed] to have only a shallow commitment to education'.

On the other hand, he argued that educators had often oversold the promise of education and that resistance to community demands for greater accountability, and shibboleths like demands for ever smaller class sizes, represented rigidities in the modes of thought of educationists, along with a considerable dose of self-interest.

Governments had certainly started to become sceptical of the returns the community received from its large investments in education and it was no great surprise when the Hawke Government in 1984 asked Karmel to conduct an inquiry into the benefits which had flowed from his recommendations of the 1970s. This was the Quality of Education Review (QERC), which reported in April 1985.

The QERC Report identified that most of the increased funding of the previous decade had gone on employing more staff: while student numbers had risen by 5 per cent, teacher numbers had gone up by one third. There were improvements in physical facilities and in the proportion of the population with qualifications, but no incontrovertible evidence that cognitive outcomes for students had become either better or worse since the early 1970s.

### The College's response

The College was certainly aware of the emerging education debate in the 1980s. It had made a submission to QERC which repeated the College's traditional values and noted the need to consider more than simply cognitive outcomes. But it did not adopt a merely defensive attitude. Although it had published a discussion paper from the New England Regional group suspicious of the QERC approach, it neither endorsed nor rejected its findings, but instead, after considering the report, commissioned a comprehensive review of the economics of Australian education from Dr Leo

Maglen, an economist at Monash University, later Australia's first professor of vocational education.

The Maglen paper explored the early association of education investment with human capital growth theory and concluded that later developments had shown that the relation between education and economic performance was both more limited and more subtle than had first been assumed.

“...later developments had shown that the relation between education and economic performance was both more limited and more subtle than had first been assumed.”

The College closed the decade with a special issue of *Unicorn* devoted to 'the new economics of education'. That issue specifically noted the change in the economics of education from human capital theory to the market signals alternative, the influence of this change on international organisations such as the OECD and subsequently its application to Australian policy (a link provided partly through Minister John Dawkins' chairmanship of the OECD education committee).

The editorial concluded that "the new economics of education is a term which suggests that drier economic policies now have currency... and that economic decisions are increasingly being used as a point of reference for educational decisions". It's a conclusion that remains with us today, although not all education advocates have shown the same combination of intellectual flexibility and consistent core values as Professor Peter Karmel.

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Ongoing calls to identify the most efficient means to deliver schooling in a system that is failing have been much more prominent in recent years than discussion 'purposes'. The debates on this topic have been wide ranging. From declining academic standards, illiteracy, schooling outcomes generally, teaching quality, teacher quality, a deteriorating social order growing social inequality and concerns over economic competitiveness, the series of endless calls to schooling to 'shape up' in respect to a whole range of agendas seems never ending. Yet many also say that talking about the purposes of education is a far too abstract and lofty job to be worthy of much time and consideration. Instead, this article would like to challenge such a view by making a case for standing back for a moment to ask ourselves some important questions about the direction in which education is heading and what it is we want schools to do.

The signing of the Melbourne Declaration (2008) by Australia's state and federal education ministers in December 2008 established an agenda for Australia's educational future.

*Goal one states:*  
*"Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence."*

*Goal two states:*  
*"All young Australians become: successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens."*

The policy enactment of the Australian National Curriculum, the Digital Education Revolution and a national teacher accreditation agenda are just three examples of significant changes to education in Australia that have been facilitated by the agreement reached by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and formulated in the Melbourne Declaration. Educational purposes in this sense not only construct particular courses of action, but that also provide a rationale for a range of policies that should (more or less successfully), result in the achievement of the stated goals.

Yet the field of formal schooling (as distinct from formal political agreements and policy) is complex and dynamic, with a range of competing goals and agendas that are intended to serve a variety of educative and social purposes. Whilst importance is most often placed upon achieving academic outcomes, other important educational goals, such as, social justice, social inclusion, democratic participation, wellbeing and environmental sustainability often work in tandem, but also compete for attention in the everyday lives of those working in schools.

