

professional EDUCATOR

November 2014

Volume 13

Issue 6

The ACE forum for policy, research and practice in education



The politics of education

Industry dominates but
where is the education
in VET?

Higher education in
2015 – transition or
reflection?

professional EDUCATOR



ABN 96 562 879 327

Published for the Australian
College of Educators by Studio 131

Editor

Paola Ghirelli
paola.ghirelli@austcolled.com.au

Editorial assistance

Dr Norman McCulla (FACE)
& Dr Susan Krieg (MACE)
Publications working group

Advertising

P: 03 9035 5473
F: 03 9341 6021
acef@austcolled.com.au

ACE membership

P: 03 9035 5473
F: 03 9341 6021
acef@austcolled.com.au
www.austcolled.com.au

Australian College of Educators

PO Box 73, Carlton VIC 3053
P: 03 9035 5473
F: 03 9341 6021

Publisher's note

© Copyright. No part of this publication can be used or reproduced in any format without express permission in writing from the Australian College of Educators. The mention of a product or service, person or company in this publication, does not indicate the publisher's endorsement. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the opinion of the publisher, its agents, company officers or employees.

STUDIO131

www.studio131.net



10

A critical reflection on the Donnelly/Wiltshire Review of the Australian Curriculum

20



The year that wasn't much different for schools



29

A young educator's year in review

- 03** Editorial *Stephen Dinham*
- 05** Class, the politics of education, the curriculum, pedagogy and creativity *Barry Jones*
- 14** An early childhood perspective *Susan Krieg*
- 17** Industry dominates, but where is the education in VET? *Linda Simon*
- 23** Higher education: 2014 in review *Gavin Moodie*
- 26** Higher education in 2015 – transition or reflection? *Peter Noonan*
- 30** Book review: Class Act – ending the education wars by Maxine McKew *Ian Keese*



ACE: The year in review

This year has been a significant one for education generally, and for the Australian College of Educators. In this edition of *Professional Educator*, Barry Jones AC FACE examines some of the higher level directions and challenges facing Australian education nationally and internationally.

Given the current and likely future context of Australian education (https://austcolled.com.au/sites/default/files/articles/sd_-_the_worst_of_both_worlds_-_how_the_us_and_uk_are_influencing_education_in_australia_-_wa_2014.pdf), it is clear there is a need for a well-informed, authoritative voice for the profession to speak from a position of evidence, experience and independence. ACE is ideally placed to fulfil this role.

In 2014 a focus for the College has been a new phase of 'on-the-ground' policy work of which highlights have included: David Gonski's well-publicised Inaugural Jean Blackburn Oration; a submission to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) on teacher education; and the successful two-day ACE 2014 National Conference on the theme of 'What counts as quality in education?' held in September in Adelaide. This year ACE has been able to draw increasingly on our members' and fellows' expertise to critique and influence educational policy and direction.

As part of our strategic planning processes there have been a number of changes to the National Board and National Office. These include the appointment of a part-time Policy Officer in 2014 and a full-time National Office Manager for 2015.

This year we have streamlined our Board structure to include three permanent committees:

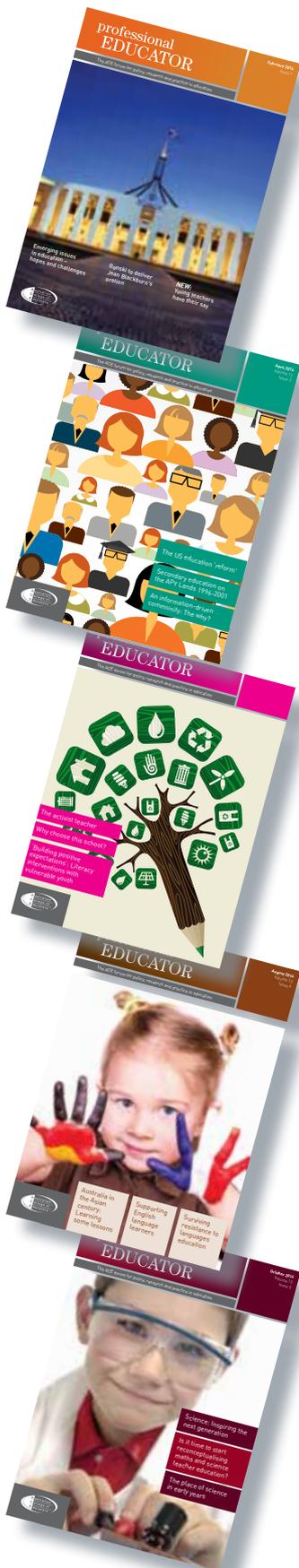
- Finance committee
- Policy committee
- Membership and Awards committee

These committees will answer directly to the Board and comprise board members, members and fellows.

We are also establishing a series of working groups reporting to these committees and the Board for ongoing work on strategic initiatives, awards processes and communications. We will also establish taskforces to deal with particular projects such as the College's new Information Technology Management System (ITMS).

A Roundtable Working Group sitting under the ACE Policy Committee has been formed to revisit and reframe ACE's statement on the future of the profession (2003).

The group, chaired by Tony Mackay, will draw on national and international evidence and will undertake work with a focus on:



- Professional identity
- Professional learning
- Professional action/policy.

These three interrelated areas will allow thorough engagement with all aspects of education. As part of this process, the group will consult with other relevant bodies in the education arena. This consultation will be facilitated by ACE.

This year ACE launched the Grassroots Membership Challenge encouraging members and fellows to each attract one new member to the College. Increased membership will assist us to do more for our members and the profession, as well as increase our influence. New members will be able to participate in the work of ACE and in turn the College will benefit from new members' experience and expertise.

Next year the College will introduce a new category of membership – Associate of ACE (AACE) for pre-service teacher candidates. By becoming an Associate Member of the College, pre-service teachers will be joining a professional body representing the teaching profession and will have access to the full range of benefits for minimal cost. On obtaining employment, Associate Members will be able to transfer to full membership with the College (MACE).

ACE has worked throughout 2014 on a major project – to redevelop its entire ITMS. The product, to be introduced late this year, will increase engagement with members and enable ACE to rapidly seek input and advice from membership as well as providing a more responsive and efficient level of service to our members. Benefits include:

- Increased engagement with members
- greater functionality with the database allowing Branch and Regional Executive to easily access their memberships lists
- improved professional presence on the web
- greater functionality with events
- improvement in electronic publishing capability.

This year the College has commenced and continued its work in strategic relationships with other organisations within the education sector. These have included working closely with the

Australian Education Union (AEU), the Australian Institute for Teaching School Leadership (AITSL), the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), the Principals Australia Institute (PAI) and the Australian Council of Deans of Education.

ACE also remains in a successful partnership with the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE); an example of the work we are implementing together is the current evaluation of the implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching for AITSL.

The College has also been working hard to forge an increased and influential profile in the media and through social media channels:

- The ACE LinkedIn.com group continues to grow and has approximately 2000 members, and the ACE Twitter.com group has approximately 1600 followers
- The Inaugural Jean Blackburn Oration by David Gonkski produced articles in nearly every major paper and radio program Australia-wide
- ACE has had a multitude of mentions across many of the major education issues discussed in the Australian media during 2014.

In 2014 ACE refreshed its publications, including *Professional Educator* and has developed plans for a new online publication to commence in 2015.

Overall during 2014, ACE has established a firm foundation for the future as a national professional organisation representing all sectors and levels of education, and it is apparent that educational bodies and policymakers are increasingly looking to the College for input and guidance. The contributions and involvements of our members and fellows at all levels have been central to this success.

On behalf of the Board and National Office, best wishes for the remainder of 2014 and for a happy and fulfilling 2015 ahead.

Professor Stephen Dinham
OAM PhD FACE
National President

Class, the politics of education, the curriculum, pedagogy and creativity

BARRY JONES

Middle class flight and Gonski revisited

When I spoke at the ACE Gala Dinner in June 2013, Julia Gillard was in her last week as Prime Minister and the *Review of Funding for Schooling*, aka the Gonski Report, was still likely to be implemented. Let me quote myself:

Australian exceptionalism: middle-class flight

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

years Catholic schools had increased their enrolments by 6 per cent and independent schools by 14 per cent.

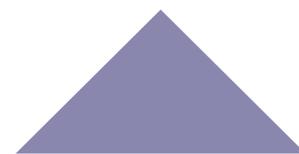
The OECD average for attendance in government schools is 88 per cent. Norway ranks highest with 98.6 per cent and Finland, which scores outstandingly in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) rankings, has 96.1 per cent.

The Australian figure is far behind New Zealand, with which we might assume having the closest affinity (94.3 per cent), Canada (92.5 per cent), the United Kingdom (93.7 per cent), the United States (91.2 per cent), Germany (94.9) and Sweden (90.0 per cent). Like Australia, there are anomalies – Chile is on 42.0 per cent, Ireland on 38.5 per cent, and the Netherlands (34.0 per cent) and Belgium (30.5 per cent), are even lower.

Just 16 months later, Gillard and Rudd have both gone, Christopher Pyne is the Minister for Education and the Review of the Australian Curriculum, by Dr Kevin Donnelly and Prof. Ken Wiltshire has been completed, and Gonski has been scuttled.

But the class, income and education divide remains.

The English Sociologist Garry Runciman argued that in 1945 the distribution of population and relative affluence in Britain could be represented by an equilateral triangle/pyramid, with the great majority of people near the base. The pyramid would also have been appropriate for Ben Chifley's Australia in 1945.

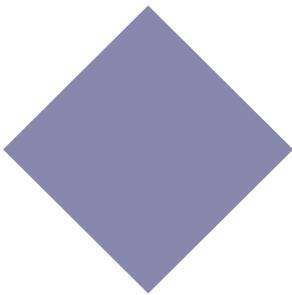


Attlee was campaigning for decent housing, decent health care, decent education, decent pensions, using progressive taxation and other social measures to take people out of destitution, overcoming a pervasive passivity and fatalism about what could be achieved. Sixty years later, Margaret



Thatcher notwithstanding, Attlee's aims (Chifley's here, too) had largely been fulfilled.

A diagram to illustrate Blair's Britain, or the Australia of Rudd-Gillard-Rudd-Abbott, would be a diamond shape – a somewhat elongated diamond, with the largest number of people not at the base but in the middle. Of course, there are billionaires at the top with disproportionate influence, and there is an underclass of unemployed, undereducated, ill-nourished, living on the margins, but the largest number, in the largest number of Federal seats in the House of Representatives, are in between.



Elections are now won or lost by appealing to the bourgeoisie, not by marshalling the proletariat. There is more emphasis on higher levels of consumption—and, in education or health care, invoking the mantra of 'choice', rather than a bottom up approach. This phenomenon was even more marked in Australia than the UK – and Labor (Gonski notwithstanding) was very uneasy about restricting access to private schools or private health programs, and certainly unwilling to raise income tax levels to, say, Scandinavian levels, or even British. Instinctively, many of us probably think of the UK as being more dominated by class divisions than we are. Not so.

The Review of the Australian Curriculum

I have read the document with close attention and it reflects the deep convictions of the authors, especially Kevin Donnelly. He is particularly concerned that there is insufficient homage paid to the Judeo-Christian tradition in our history teaching and excessive emphasis on where we are

now—our relationship with Asia, for example, and the complex, ancient history of the indigenes whose land was seized by representatives of the Judeo-Christian tradition (British version.) As somebody fascinated, I have to admit, by the architecture, painting, sculpture, music and literature of that Judeo-Christian tradition, I am grieved to think that students—teachers, too—are missing out on something serious if they have never heard of Dante, Michelangelo or Bach.

I would not like to see the Judeo-Christian tradition ignored—in a syllabus that was simply materialist, instrumentalist, artistically and aesthetically barren. But the concept of the separation of church and state, entrenched in the US and Australian Constitutions deserves our respect. I am uneasy about attempts to by-pass our High Court to ensure public funding of school chaplains and I hope the Donnelly-Wiltshire Report is not aimed at promoting this.

The Judeo-Christian tradition has its ugly side as well—the Crusades, the brutality of imperialism often under the banners of pope kings and popes, slavery, the subjugation of women, vicious anti-Semitism and racism, long brutal wars of religion between states with established faiths, hostility to science, the ambiguous relationship of the church with Mussolini and Hitler. The Donnelly-Wiltshire use of sources is instructive—they are impressed by submissions by the IPA (Institute of Public Affairs), Mr Peter Abetz, MP (Eric's brother, a pastor and part of the WA 'God squad', although this is not disclosed), Prof. Greg Melleuish and the NSW Catholic Education Commission.

Defenders of the existing history syllabus tend to be dismissed as barrow pushers, part of a coordinated campaign to defend the status quo, which Donnelly-Wiltshire see as too Australia-centric and critical of European occupation/settlement.

So, in theory I support a rigorous examination of the Judeo-Christian impact on the Western world, and Australia, but it would need to be done in depth, with expertise, not just surfing *Wikipedia* for the odd sentence on Grünewald, Savonarola, Luther or

the witches of Salem, and it would be intensely controversial.

The authors are extremely supportive of churches as providing a much needed moral framework. Well, perhaps, although the current Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (not mentioned in Dionnell-Wiltshire) suggests that the evidence would not be regarded as an appropriate element in the history syllabus.

The material on civics and citizenship is more robust, relying on some valuable work by Prof. Anne Twomey of Sydney University. One oddity is the assumption that all that is good in Australia's political system is derived from British practice.

Well, up to a point, Lord Copper. [That's a quotation, by the way.]

Take the following examples:

Manhood suffrage

Female suffrage

Secret ballot

Payment of MPs

Referendum

Adoption of the word 'democracy' except as synonym for 'mob rule'

Elected upper house.

Which came first, the Australian colonies or Britain?

In each case the Australian colonies—and then the Commonwealth from 1901—adopted democratic practices long before the United Kingdom. The Marquess of Salisbury, Prime Minister until 1902, recoiled from use of the word 'democracy.' Catholics were denied the right to vote until 1829 and Jews until 1858, discriminatory practices which never applied in Australia. Until the reign of George V (1910-36), the speech from the throne opening Parliament contained a denunciation of the Pope and all his works, dating from Tudor times.

I offer strong support, for what it is worth, to the recommendations on the arts, with greater emphasis on music and the visual arts, taught in depth. This raises two problems (i) what music and what art? and (ii) where will the specialist teachers be found?

The central problem with every curriculum review is not bias, but what to leave out and what to put in.

Educators have the choice of restricting the syllabus to a few core subjects and teaching them in depth (if they are up to it), or broadening it to provide what is, inevitably, a superficial grasp of a range of subjects. Is it possible to become competent in humanities + science + foreign languages + mathematics + literature/arts/music + social sciences + media studies + economics + understanding how processes work + philosophy + religion/ethics within the limits of 30 contact hours each week for 40 weeks of the year? Apparently not, even if we adopted the Japanese, Korean or German models of tuition. When should specialisation begin? Without it there can be no mastery: with it may be lack of understanding of other areas of knowledge and a deep

division between the sciences and the humanities. If foreign languages are not taught in primary schools, is it too late in secondary? Fear of failure leads students to avoid difficult and complex subjects. Young Americans, British and Australians are easily discouraged. Asians are not.

Pedagogy v. Education

I have had a long concern about the priorities in the preparation of teachers for their professional careers, with its exaggerated emphasis on pedagogy. This is essentially instrumental and managerial, working in prose rather than poetry, concentrating on techniques for delivery, rather than the content itself. The teacher becomes a process worker in a transmission system, where outcomes are largely predictable, aimed at preparation for citizenship and for entry into the labour market. The goal is

to provide techniques for learning, rather than concentrating on the subject matter itself.

As I have said, and written, on all too many occasions, pedagogy is one of my least favourite words.

In Athens, the pedagogue (παιδαγωγός, *paidagōgos*), was the slave who escorted children to school. It puzzles me that many who use the term never speculate about its origin.

There is a risk that in the age of management-speak, 'pedagogy' becomes a virtual synonym for 'education.' Managers like the concept of pedagogy and are worried by 'education', or 'philosophy', with its challenging and unpredictable outcomes.

I would like to see far more emphasis on creativity, especially music and the arts, in our intellectual life. Creativity enables individuals to maintain a sense



Customer owned banking

Welcome Rate Home Loan

- Also applies to 1 and 2 year terms.
- No monthly fees.
- Owner occupied and investors.
- Mobile Lending service.
- Apply before 31 December 2014.

Call **1300 654 822**. Visit vict teach.com.au.

3 Year Fixed Welcome Rate Home Loan

4.64%¹ p.a. **5.41%**² p.a.

Comparison Rate

1. Offer valid for applications received between 1 August – 31 December 2014 and loan must be funded by 31 March 2015. Minimum new loan amount is \$150,000. At the end of the chosen fixed term period (1, 2 or 3 years) rate reverts back to the Standard Variable Loan rate, currently 5.64% p.a. Interest rates correct at time of printing and subject to change. This offer is only available for new home loans. Loans in excess of 80% Loan to Value Ratio (LVR) will incur Lenders Mortgage Insurance charges. 2. Comparison rate calculated on a secured loan amount of \$150,000 for a term of 25 years. WARNING: This comparison rate is true only for the example given and may not include all fees and charges. Different terms, fees and other loan amounts might result in a different comparison rate. Fees and charges apply. Terms and Conditions available upon request. Victoria Teachers Limited, ABN 44 087 651 769, AFSL/Australian Credit Licence Number 240 960.



of control and wellbeing, through a process of resolving difficulty rather than by disengaging from it. The importance of creative thinking in addressing social and environmental challenges facing local and global communities needs to be acknowledged and fostered. It is imperative that our education system identifies how best to prepare young people for new roles and employment as the emergence of creative industries become the mainstays of our economy. Young people need to experience creativity in their teachers at schools, and outside them.

Innovation and creativity are sometimes defined as if they are synonymous. There are large areas of overlap but I think that useful distinctions can be made:

CREATIVITY

Personal
Human
Quantum Leaps
Intangible
Intuitive
Values
Subjective
Unique/ one off
 $e = mc^2$
Non-cyclical
Original
Without components
Understanding
No rules
Arts/Music/
Literature
Understanding
existence
Non economic
Intellectual
Hard to measure
Hard to teach
Partly innate
Jesus,
Shakespeare,
Bach
Culture
Flexible
Subconscious
elements
Joyful

INNOVATION

Process
Systemic
Linear
Tangible
Logical
Utilitarian
Objective
Replicable
Edison, Ford, Bell
Cyclical
Downstream
Building on
components
Outcomes oriented
Rules
78→LP→CD→DVD
Productivity
Entrepreneurial
Material
Easy to measure
Easy to teach
Largely experiential
Gutenberg, Wright,
Marconi
Economy
Blueprint
Conscious elements
Aspirational

Creativity and innovation have a profound and complex interaction, in which cause and effect are inextricably linked. Touch a cause, and it changes the effect, which then changes the cause, and so on...