If we look to the orientating arguments stated in the preamble of the Melbourne Declaration to get some context on the current state of educational goals in Australia, it appears education is certainly being directed toward embracing this pluralism. The preamble recognises that:

*"Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion."*

Also prominent is the substantial focus on the economic aims of education. The preamble also states:

*"Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation's social and economic prosperity..."*

Such purposes align with the 'new' type of education advocated by the OECD for the development of the kinds of persons required in the emerging knowledge economy. Indeed, the OECD suggests that education systems need to produce people who can think creatively with knowledge, work flexibly to adapt to ever changing circumstances, are mobile, who think and connect globally and interculturally, and who are prepared to be life-long learners (Rizvi, 2008). Such a goal seems logical enough given our interconnectedness to a global world economy, but if, as noted educational researcher, Allan Luke states: "Australian schools are in effect currently serving the social and economic interests of slightly less than half of all Australian youth" (2010, p. 340) then such a focus seems distinctly inequitable. The problem with the goal of education for the global economy may be in part that "[It] assumes that knowledge is neutral and that concepts such as cultural and social capital don't exist; and it fails to acknowledge the ways in which the very structures of the curriculum can discriminate against certain groups of students" (Reid, 2009, p. 5).

“ *Whilst an emphasis on the economic value of education has been used as a tactic to validate increased spending on education, the issues it creates for those teaching children and young people cannot be rhetorically glossed over in one swift sweep of the pen.* ”

▶ The false front of the all-inclusive logic of the many educational goals now given to schools is that they hide ambiguities and tensions at the foundation of their agendas. For example, whilst the Melbourne Declaration places emphasis on the dual purposes of promoting equity and excellence, it can also create some dilemmas for educators. Does commitment to educational excellence take precedence? Do we focus on educational equity? Does such an approach draw a false distinction, that no system can be truly excellent without also being equitable, thereby balancing each of the claims equally? Or that perhaps, neither goal is really possible.

Although an emphasis on the economic value of education has been used as a tactic to validate increased spending on education, the issues it creates for those teaching children and young people cannot be rhetorically glossed over in one swift sweep of the pen. For example, Alan Reid's (2009; 2010) ongoing analysis has shown that the focus on the economic goals has resulted in a raft of policies designed to make education about the preparation of human capital for the labour market. Despite the rhetoric of the Melbourne Declaration, the goals for Australian schooling are implicitly couched in language where the economic aims of education are given precedence amongst many other aims worthy of attention. Accompanied by an arrangement of policy initiatives, such as NAPLAN and MySchool, the current vision for education is aimed at economic reform and achieving higher productivity and participation in the global knowledge economy.

This means that we have not only developed a system that potentially views young people as the primary means to an internationally competitive economic system, hence failing to recognise students and their learning as ends-in-themselves, but we have also managed to marginalise discussion, research and programs directed toward other public

purposes, particularly those that that envisage education as serving a common good, however, this may be defined. The situation that we have created is not just a technocratic issue to be solved, but also an ideological struggle based on arguments about what schools should do (Ladwig, 2010).

Here, the public and private purposes of education are worthy of some detail. Some researchers suggest there are three main purposes of education; Democratic, Individual and Economic (Reid, 2010; Cranston et al, 2010). Democratic schooling, that is schooling to enhance the social fabric of society, is characterised as being a public purpose of schooling. Individual schooling is schooling to secure individual advantage in economic and social life, in which education is treated as a commodity for private purposes. The economic purpose of schooling is considered to have a "constrained public purpose" (Reid, 2010, p. 2) since becoming a successful economic citizen has both public and private benefits. Reid calls for a re-visioning of "education as a common good" (2010, p. 2) through a renewed emphasis on a democratic public purpose for Australian education noting that the Melbourne Declaration does in fact represent a 'formal commitment' to such a goal.

Renowned educational philosopher Nel Noddings states: "Aims-talk should be central to education, but today it is often neglected. Indeed thoughtful teachers who ask, 'Why are we doing this?' are frequently accused of obstructionism" (2004, p. 265). Admittedly engaging in aims-talk is a risk and not all are in a position to afford such risk. But by introducing aims-talk it is possible to draw attention to ways in which the purposes, and especially the purposes of a common good, can be envisaged as a viable and useful educational goal for Australian schooling.