I would like to see greater emphasis on:

- music and art, promoting creativity as central to human experience and self-discovery—encouraging left and right brain activity from infancy—and emphasising the importance of design as a major tool of understanding
- using creativity and imagination to promote linkages between the earth-bound and normative with the exceptional/numinous/transcendental/divine
- education as a transforming and enhancing experience, including self-mastery, understanding and managing time, encouraging innovative thinking, learning to learn, recognising that the goal is trying to grasp complexity and possibilities (not aiming at *certainty*)
- recognising that most humans are capable of a far higher level of performance than we generally recognise.

We need to promote imagination, the act of linking:

- known and unknown
- seen and unseen
- heard and unheard
- past ← now → future
- here ← → not here
- familiar ← → unfamiliar
- self ← → not self
- language/ colour/ form/ design/ sound.

Dr. Jacob Bronowski, a British scientist, mathematician, writer and television presenter said: 'Every act of imagination is the discovery of likenesses between two things that were thought unlike'. This is central both to creativity and innovation.

Sir Ken Robinson chaired the UK National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education which produced the report *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education (1999)*.

Despite its age it still seems relevant and can be downloaded at www.creativitycultureeducation.org/all-our-futures-creativity-culture-and-education.

Ken Robinson is also accessible on TED.

The Robinson Report urges *specific* provision to improve teachers' expertise in creative and cultural education.

Excitement and enthusiasm shown by pupils in primary education often tapers off into a sullen resentment in secondary.

I conclude by raising, hesitantly, a concern which will win me no friends in the sector.

What is it that draws young people to teaching? Clearly a love of children is a starting point, but more should be asked.

Is it the prospect of order and security, with low risk of failure? Is there some sense of never leaving school? Do they respond to conformity and hierarchy? Are they passionate about the subject (mathematics, history) or about the job. Where do they see themselves in the spectrum – as transition agents or as generators of creativity?

They are overworked, underpaid, with family responsibilities and financial burdens, so that overseas travel, seeking higher degrees, reading widely, attending concerts, plays, museums and art galleries falls out of their range.

Public education is the gateway to our future.

Its inputs and outputs must be cherished and appropriately rewarded.

At present they are not.

Barry Jones is a Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne. He used to be a politician, writes a lot and proffers advice whether it is sought or not.

Become an Associate Member of the Australian College of Educators (AACE)



The Australian College of Educators (ACE) will soon be opening its membership to pre-service teacher candidates by creating a new category of membership – **Associate of ACE (AACE)**. This membership and its benefits are explained below.

ACE is known as the nationwide voice of the teaching profession. By becoming an Associate of the College you will be JOINING THE TEACHING PROFESSION and the strong voice that is currently being heard and heeded by Australia's public and government decision-makers.

Will you be able to qualify as an AACE?

- Pre-service teacher education candidates and recent graduates awaiting a substantive appointment will be eligible to join ACE. Associate members will be entitled to use the post-nominal AACE once employment is obtained (fractional, contract or full-time), Associates can transfer to full membership of ACE – MACE.

What are the benefits of an AACE membership?

- Becoming actively engaged in the profession through ACE seminars, professional development events, conferences, committees, interest groups and other activities.
- Participation in high-profile education events, for example the College's inaugural Jean Blackburn Oration with guest speaker Mr David Gonski AC and our recent National Conference with keynote speakers: Ms Virginia

Simmons, Professor Colette Tayler, Professor Bob Lingard, Professor Richard James, Professor Stephen Dinham and Australia's Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb AC.

- Opening the door to your profession and career by attending networking events with key educators and other experts across all education sectors nationwide. Please see the ACE website <http://austcolled.com.au/> for more information about the College and events in your state or territory.
- Becoming engaged with state and national committees in a range of education subjects and fields.
- Access to ACE publications, including *Professional Educator*, and other ACE resources.
- Easy online registration, subsidised fees for Associate members (\$65 AACE annual rate) and the opportunity to become a full member of ACE (MACE) once you commence teaching. (Web link will be provided when the new ACE website is launched).

A critical reflection on the Donnelly/Wiltshire Review of the Australian Curriculum

BOB LINGARD



This is an excerpt for *Professional Educator* from an oration given by Professor Bob Lingard at the QLD Branch 2014 medal presentation on 30 October.

Introduction

In many ways the review, appointed by Federal Minister Christopher Pyne and conducted by Dr Kevin Donnelly and Professor Ken Wiltshire, (released publicly on 12 August 2014), is better than I ever imagined it would be. Here I acknowledge the importance of the submissions from the profession, the schools, the systems, the academics and so on (1600 submissions) and also the good work of the review secretariat. All policy, and I will regard the review as a policy, consists of a *mélange* of: a) ideology/values, b) evidence/facts/research and c) professional knowledge, as head (2008) has argued. In the review, there is more evidence of ideology and

professional knowledge from teachers, their representatives, and the systems, than of research.

The research relied upon is not of the academic kind, but mediated by ideology, and of the consultancy, descriptive kind. As with much policy development today, despite the evidence-based mantra, academic educational research is sidelined. The review contains no proper references to the academic field of curriculum studies. Good sense rather than ideology has largely, and we should at least be grateful for that, but not fully, won out.

There is still though, a strong whiff of the culture wars about the review and especially in parts of it: notably, what

I see as its neo-conservative stance regarding knowledge. I am thinking in particular here of recommendation 15 and the related discussion in the review. Recommendation 15 states:

ACARA revise the Australian Curriculum to place more emphasis on morals, values and spirituality as outlined in the Melbourne Declaration, and to better recognize the contribution of Western civilization, our Judeo-Christian heritage, the role of economic development and industry and the democratic underpinning of the British system of government to Australia's development.

My view puts my analysis at odds with the media reception of the review, both Fairfax and Murdoch, which seemed to breathe a collective sigh of relief that good sense seemed to have triumphed over the culture wars. For example, *The Australian's* (13 October 2014) headline stated: 'Literacy, Numeracy and Western Values boosted in Curriculum Shake-up' and 'Subjects fine-tuned as schools go back to basics'. A headline inside *The Australian* (p.4) that day summarised the focus of the review in this way: 'Curriculum should focus on phonetics and the West'. The *Sydney Morning Herald's* headline (13 October 2014) stated: 'Education Back to Basics' and 'PM's school review wins wide support' with the first paragraph of this front page story noting: 'The Abbott government's controversial review of the national curriculum has failed to reignite the culture wars as expected with its recommendations receiving widespread support across the country'. The headline in the *Courier-Mail* on (p.11, 13 October 2014) was: 'Back to Basics Abbott wants simpler, more 'Western' school curriculum'. This story did acknowledge, though, the potential for reopening the culture wars when it observed: 'But it also made controversial findings that could re-ignite the so-called culture wars. It found there should be more focus on Western civilization and Australia's Judeo-Christian heritage, and Indigenous and Asian history should be scaled back'.

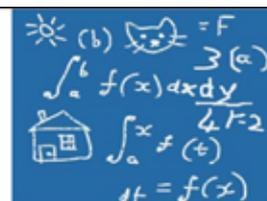
The neo-conservative stance in respect of knowledge in the review, its epistemological framing and in relation to curriculum implies a loss of

traditional knowledge, and neglect or under acknowledgement of Western and Judeo-Christian values (see Apple, 2001, pp. 47-53). Indeed, the review demands a clearer expression of these to underpin the curriculum, a return to them and to have them embedded more deeply in both English (including a reduction of focus on Indigenous literatures) and History. This 'others' the multiple knowledge forms produced in other traditions: this multiplicity is a striking reality today in our digitised, connected and globalised world.

The review quotes with approval the British philosopher, Michael Oakshott's position that education is an ongoing conversation with humanity: 'It is the ability to participate in this conversation, and not the ability to reason cogently, to make discoveries about the world, or to contrive a better world, which distinguishes...the civilized man (sic) from the barbarian'. Here, in contrast, I would suggest that all of these

characteristics are necessary for the production of educated individuals from schooling and that this conversation with humanity, needs to be 'postcolonialised' and brought into the 21st century, acknowledging multiple knowledge forms and recognizing the reality of 21st century life: globalised and digitised. We also must recognise that Australia is largely a secular society, but also a multi-faith, multi-religions society as well. We must not forget this today as xenophobia arises in the post-September 11 world of rising Islamaphobia and 'Team Australia'.

The review supports a view of the purposes of education, schooling and curriculum as a good in its own right: the liberal-humanist education defence. In expressing such a stance, the review rejects the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) more utilitarian account of these purposes: for the OECD, schooling should equip all students with inter alia 'the skills necessary to achieve their full



Calculus for Kids

We show you how to transform teaching through using computers. Students find advanced Mathematics easy and fun with real world examples.

Expressions of interest are now open for 2015.

Please nominate a class in your primary school — visit www.calculus4kids.edu.au

- Free software for the class
- Free training for teachers—accommodation & transport in-



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

“ It is a very good idea to unclutter the primary school curriculum, clarify hours needed to cover it and be clear about what the core is. ”

potential, participate in an increasingly interconnected global economy, and ultimately convert better jobs into better lives'. The Review's liberal-humanist justification suggests that schooling/ education is in and of itself, 'inherently worthwhile, transcendent in nature and valued for its own sake'.

The review

I will provide a quick response here to some of the more positive recommendations of the review. It is a very good idea to unclutter the primary school curriculum, clarify hours needed to cover it and be clear about what the core is. I think some considerable debate is needed about whether the early years should simply focus on literacy and numeracy, as suggested by Professor Wiltshire. I think this is happening in a *de facto* way anyway, given the flowback of Year 3 NAPLAN testing into the early years. There is evidence for that and we need to be wary of it.

It is also a very good idea to have a version of the national curriculum produced for parents and to involve parents more. There is a need to embed NAPLAN in the curriculum. Making the cross-curriculum priorities curricular rather than cross-curricular is much better than not having them at all, which I thought is what the review would recommend. Clarifying the A-E achievement standards is also necessary. Community input into creating a framework for the national curriculum is also probably a good idea, particularly given the datafication of education and potential dictatorship of data that is now framing education policy in (particularly government) school systems.

The review recommends that teachers become more data literate. I think this is as much the case in respect of system leadership and education politicians. Putting the capabilities other than literacy and numeracy and Information, Communication and Technology Services (ICTS) into relevant subjects is at least defensible. Addressing the needs of students with a disability is a necessity. The call for research into effective pedagogies is better than endorsing a particular pedagogy at least. We all know good teachers and good teaching draw on different pedagogies for different topics for different students at different times. Here the review in my view steps too far into the domain of teacher professional decision making. This is interesting, given the review's stance on federalism generally and specifically on educational federalism. Most contemporary education policy offers exhortations to the importance of teachers – their pedagogies the most significant in-school factor, a system cannot be better than its teachers, but always policy seems then to try to inhibit teacher professionalism by explicitly telling them what to do. This seems to be the case with the review especially in respect of how best to teach young people to read and the review's dogmatic stance in that regard. It is good idea to suggest that any revisions include classroom practitioners with discipline relevant knowledge.

The review pays a lot of attention to Australian federalism and what we might see as educational federalism (Lingard, 2000). Indeed, here the review points out: 'The reviewers are aware that it is the Ministerial Council which ultimately determines the nature and extent of the Australian curriculum, and have explicitly considered the evidence and its findings in the context of Australia's federal system and the constitutional responsibility of the states and territories in relation to school education'. In that context, the recommendations are aimed at the Education Council and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), even though the review was commissioned by and reported to the Federal Minister. The impact of the federal structure on the national curriculum - the maze of

mad mirrors - is noted and rightly so, throughout the review.

Additionally, I note that within Australian federalism and contemporary politics there appears to be an acceptance, despite the constitutional reality, whereby schooling is the responsibility of the States and Territories - schooling is not mentioned in Section 51 of the Constitution, that the Australian population and profession support a national curriculum. The executive summary of the review points out: 'there is still strong support across the country for developing and implementing a national curriculum, despite some initial doubts and resistance'.

There is also political bipartisanship about the necessity of an Australian curriculum, though any move to rethink federalism, might undermine such bipartisanship, especially as revenue raising issues will be involved in any such discussion (e.g. the GST). I am thinking here of the Prime Minister's recent speech (26 October 2014) and the Review of Federalism with a focus on schooling, he has established. It seems at this moment, though, the need for a national curriculum in Australia is not to be debated or up for debate: rather, the debate is about what that curriculum should consist of and seek to do. That is where the debate, sometimes acrimonious, lies.

“ Community input into creating a framework for the national curriculum is also probably a good idea, particularly given the datafication of education and potential dictatorship of data that is now framing education policy... ”

There is a real political, organisational and governance complexity surrounding the national curriculum. ACARA, created to develop and manage the national curriculum and the National Assessment Program (NAP), is a statutory authority of a particular kind. It has a governing board that it is responsible to. It is responsible to the Federal Education Minister (and Federal Finance Minister). It is responsible to the Education Council. It has relationships with state departments and state curriculum authorities.

There is a great complexity here, which results in multiple mediations of what happens with both the development and implementation of the national curriculum. We see much stronger mediation, as the review notes, by the larger states (New South Wales and Victoria), less from the smaller states. The review makes recommendations regarding the governance of ACARA.

Conclusion

The review is reasonably silent on NAPLAN. This is possibly a reflection of its terms of reference. I would suggest that NAPLAN is having a substantial reductive effect on curriculum and that these effects are disjunctive with the rationale for education that is expressed by the review. There is a need for a review of NAPLAN.

I have noted the complexities surrounding the lines of responsibility of ACARA. Nonetheless, it was the current ACARA governance structure in all its labyrinthine complexity, reflecting the maze of mad mirrors that is Australian federalism, that was essential to getting us to where we are (as well, of course, the commitment of the profession): commitment to and implementation of an F-10 national curriculum. So, while I think the review has put its finger on the problem, I am not so certain that recommendations 24-29 will solve the problem. We need a debate here, an open lengthy one, set against what might happen in respect of federalism more broadly. Clarification of ACARA's charter would be a good thing (recommendation 24), but is a new national body (National School Performance Authority) really needed as in recommendation 28? I



think much thought needs to be given as to whether or not ACARA should be reconstituted as a company. On the surface, having an ACARA Board of experts, rather than representatives of various education authorities seems attractive (recommendation 26), but would this slow the momentum for a national curriculum, which I think is slowing anyway. What about teacher representation? This is the complex problem of 'arms-length' curriculum development related to political responsibility, as mediated by a federal political structure. Greater transparency regarding minutes and so on seems a good thing.

To date, the Intergovernmental Council in Education, consisting of all the nation's education ministers, has approved the F-10 national curriculum for Maths, Science, English, and History, which were to be 'substantially implemented' by 2013, with Geography and the Arts approved with no agreed timeline for implementation. There appears to be little commitment by the states and territories to a national curriculum at the senior levels. My real sense is that some of the

impetus and political drive for a national curriculum have weakened. The states are expressing more independent views on this and federalism is under review. It might be the case that we end up with a partial F-10 Australian curriculum. The acceptance and then implementation of the sensible recommendations of the review would help improve what we currently have.

Professor Bob Lingard is a Professorial Research Fellow in the School of Education and the Institute for Social Science Research at The University of Queensland and the College's Immediate Past President.

References

- Apple, M. (2001) *Educating the 'Right' Way*. New York, Routledge.
- Head, B. (2008) Three lenses of evidence-based policy. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*. 67, 1, pp.1-11.
- Lingard, B. (2000) Federalism in Schooling since the Karmel Report. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 27, 2, pp.93-109.

An early childhood perspective

SUSAN KRIEG



When reviewing 2014 from an early childhood perspective it is important to recognise that, in line with international definitions, these years include a birth-8 range and encompass childcare, preschool and also the early years of school.

Looking back over the year using a birth-8 lens it could best be described as a period of uncertainty and review. The Coalition released its 'Better Child Care and Early Learning' policy in September 2013 and following that, the Abbott Government moved comparatively quickly to announce policy change in the early education sector.

Assistant Education Minister, Sussan Ley, with responsibility for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), quickly affirmed Coalition support for the National Quality Framework (NQF) and acknowledged the significant growth and change achieved in the sector under this reform. The NQF had been agreed by The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and introduced at the beginning of 2012. The implementation of the NQF meant that for the first time in Australia the diverse, uneven and outdated regulatory standards applicable to ECEC across the states and territories were brought together and unified under a single framework.

However, along with this, the assistant minister signalled that the new government intended to minimise the paper work and 'regulatory burden' under the existing NQF requirements by instigating three major reviews to examine these issues. The included: 'A review of the Early Years Quality Fund (EYQF)', a 'Productivity Commission Review of Childcare and Early Childhood Education' and a 'Review of the National Quality Framework'. The terms of reference for the reviews and inquiries identified some of the most contentious aspects instigated by the previous ALP Government: Issues of early childhood educator qualifications; appropriate adult

to child ratios; and workloads and how these are related to costs. The reviews focused on 'flexibility, affordability and access'. This emphasis on flexibility and cost fails to recognise that the transition from home care to external care for young children has serious implications for their intellectual and emotional development, particularly in early years where patterns are set, affecting them for the rest of their lives. Moreover, staff looking after young children would need specialised training and experience.

As a result of the review into the EYQF, one of the first changes that occurred in 2014 was the freeze and then redirection of this funding. Initially intended to support an increase in wages for early childhood educators (current hourly rate for a Certificate 3 is \$19.30), the EYQF funding was a one-off pool of money and implementation of the EYQF was seen to be inequitable, unmanageable and became a target for reform by the Abbott Government. The Coalition redirected this finite pool of funding to professional development rather than increasing wages for childcare educators.

Throughout 2014 there was considerable uncertainty regarding the continuation of the 15 hours preschool entitlement introduced under the 'Universal Access' policy in which each preschool child was entitled to 15 hours funded preschool education. Although the increase from 12 to 15 hours for each child in preschool may seem insignificant to some outside the field, in reality, the increase is in line with much international policy. There is now a body of research demonstrating the long term educational benefits of quality preschool participation and many other countries have already laid the groundwork for educational achievement before children begin their formal education by increasing access to quality preschool.