Viewing the Melbourne Declaration as a document that justifies purposes as diverse as; increased standardised testing, concerns and action on issues of educational equity, increased use of ICT, better physical activity, and informed environmental programs, warrants education returning to some core questions.

What goals should we have and why?  
What priority should be attached to each?  
Are the means selected compatible with them?

Such questions are not exactly new to education, however, may have been lost in recent years in the ongoing debates concerned with identifying the most efficient means to deliver schooling. If we concentrate purely on the means of delivery we miss the opportunity to stand back and ask ourselves a host of important questions about the direction in which we are heading.

Are we concerned about the role of the individual to society (and not just a national society but a global one)?

Are we concerned about the contemporary meanings attached to justice, equity (both generational and intergenerational), inclusion, multiculturalism, wellbeing, sustainability and the current state of our democracy?

And are we concerned about who is advocating a particular ideology for us to follow and their reasons for doing so? (and the authors are not exempt from this).

Education itself (and not just economics and politics) is an important stakeholder in the debate about educational purposes. Being engaged with these issues is not easy for any of us, but they are important because it "requires that we keep working on the question as to what is distinctively educational about education" (Biesta, 2012, p.2).

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# 'In-school' and 'contextual' factors in systemic school performance: 'Complexifying' education policy for achieving social justice

**Presented by Professor Bob Lingard**

*National President, ACE and School of Education, University of Queensland*

Thursday 31 October, 6pm – 7pm

Theatre Q230, Level 2, 234 Queensberry Street, Victoria

*Inaugural Jack Keating Memorial lecture, presented in partnership with the Melbourne Graduate School of Education*

In accordance with Professor Keating's research, this lecture will explore how policy might contribute to higher quality and more socially just outcomes for all students. It will advocate a focus on in-school and contextual factors and the productive use of data, as well as the conceptualisation of social justice beyond its 'enumerated' forms like PISA results, NAPLAN scores and the MySchool website.

It will explore how and why contemporary education policy uses data and numbers to focus on teachers and their practices, arguing that successful policies must take this context into consideration. It will also argue that policies on matters like redistributive funding must recognise a broader conceptualisation of social justice.

In line with Professor Jack Keating's research, this lecture takes a policy sociology approach to analyse and critique aspects of policy settings.

Places are limited and registrations will close when the lecture is fully booked. Register your attendance online:

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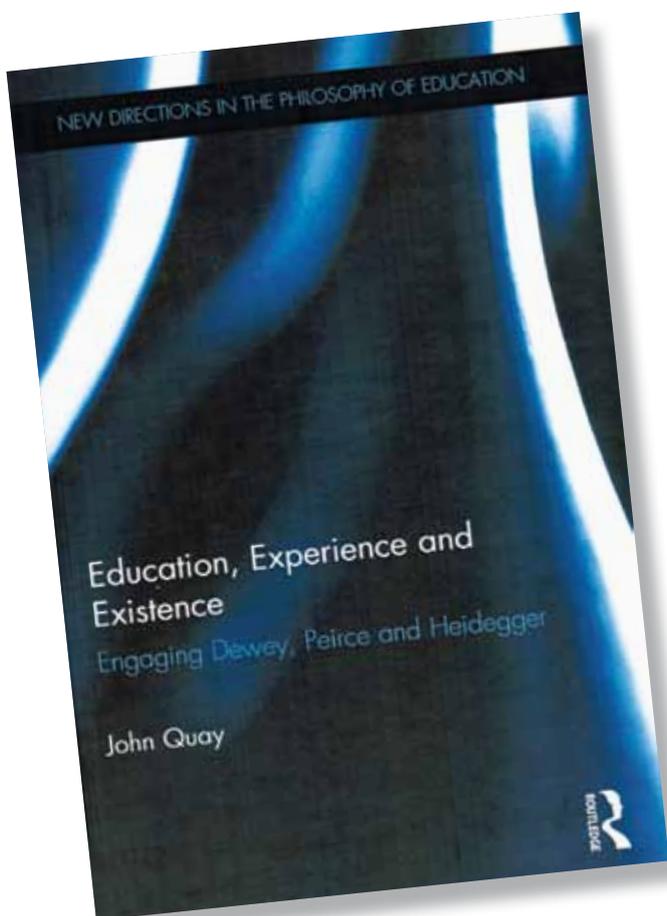
**Professor Bob Lingard** is a Professorial Research Fellow in the School of Education at The University of Queensland, a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and National President of The Australian College of Educators. He held the Andrew Bell Chair of Education at The University of Edinburgh from 2006-2008. Bob has an international research reputation in the areas of sociology of education and education policy, having authored more than 100 journal articles and book chapters and authored/edited 18 books.