To implement the extra three hours, early childhood educators readjusted program hours, days and staffing to accommodate the change. The concern that the 15 hours may be wound back to 12 hours signalled a worrying trend in Australian early childhood care and education policy. However, the assistant minister announced in September that the

funding for the extra three hours would continue for 2015. This announcement was welcomed by the field. However, the extension of one year can hardly be seen as a commitment to ongoing continuation of this policy.

“ As a result of the review into the EYQF, one of the first changes that occurred in 2014 was the freeze and then redirection of this funding. ”

The invitation to submit to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into Childcare and Early Learning resulted in 468 submissions (<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/childcare/submissions>). These included a wide range of individual opinions, organisational responses from businesses and researchers (for example, the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) response). As a result of this process, a 900-page report by the Productivity Commission Inquiry was released in July. This report (still considered to be in draft) was sent out for further comment and feedback prior to final decisions being made in October. As of 19 October, there are 455 post-draft submissions. It will be interesting to see the results of this process and what changes are made to the huge round of recommendations included in the draft report.

The actual recommendations in the draft report were a mixed bag, with the NQF being retained with some streamlining and refining. Some of the most contentious recommendations relate to the funding of childcare. This issue is of primary concern to both families and governments. One of the report recommendations involves a move to a means-tested single subsidy, paid directly to the provider. This must be viewed positively as a simplification of the incredibly complicated payment

and funding process that now exists. The possibility of a 'top-up' additional subsidy for children with special needs or a disability is also a welcome recommendation and may go some way to addressing equitable childcare for these children and their families.

However, underpinning these beneficial changes, the report states that the subsidy would be based on a set 'reasonable' cost of care and this raises the questions of how this 'reasonable' cost will be determined and whether quality will be criteria?

Lastly, the possibility of including nannies as eligible for childcare subsidies raises issues regarding the regulation and types of qualifications that will be required. How will such a provision be regulated and what level of qualification would be required?

The review of the NQF was undertaken by an external research company - Woolcott Research and Engagement and sought feedback from face-to-face public consultation sessions, online comments and submissions. The purpose of the review was to 'assess the extent to which the objectives and outcomes of the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care had been achieved. In particular, the review would examine whether the NQF had improved the efficiency and cost effectiveness of regulation of services and reduced the regulatory burden for providers and regulatory authorities'. The findings of the review were released in October (2014) and the reviewers stated that:

'Throughout the consultations participants supported the National Quality Framework and its current implementation timeframe. While it was thought some improvements could be of benefit and there were some implementation issues, it was clear the National Quality Framework has provided significant benefits to children and services since it began in 2012' (p.5).'

'As a result of the review, a 'Consultation Regulation Impact Statement (RIS)' will be released towards the end of 2014. This will outline any suggested changes to the National Quality Framework and will present options for change and



improvement. This RIS will be accompanied by further public consultation (p.11).'

This year has also seen some interesting developments in the early years of school.

Alongside the announcement of the reviews outlined above, there was also a significant increase in funding to the Out of Hours Care (OSHC) sector. This was an interesting policy because it represented a shift of focus from the early years to school age care programs.

The Productivity Commission Report's recommendation that schools will be directed to provide preschool child care was contentious. Including three to five year olds in OSHC requires significant resourcing. This recommendation will need to take into account the particular rights of very young children to adult attention (ratios), suitable indoor and physical spaces and a program that will be appropriate for this age group. Similar issues arise with the recommendation that occasional care programs are expanded.

The recent release of the Review of the National Curriculum also has many implications for the early years of schooling. For those of us who have worked with, and advocated for, young children over many years, it was encouraging to see recognition of the importance of these years and also an endorsement of an Australian Curriculum based on children's early learning needs. The reviewers' state:

'Consultations for this review with early learning experts, combined with research into international experience, confirm the vital importance of the early years of schooling in terms of a student's educational development. Curriculum content clearly plays a key role in this and there is convincing evidence to suggest that the early years should be regarded as quite distinct, and treated differently from the rest of the learning spectrum (p. 99).'

The review also recommends a focus on the 'basics' of literacy and numeracy in the early years and reiterates that the early years' curriculum draws from the lives of children:

'...the teaching of literacy and numeracy can easily be integrated pedagogically with other content by using examples relevant to the lives of students of these ages. Since literacy is the main foundation for the whole school curriculum there seems to be convincing evidence that Foundation to Year 2 should be separated both conceptually and organisationally in the whole curriculum (p.99).'

In conclusion this review of 2014 from an early childhood perspective, given the contemporary importance and status of international comparisons of educational outcomes, the Australian public and policy debates should be attentive to the fact that in OECD comparisons, the countries who are performing best, invest much more than Australia in early childhood education. The proportion of GDP invested by Australia is 0.6 (UNICEF, 2008) and when this is compared with that of the countries that consistently perform at the top of the international comparisons (for example, Finland and Sweden, 1.3) the relationship between consistent ongoing investment in early childhood education and long-term educational outcomes becomes evident. Access to universal, integrated health care and quality early education must be viewed as an entitlement rather than a privilege.

Susan Krieg is the Program Coordinator of the Early Childhood programs at Flinders University. Prior to this she worked at Edith Cowan University (2000-2006) leading the development of a Bachelor of Education.

References

- Donnelly, K., & Wiltshire, K. (2014). Review of the Australian Curriculum. Retrieved 17th October, 2014, from <http://www.studentsfirst.gov.au/review-australian-curriculum>
- Woolcott Research and Engagement. (2014). Summary of findings from the 2014 National Quality Framework Review.



Industry dominates, but where is the education in VET?

LINDA SIMON



In the lead-up to the 2013 federal elections, the now Federal Government had very little to say about its plans for vocational education and training (VET). By contrast in 2007, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made VET a feature of the last week of campaigning by recognising the underfunding of the VET sector and the complexity of its shared governance arrangements between the states and the commonwealth. He proposed, as others had before him, to have it placed under the responsibility of the Federal Government.

This was not pursued by the incoming Coalition Government. One of the first significant changes by the Abbott Government was to separate VET from the other two education sectors and put it under the portfolio of Industry with Minister Ian Macfarlane. In explaining this change, the Department of Industry's website states that: 'By having vocational education and training within Industry,

we are in the best position to closely align training and apprenticeships to meet current and future industry skills needs which is a core part of the Government's competitiveness strategy'.

Once again little was said about VET for several months, and changes to the sector, while the minister turned his attention to other parts of his portfolio, became clear when his initial public statements indicated that the VET sector was in need of reform. In addressing the issues around the car industry in February 2014, Minister Macfarlane stated: 'The reality is we've inherited a system in the skills and training area which is so close to broken that we have regular meetings now with people who say just fix this' (*The Australian* 12 February, 2014). This became a common theme: and as a result of the previous government, the VET system was almost broken and needed to be fixed. Yet, the VET reforms that followed have attempted

to deal with the symptoms of these 'breakages', but have not changed the market ideology which was firmly put in place by the Rudd/Gillard Government. That is, the market should determine the take-up of VET, remains the underlying philosophy.

The Abbott Government, both in the lead-up to the elections and after, continued to claim that there was too much 'red tape' in government programs and that needed funds would be found by cutting back this 'red tape'. It became apparent in the VET sector that anybody or function separate from the government department was to be cut. The Australian Workforce Productivity Agency (AWPA) was one of the first to go, with its functions supposedly taken over by the department, and nothing was said about the National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC) which just quietly disappeared, along with a VET focus on access and equity. The National Skills Standards Council (NSSC), with its draft standards also ceased operation and was finally dissolved by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Industry and Skills Council. In actuality, those bodies set up as independent of government, and with the role of providing advice to government, were gone. All would now be decided 'within the tent' it appeared. In a similar vein, whilst the Industry Skills Councils had a one year extension to their core funding agreement, they also face significant changes to their role.

Two overarching frameworks appear to be guiding the current VET reforms. The first is the government's 'Industry Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda', of which the Prime Minister Abbott said on the 8 September 2014, that 'the Australian Government is taking action to make Australia more internationally competitive, attract investment and foster stronger and more enduring economic growth'. He went on to say that the VET sector will play a central role in this vision by producing workers with the skills employers need. Arising from this were three new projects, Training for Employment Scholarships, Youth Employment Pathways, and new arrangements to the Australian Apprenticeships Support Network. The network would be formed through

“ *The government's vision for the future of VET clearly sets it in a market process where the employers, and to some extent the students, will determine the training they require and who they will go to in order to provide it.* ”

a competitive tender process. The youth programs announced as part of this vision, clearly indicate the government's priorities in addressing youth unemployment in regional areas, where 'the decisions about training needs of employees will be put in the hands of employers'. The central role of industry and employers is clear.

The second framework was determined by the COAG Industry and Skills Council which replaced the Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE). At the inaugural meeting in April this year the State and Territory Ministers, along with Minister Macfarlane, agreed on six objectives for the VET system. In summary they covered a national VET system with clear governance roles, a national system of industry-defined qualifications, trade apprenticeships valued as a career pathway, a responsive national regulatory system that supports a competitive and well-functioning market, informed consumers, and targeted and efficient government funding.