Bob was the inaugural Chair of the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), appointed by the Minister for Education, and is currently a member of the Governing Board of the QSA and Chair of its P-12 Curriculum Committee.



# *Education, experience and existence: Engaging Dewey, Peirce and Heidegger*

Book review by Jefferson Kinsman



*Education, Experience and Existence: Engaging Dewey, Peirce and Heidegger*

Written by John Quay

Published by Routledge, New York, in 2013 as a part of the *New Directions in the Philosophy of Education Series*.

While Australian teachers typically embrace inquiry-based learning programs, their approach is not without its critics. High profile researchers have claimed that inquiry programs have little impact, advocating in its place a direct-instruction-with-feedback approach. Their arguments, which are typically grounded in quantitative forms of analysis, tend to pay scant attention to the philosophical status of the concepts that they claim to be researching.

In school staffrooms, teaching through project construction or inquiry activities is often criticised for granting the students too much autonomy, while the teacher stands accused of contributing too little to the development of the student's knowledge. Meanwhile, a polemic continues to rage between conservatives who define teaching and learning as *instruction and recall*, and progressives who believe education to a process of *experience and inquiry*.

Rather than leaping to a taking a side in the debate, teachers who are presented with an inquiry-based curriculum might consider the following two questions: Firstly, how sound is the philosophy that underpins inquiry-based learning? And secondly, what is the most effective way to go about it?

The first of these two questions is commonly overlooked in teacher training courses and professional development programs. As a clinical specialist at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, I have observed many teachers introduce inquiry process into their curriculum, often with wildly varying degrees of



success. More often than not, their success appears to depend upon their understanding of the foundational philosophical ideas that underpin their pedagogy.

In the context of this manifestation of the *theory-practice gap*, John's Quay recently published work *Education, Experience and Existence: Engaging Dewey, Pierce and Heidegger* offers a foundational guide from which to reflect on project-based teaching. Working methodically through difficult ontological concepts, Quay provides a handy point of entry into the philosophical analysis of meaningful education. By synthesizing the work of pragmatists and phenomenologists – he boldly argues that curriculum projects should adopt what Dewey termed an *occupational* orientation, rather than being restricted to the research and consumption of a set-knowledge curriculum.

I first encountered Quay's book when he asked me to read a draft of the manuscript some months before it went to press. At the time, I was systematically working my way through the recordings of Hubert Dreyfus' series of lectures from his course Philosophy 185 Heidegger, which was delivered at Berkeley in the Fall of 2007. Such was the clarity with which Quay interprets Heidegger's phenomenology that I was able to use it as guide whenever I lost my way in Dreyfus' lectures.

It might seem odd to some teachers that their opinions on the nature of experience and existence have consequences for their teaching practices. Dewey's analysis of the difference between reflective and aesthetic experience is largely premised on our existence being primarily a matter of reaction and interaction. Quay points out that Heidegger takes a different pathway when he distinguishes between calculative and meditative. For Heidegger, the pragmatic methods of science alone offer an insufficient account of human beings, since thinking is essentially amounts to a contingent anthropological *standpoint*. Another way of describing this is to say that the human mind escapes *machination* by operating in an un-systematic state of mindfulness. For Heidegger, the act of thinking is foremost

an act of interpreting, in the aesthetic and poetic sense, involving the whole of our life-experiences. In other words, our thoughts are synonymous with our whole being-here.

“ ...he boldly argues that curriculum projects should adopt what Dewey termed an *occupational orientation*, rather than being restricted to the research and consumption of a set-knowledge curriculum. ”

Quay goes on to trace Heidegger's sophisticated account of phenomenology through to the emergence of an alternative but coherent theory of experience. The pragmatic perspective, which gives us the categories of subject/object and organism/environment, is reconstructed using the phenomenological concepts of care/significance and who/world. Those with a background in philosophy may recognize this as Heidegger's radical shift away from, or destruction of, Aristotle's doctrine of causation. The understanding of people as things contained within a material universe is replaced by an existential vision in which the notion of context only makes sense as a temporal manifestation of a *being as a whole or being-the-world*.

All of this provides Quay with a useful aesthetic account of existence, which he applies in Part III of his own book to Dewey's idea of *education through occupations*. Whereas teachers commonly exercise reflective thinking in order to prepare students for a remote and pre-determined future (vocational or

otherwise), Quay presents this as a failure to connect the curriculum and the whole-world experience of young people. Teaching, he argues, is better understood as the discovery and creation of opportunities for young people to be those phenomenological occupations which encompass their tangible aspirations.

For Quay, as for Dewey, the term 'occupation' is always social in its orientation. It is particularly useful when describing the limited and generic occupational experience of being-a-student, which is defined by a respectful fear of the teacher and the hope of success in assessment tasks. Instead, when professional teachers reorient the curriculum around other more meaningful occupations, students can be said to experience acts of authentic interest. Learning is thus understood as the result of doing things that are called for in social situations. Quay reconciles this with Heidegger's idea of learning as a commitment to doing whatever is required in a given moment. Thus, embracing an authentic occupation, or a *way of be-ing*, is what gives a learning project its potential. For Dewey, personal concern must exist in the study of a subject, which is shown to accord with Heidegger's notion of an aesthetic whole as 'being-here'.

Quay's book is anything but a light read. Considered separately, phenomenology and pragmatism are highly complex philosophical systems, and so marrying the two philosophies in an educational context is a bound to involve difficult philosophical and poetical terminology. However, educators with an interest in affective or qualitative thinking are well advised to explore the conceptual origins of these ideas. Furthermore, by becoming familiar with the categories and arguments set out in this book, readers can expect to find themselves in a stronger position to develop, evaluate and defend their choice of pedagogy.

**Jefferson Kinsman is a lecturer and researcher at Melbourne Graduate School of Education.**

# 2013-2014 Fellowship Nominations



Fellowship of the Australian College of Educators is one of the highest honours that the College can bestow, and should be seen by College Members and Fellows, and by the wider education community, to be recognition of outstanding and distinctive contributions to the advancement of education.

**All members are encouraged to participate in the 2014 ACE Fellowships Awards Nomination.**

The Fellowships Awards process has been revised for 2013-2014. It is important for members to read through the new Fellowship Guidelines that are available on the College website at [www.austcolled.com.au/fellowship-guidelines](http://www.austcolled.com.au/fellowship-guidelines) before preparing your nominations.

Please note that the due date for the Initial Notification Form (Attachment 1 of the guidelines) is 19 October 2013

## Deadlines

19 October 2013

## Stage of Process

Due date for submission of Initial Notification of intent to nominate to State/Territory Awards Committees.

State/Territory Awards Committees acknowledge receipt of submissions.

1 November 2013

Due date for State/Territory Awards Committees to advise nominators to proceed to complete the full Nomination for Fellowship.

13 December 2013

Due date for submission of fully completed Nomination for Fellowship forms to State/Territory Awards Committees.

State/Territory Awards Committees provide nominators with acknowledgement of receipt of their submissions.

State/Territory Awards Committees to assist and support nominators in completing their submissions to the required standard of documentation for forwarding to the National Awards Committee through the National Office.

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For more information please visit <https://austcolled.com.au/award/fellowship-face> or contact the National Office via [ace@austcolled.com.au](mailto:ace@austcolled.com.au)

## Australian College of Educators

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

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- the entitlement to use the letters MACE as a recognised, professional post-nominal
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