The government has pursued this set of objectives in a number of ways, including the establishment of a VET Advisory Board made up of industry with no educationalists or unionists, and the soon to be operative Industry and Skills Advisory Council. The government

has also made much of its consultative processes around VET reforms. There is a specific website www.vetreform.industry.gov.au, which provides details of all the reforms to-date and those to come. It also indicates the consultative processes underway, and encourages those interested to engage through submissions, attending workshops and joining LinkedIn discussions. There appears to be a comprehensive array of processes for stakeholders to engage with, yet the 'real' consultations appear to be occurring with a limited number of industry peak groups, and the exclusion again of unions and educationalists is significant.

One of the necessary reforms that the government claims to have heard loud and clear is related to the training packages. The consultative processes around this were announced in October this year. The process makes it clear that there will be a contestability framework overseeing the future development and maintenance of the training packages, with Industry Skills Councils being able to tender along with other bodies. It will be interesting to see how placing this process in a contestable framework under the control of industry and employers will ensure flexibility, cutting of red tape, efficiency and a good educational product.

The government's vision for the future of VET clearly sets it in a market process where the employers, and to some extent the students, will determine the training they require and who they will go to in order to provide it. Each state and territory has implemented this agenda slightly differently. For example, the Victorian experience is one that stands out by clearly demonstrating problems created over funding, 'rorts' by some training providers and the potential collapse of some TAFE Institutes. The critical role of TAFE has been missing from the Federal Minister's rhetoric on VET reform, with the assumption that the states and territories are responsible for working out the relative funding of the public and private sector. What we have seen, at times, almost every day in the media, is what damage an unfettered market can do in education.

Exacerbated by the introduction of VET FEE-HELP for diplomas and higher qualifications in the VET sector, the growth not only in private providers, but also in brokers, has been significant. The operation of some of these companies has been highlighted further by the proposed government policy on deregulation that will be applied to higher education. Stakeholders in that sector have been appalled at the impact of a competitive market and at government funding propping up private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). Not only has this further shone the spotlight on VET providers offering iPads and other inducements to students to sign up to their courses, whether appropriate or not, but also the inadequate education and training that many students have gained from their experiences. As a result of this a number of private providers have constructed their businesses on the receipt of government funds causing concern amongst many, and stakeholders have watched some of these RTOs launch themselves onto the stock market, with varying results.

Practices such as 'channelling' have become evident; where providers enrol students in alternative courses in order to receive a greater subsidy level. The number of third parties operating as brokers has grown, with such operatives touting for business outside welfare and

other agencies, preying on many of the most disadvantaged with promises that can't be achieved, and often signing them up to debts that they were not aware of. These practices have been addressed in the October release of the new Standards for Training Providers and Regulators. Whether these are still strong enough to prevent such practices will remain to be seen, but what such practices do is demand of all governments is a far tighter protection of vulnerable students in the VET sector as well as sanctions on providers that really will deter unsatisfactory practice.

The quality of education and training has been a focus this year, with the new standards, and revised functions for the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). ASQA has been asked to remove the red tape from proven RTOs and to tighten up the overseeing on those caught in unethical practices. An ASQA investigation last year found that up to 45 per cent of RTOs were in breach of marketing and advertising rules (*The Australian*, 6 September 2014). At an Australian Council of Private Education and Training (ACPET) seminar during the year, Minister Macfarlane spoke of wanting quality in the sector, but of not telling providers how to get there. The operation of the marketised VET sector has resulted in organisations such as the Business Council Australia (BCA) to raising concerns. Jennifer Westacott, Chief Executive of BCA said: 'We can't just let the market work, because it doesn't always work for everybody – and I say that as the queen of capitalism. It doesn't work for disadvantaged people, it doesn't work in certain locations (and) it doesn't work for emerging skills... Market reforms have to be about outcomes not fads' (*The Australian*, 3 September, 2014).

Her concerns about the market and the lack of funding generally in the sector were echoed by Peter Noonan, a long-time VET observer and researcher, at the TAFE Directors Australia conference this year. Noonan detailed the under-investment in VET, especially compared to the other education sectors, and said: 'Ongoing growth at reduced funding rates (in VET) is a recipe for poor student experiences and poor outcomes' (*The Australian*, 3 September 2014), and he



called for an immediate and independent assessment of VET in the same way that there had been of higher education.

The Federal Budget this year raised further concerns in terms of funding with cuts to ten programs in VET, some supporting the most vulnerable, saving over \$1 billion and instead creating an Industry Skills Fund of \$476 million over four years.

We can only hope that soon governments will listen to the consumers and educators of vocational education and training. We are fast moving to a system that supports a training market at the expense of maintaining a strong quality public education system in TAFE, and a VET system that is underfunded and only representing a few large industry players. There are many reforms occurring under the Federal Government, but many stakeholders remain unconvinced that they are taking us in the right direction.

Linda Simon has been a teacher in schools, TAFE and now at university. She currently teaches subjects relating to VET policy at UTS and Charles Sturt University.

“ *The Federal Budget this year raised further concerns in terms of funding with cuts to ten programs in VET, some supporting the most vulnerable, saving over \$1 billion and instead creating an Industry Skills Fund of \$476 million over four years.* ”

The year that wasn't much different for schools

CHRIS BONNOR



For seven years I've been maintaining an online blog which summarises media reports on educational issues that matter – as distinct from the ones that don't. In the former category I include access, opportunity and achievement for all students. In the latter category are all the things that pile up benefits for some students at the expense of others. Yes, it reflects my own priorities but it sustains a bird's-eye view of commentary and policy about schools.

Over time I've made the unhappy discovery that most years are much the same. Research, reports and reviews come and go, governments pick the easy and populist bits, inject their favoured ideology developed by favoured ideologues - and schools go on regardless.

To date, 2014 hasn't proven to be much different. It started with unfinished business from the year before. Everyone will remember the federal election and Minister Christopher Pyne's subsequent dust-up (falling short of a shirtfront) with the states over Gonski funding.

He soon learned that it is much safer to stay with ABG (Anything But Gonski) – hence 2014 began with announcements of a review of curriculum and another of teacher training. And of course there was a renewed push on school autonomy.

In fairness, Minister Pyne flagged such priorities before the election and after all, the previous Labor Government devoted large slabs of time to ABG. Almost from day one, implementation of the Gonski review fell well short of its recommendations. More about that later.

It is also the case that the **curriculum review** wasn't as bad as many predicted - although the somewhat underwhelming recommendations could have been as easily produced by a couple of bureaucrats without the sideshows. We were told that the curriculum is overcrowded, something which won't come as any great surprise. We apparently need more Judeo-Christian heritage and physical geography instead of a cross-cultural focus, creativity and human geography. According to the reviewers, Ken Wiltshire and Kevin Donnelly, the current curriculum lacks

balance, a criticism not helped by revelations about the email antics of one of the review's advisers.

In the end the findings of the review will be considered as yet another salvo in the cultural wars and be largely ignored. Fortunately, little of this ever filters down to classroom teachers who just get on with the job. As for the **review of teacher training**, I'm sure it is important – but how might it be different than the countless similar reviews in past years?

Just as the 2014 school year began Minister Pyne also launched the Federal Government's plan for a quarter of Australian public schools to become **autonomous** within three years, at the bargain price of \$70m. That represents good dollar value for the publicity generated. His comments about the benefits of school autonomy cheerfully deny the weight of evidence which, on balance, is ambivalent – especially about the claimed benefit for student achievement. His campaign on autonomy didn't get off to a fine start, with NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli raining on his parade.

The on again, off again, saga about **chaplains in schools** also featured in 2014. Labor had created an option to allow schools to employ secular youth workers. In May the Commission of Audit recommended that the program should be abolished. The Coalition responded in the Federal Budget by doing the opposite, restoring the original system and putting Labor's secular youth workers out on the street – presumably along with some of the young people in their previous care.

Meanwhile Ron Williams—who in 2012 persuaded the High Court to declare the program invalid—was back in court and once again the program was struck down. In August the Federal Government solved the little technical problem, AKA the Australian Constitution, by announcing that they would fund the states to employ chaplains. Clearly the issue of religion in schools didn't go away in a year in which principals in Victoria were stopping religious education classes, citing issues which also featured in *Taking God to School*, by Marian Maddox.

In common with previous years, 2014 saw a lot of kite flying as **various new**

ideas were hoisted aloft, albeit to mixed reception. In May the Commission of Audit demonstrated its expertise in matters educational by suggesting that the states, almost alone, should run education – not entirely a silly idea but the Commission was clearly concerned about efficiency, not consistency or equity. The Centre for Independent Studies concurred but also suggested that wealthier parents pay more for public schooling. The idea was soon slapped down by many, including Professor Stephen Dinham, National President of the Australian College of Educators.

Our time-honoured tradition of bringing home **bright ideas from overseas** continued to torment schools. Who could forget Education Minister Julia Gillard's infatuation with New York education Chancellor Joel Klein a few years ago, an infatuation shared, as it turned out, with Rupert Murdoch. In June this year it was Prime Minister Tony Abbott's turn, this time to be excited by an industry-linked school in New York.

By now we should be used to grand announcements of new ideas which aren't all that new. School industry links have only been around for three decades. Not to be deterred, Prime Minister Abbott, in October, announced the fruits of his technology tourism: an Industry, Innovation and Competitiveness Agenda which is going to see greater maths and science specialisation in some schools. His idea raised a few eyebrows over such trivialities – but it seems that ABG has reached the big end of town.

So what happened to Gonski in 2014? In January the review final report was again made available online, having been earlier removed. But that's about as good as it got. As far as politically possible, the Abbott Government continued to walk away, even from Labor's truncated implementation.

A senate inquiry rekindled concern, but also gave oxygen to the schools sector peak groups intent on dismantling equity funding. Having spent years sowing doubts, one school peak group declared that the Gonski funding model was unachievable. Independent Schools Victoria mounted the argument that schools would play any equity-funded

“ *As far as Gonski's findings are concerned, close analysis of My School data that I've completed with Bernie Shepherd show that Gonski had every right to be concerned about levels of student achievement and Australia's equity gap.* ”

system by enrolling disadvantaged students – just to get the money.

In May Minister Pyne declared his emotional commitment to private schools, ironically at a Christian Schools Australia (CSA) event. CSA is one school peak group which has remained a solid supporter of Gonski. In August Minister Pyne was able to back his emotional commitment with a further and somewhat covert review of equity loadings.

Meanwhile the man himself, David Gonski joined the fray in a landmark speech. He expressed some regrets: the likely cost of implementation tended to obscure many of the review's important findings. On the matter of funding he obliquely indicated that achieving greater equity without some redistribution was problematic, something that Ken Boston and Kathryn Greiner reiterated at a Need To Succeed (NTS) Gonski symposium in October.

As far as Gonski's findings are concerned, close analysis of My School data that I've completed with Bernie Shepherd show that Gonski had every right to be concerned about levels of student achievement and Australia's equity gap. As reported after the Need To Succeed (NTS) symposium, the achievement of high and low Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) schools has somewhat diverged in



the last few years. Equity gradients constructed out of My School data have steepened. Increases in funding show little relationship to need. The differences between the states and between sectors, described by Gonski as lacking logic and consistency, have now reached the point of absurdity. The importance of full implementation of Gonski is greater than ever.

Other school education issues bubbled along in 2014. The shortage of government schools, including in inner Sydney and on Melbourne's fringe has caused concern. New research addressed a range of matters: relative achievement of public and private school students (Chesters, Preston, OECD), school choice (OECD), culture and student achievement (Riley), provision of schools (Grattan), student engagement (NCVER), school competition (OECD).

The year also saw evidence of push-back against some of the relatively useless 'reform' of the last few years. From Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), this included a report criticising student grading, NSW criticised aspects of the My School website and school reporting to parents was raised during the Victorian state election. Professor Stephen Dinham delivered an outstanding address on school reform at the end of October. The title alone—'The worst of both worlds: how the US and UK are influencing education in Australia'—says it all.

So that was another year that probably wasn't with perhaps less Gonski, more ideology, enjoyable distractions and the occasional moral panic. The constants include continuing erosion of the remaining equity in our framework of schools – and the energy expended to throw such problems into the too hard basket. I'm sure 2015 will be completely different.

Chris Bonnor is co-author, with Jane Caro, of *What makes a good school?*

Please email the author at bonnorc@gmail.com for a list of full references.

Higher education: 2014 in review

GAVIN MOODIE

Professional Educator's preview of the higher education sector in February 2014 reviewed the Coalition Government's thin election platform including Prime Minister Abbott's and Education Minister Pyne's anodyne comments about higher education until then. The review also noted Abbott's (2013) promise, as opposition leader, to Universities Australia's 2013 conference that: 'First and most important, we will be a stable and consultative government' (Coates and Doughney, 2014).

Public policy process

All of those statements were contradicted by the 2014-15 Federal Budget. The budget proposed several radical changes to higher education financing: cutting government funding of higher education teaching by 20 per cent, extending those reduced subsidies to all higher education providers including private for profit

providers, and allowing all providers to charge whatever fee they chose without any effective limit to provider fees nor student loans. The budget also signalled the introduction of a real rate of interest to the increased loans that students would need to take. There is no need to recapitulate the extensive debate of those proposals that has been published in several other forums, especially since many seem likely to be changed substantially by the Senate. But it is worth reiterating observations about the process adopted by the Coalition which have been overshadowed by the debate over the substance of the proposals.

The last federal election that was informed by a substantial policy platform was the 'Fightback!' election of 1993. Both major parties concluded that the Coalition lost that 'unlosable' election because it proposed detailed policies, rather than the nature of those policies. Subsequent federal elections have been

fought on general and sometimes vague impressions and personalities rather than policy.

Compensating somewhat for the lack of policies in election platforms has been the long tradition in Australian higher education of making policy by public committee of inquiry. However, the Abbott Government did not follow this process before proposing radical changes to higher education financing, leaving no direct opportunity for participation by students, who would be most directly affected by the Coalition's proposals. This democratic gap was filled by the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee of inquiry into the *Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill*. This bill sought to implement the Coalition's budget proposals. The committee received 164 submissions and held public hearings which canvassed a wide range of views on the Coalition's proposals.



Teacher education

The current higher education *Commonwealth Grant Scheme Guidelines 2012* specify that one of the national priorities is 'increasing the number of persons undertaking teaching and nursing courses of study'. The national priorities were formally established in 2003, but reflect the Australian Government's longstanding agreement with state governments to fund enough teaching and nursing graduates to fill vacancies caused by high turnover in state government schools and hospitals. More recently there has been an oversupply of teaching graduates, exacerbated by universities increasing their teacher education intakes following the introduction of the demand driven system. Some universities have admitted students with relatively low entry scores. These increased intakes put pressure on the number of placements available for students to meet the professional experience requirements of teacher registration. There have also been ideological contests over the content and pedagogy of teacher education programs.

In February 2014 the Australian Government established a teacher education ministerial advisory group to advise on teacher education programs and in particular:

- Pedagogical approaches - the ways teachers teach their students, and the different ways teaching and learning can occur
- subject content - how well teachers understand the content of the subjects they are teaching
- professional experience - the opportunity for pre-service teachers to put theory into practice through quality in-school learning experiences.

The group's issues paper noted that: 'there is currently limited evidence on what constitutes effective teacher preparation. Much of the research undertaken to date focuses on individual elements of teacher education programmes and the perceptions of graduate teachers, school leaders and higher education faculties, without focusing on the ultimate effects on

student learning' (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014: 4).

The group (page 7) posed four high-level questions:

- What characteristics should be fostered and developed in graduate teachers through their initial teacher education?
- What teaching practices should be developed in graduate teachers through their initial teacher education?
- What level of integration should there be between initial teacher education providers and schools?
- What balance is needed between understanding what is taught and how it is taught?

The Australian Government's policy on teacher education seems to be building much more securely on a rational analysis of current practices. This is perhaps partly because NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia have recently developed new policies on teacher education. The Australian Government may also be deferring to work undertaken by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). For example the institute has developed Australian accreditation standards for initial teacher education programs and is currently developing national selection guidelines for admission into initial teacher education and a national approach to professional experience, as well as literacy and numeracy assessment for teacher education students.

Regulation and quality assurance

Tensions if not contradictions are starting to emerge in the Coalition's policy on higher education regulation and quality assurance. The Coalition came to power enthusiastically adopting and expanding the former Labor Government's rationalisation and reduction of the regulation of higher education institutions. But this included weakening the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) whose maintenance of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and other standards many universities find

irksome. However, deregulating fees and making government subsidies available to all registered providers would increase the risk of the failures of standards and quality that led to TEQSA's establishment in 2011. So over time the Coalition may come to strengthen TEQSA, just as it first weakened and is now strengthening the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), which regulates vocational education.

International education and student mobility

The Coalition has also largely followed the Labor Government's streamlining and rationalising of international education. It is changing regulations to make it easier for private providers to recruit international students.

The Coalition's new Colombo plan must surely win a prize for the most extensive and long lasting favourable coverage for the least funds allocated. The government has committed \$100 million over four years to fund about 60 scholarships a year to support Australian students spending a semester of study and undertaking internships in the Indo-Pacific. The plan has been widely praised by academics, administrators, universities, analysts, journalists and overseas governments. Yet the existing global student mobility programs are mostly unnoticed though they support 5,000 Australian students a year to study overseas at a cost of \$16.5 million or \$66 million to support 20,000 students over four years. The new Colombo plan was very astutely designed and planned by Julie Bishop as shadow then Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Research and industry innovation

The Coalition continued the Labor Government's location of responsibility for science and research with the Minister for Industry, but removed 'science' from the minister's title, much to the annoyance of some. The Coalition's industry innovation policy (Australian Government, 2014) continues some of Labor's policy, seeking to better integrate it with vocational education and research. Thus the industry growth centres in the Coalition's policy seem to be adaptations

of the industry innovation precincts established in Labor's industry and innovation statement (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013: 17-22).

The Coalition is seeking to integrate university research with industry innovation, which has been generally supported by, for example, Universities Australia and the distinguished scientists on the Commonwealth Science Council which replaces the Prime Minister's Science Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC). However, it is not clear that this would be desirable if it continued the reduction in the proportion of pure basic research conducted by universities.

Pure basic research has fallen from 40 per cent of all higher education research in 1992 to 24 per cent in 2012. This fall hasn't even been in favour of strategic basic research, which has also fallen, from 24 per cent to 22 per cent. Instead, a much higher proportion of higher education institutions' research has transferred to applied research, which has increased from 30 per cent to 45 per cent. Applied research and experimental development are now 53 per cent of all higher education's research.

Many including the expert science members of the Commonwealth Science Council have observed that pure basic research is needed to foster major innovations such as Wi-Fi, which emerged from CSIRO's research in radio physics. The major reduction in higher education's pure basic research orientation at least warrants discussion. Before starting to 'focus' government funding on university research there should be a discussion of how much and what type of the nation's research should be undertaken in universities, and how much and what type of research should be undertaken in other bodies such as government research agencies and business.

Conclusion

In its first year in office the Coalition has built on current practices and developed Labor's policies in many areas of higher education such as teacher education, regulation and quality assurance, international education and student mobility, and research and industry innovation.

Yet assessments of the Coalition's performance in this, and possibly in any subsequent term will be dominated by the Coalition's radical proposals to change higher education financing. The radical nature of those proposals ensures that there are strong views on their merits. The same was true of former Coalition Minister for Education David Kemp's Cabinet proposal in October 1999. Yet as radical and as unpalatable as those proposals seemed in 1999, a decade later key parts were recommended by Labor's Bradley review of Australian higher education and introduced by the Rudd-Gillard Government. Perhaps Minister Pyne's proposals will similarly seem progressive in a decade.

Gavin Moodie is Adjunct Professor of Education at RMIT.

References

- Abbott, Tony (2013) Address to the Universities (sic) Australia higher education conference, 28 February, Canberra.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014) Research and experimental development, higher education organisations, Australia, 2012, catalogue 8111.0.
- Australian Government (2014) Industry innovation and competitiveness agenda. An action plan for a stronger Australia, retrieved 14 October 2014 from <http://minister.industry.gov.au/node/502>
- Coates, Hamish and Doughney, Lachlan (2014) Higher education: in need of national conversation, *Professional Educator*, issue 7, pages 19-21.
- Commonwealth of Australia (2013) A plan for Australian jobs: the Australian Government's industry and innovation statement, retrieved 16 April 2013 from <http://www.aussiejobs.innovation.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>
- Commonwealth of Australia (2014) Towards responsible government. The report of the National Commission of Audit, retrieved 1 May 2014 from <http://www.ncoa.gov.au/report/phase-one/part-b/7-13-higher-education-arrangements.html>
- Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (2014) Issues paper, retrieved 14 October 2014 from <http://www.studentsfirst.gov.au/teacher-education-ministerial-advisory-group>



Higher education in 2015 – transition or reflection?

PETER NOONAN

Gavin Moodie's article on page 22 of this edition provides an excellent summary of the Federal Government's far-reaching proposed changes to higher education funding in Australia and the process by which those proposals were developed. If implemented these changes would take effect from 2016, making 2015 a critical transition year for higher education institutions in Australia.

Should the changes not proceed, 2015 will be a year when the higher education sector itself and the major political parties should reflect on the latest in a long line of failed proposals to establish a sustainable and bipartisan framework for higher education funding in Australia.

Legislation to give effect to the Federal Governments proposed changes, announced in the Federal Budget, was still before the senate at the time this article was prepared. Public indications were that the legislation to give effect to fee deregulation will be blocked in the senate. However, there is a prospect that the extension of the demand-based higher education funding system, to sub degree courses and to a broader range of institutions than the existing group of (primarily) public universities might proceed even if fee deregulation is blocked.

Nevertheless measures to extend the demand-based system involve additional budget outlays. With savings not possible through reductions in course subsidy levels as proposed in the budget (as these are set in legislation) and with the government determined to achieve its planned budget savings, the demand-based system may not be extended even if the legislation permits.

The lack of clarity about subsidy levels, student contributions and eligibility creates a climate of unprecedented uncertainty for public universities, private universities and other accredited higher education providers, including TAFE institutes offering higher education programs.

For public universities the uncertainties include:

- The level of public funding per student across their course profiles.
- Related to subsidy levels, the extent to which they can adjust student contributions to offset any reductions in funding and increase revenue and, how they should price those adjustments.
- For some universities, whether they can extend subsidised courses into Associate Degrees and Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas beyond the current three per cent student load cap set by the previous government.
- The level of future indexation of public subsidies– which over time involve substantial revenue.
- Whether institutions will be required to direct some of the revenue growth to student scholarships.
- If subsidy levels aren't reduced, whether equivalent savings will be achieved through reduced student enrolments (which would have to be implemented through reduced first year intakes).
- Whether or not they will face competition from new providers.

These uncertainties have made budget planning almost impossible in public universities.

For higher education providers outside of the publicly-funded system, the uncertainties include:

- The threshold question as to whether or not they can or should access public funding.
- The rules and guidelines applying to entry into the publicly-subsidised market including quality assurance and compliance requirements.
- Public subsidy levels which are likely to be less than those applying to universities.
- Requirements for scholarship schemes.

For potential future students the uncertainties are even sharper. They include likely fee levels, whether or not long-term bond interest or CPI rates will apply to their Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt and for some students, whether or not they will have to pay a fee surcharge for their income contingent loan.

Some of these uncertainties will be clarified once the legislation has been debated and a vote taken in the senate. However the government's response to any amendments is another matter.

In the medium to longer term, even if the legislation is passed in its current form, it is probable that the current and future governments, in the light of experience and in pursuit of further budget savings, will make further changes. For example,

the proposed new subsidy levels cannot be regarded as set in stone if fee increases result in windfall revenue gains to universities.

Potentially the entire framework for higher education funding might be overturned if and when there is a change of government.

The Report of the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee into the proposed changes is instructive in this regard. The extent to which entirely different conclusions were reached by the major political parties from the same evidence presented to the committee is stark.

The government members of the committee unsurprisingly supported the legislation and recommended its passage. However, they proposed guidelines to address concerns relating to the proposed scholarship scheme as it applies to regional or low Socioeconomic Status (SES) students, the establishment of a structural adjustment fund to assist universities to transition to the new system, reconsideration of the proposed long term bond interest charge on HELP debt, and the recovery of debt from graduates working overseas.

Largely dismissing concerns about potential high level fee increases as 'scaremongering', the government members concluded that:

In addition, competition for student enrolments will ensure that providers keep costs in check. It is not logical or in providers' interests to make education prohibitively expensive (Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee (2014) p. 28).

They also highlighted the fact that access to higher education would continue to be free at the point of entry.

Also strongly supporting the contention that the current demand-based funding system was unsustainable in the future, the government members cited evidence from the Department of Education about projected expenditure increases, almost unanimous evidence about the long term deterioration in per student funding levels and continuing reliance on revenue

from international students to subsidise courses for domestic students.

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) members, in their dissenting report, argued that there would be little price competition based on previous experience in Australia and overseas and that universities would generally price at similar levels with high fees being set by the most prestigious institutions as a benchmark.

They also largely dismissed concerns about the long term sustainability of the demand-based funding system, highlighting the increases in per student funding levels under the previous Labor Government. Citing analysis by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) they also argued that public universities collectively achieved an operating surplus of \$1.8 billion in 2012, suggesting that it was the proposed cuts to subsidy levels that would create a crisis in higher education funding rather than the settings under the current system.

The ALP members also opposed the proposed changes to extend subsidies to sub degree programs (arguing that this would result in cost shifting by the states from VET to higher education) and to other higher education providers. They argued that:

If the government's plans are realised, Australia would essentially have a voucher system of funding undergraduate education, where Commonwealth subsidies become no more than vouchers, cashable with a myriad of providers, dubious or otherwise. This is a recipe for decline, if not disaster (Senate Committee, p. 98).

In their dissenting report, the Greens reached similar conclusions; specifically citing the proposed pricing structure at the University of Western Australia to support their contention that fees would rise to almost \$100,000 under the new system, arguing for significant increases in public investment in universities (and even raising the prospect of the abolition of student contributions). The Greens also opposed the extension of subsidies to non-university providers.

However, these differences need to be looked at in perspective.

On the major underpinnings of higher education funding—the continuation of the demand based funding system and the availability of income contingent loans—there is important bi-partisan support.

However, there is no agreement across the political parties about the range of courses and institutions the demand-based system should apply to; even though the Bradley Review recommendations encompassed non-university providers and sub degree programs.

Nor is there agreement about the structure and level of per student funding through public subsidies and student contributions.

These differences then influence the extent to which the parties accept that there is a major problem with higher education funding in Australia in terms of the sustainability of the demand based funding system in terms of budget outlays and the financial sustainability of individual institutions.

However, we do know that since the Keating Government reduced indexation levels, public subsidy levels have been eroded through the application of lower indexation levels and reductions in public subsidy levels by both major political parties. We also know that all future governments face both pressures to reduce the level of the budget deficit and enormous pressures to increase outlays in other areas including school funding.

The uncertainties around future arrangements for higher education funding in Australia and the polarised views of the major political parties do not bode well for a *long term, sustainable and predictable funding* for higher education argued for in Universities Australia's submission to the Senate Enquiry (Universities Australia, 2014, p.14).

In fact the current imbroglio is hardly surprising as the history of proposals for reforms in higher education funding in Australia - post the introduction of Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) and the relative funding model associated with the Dawkins reforms of 1989 - have been largely ad hoc and incremental. ►

► This is despite the fact that there have been five major reviews into higher education financing since 1998 with each review using extensive consultation processes, submissions modeling and analysis.

However, outcomes from those reviews have either been not considered or rejected, partially implemented or have fallen well short of expectations with the exception of decisions of the Rudd Government to introduce a demand-based funding system a policy reaffirmed by the current government.

The major policy shortcoming has been the failure by governments to establish a transparent and sustainable higher funding framework encompassing public subsidies and student contributions.

The major problem with the current higher education framework and the government's proposed reforms is that the purpose of both public subsidies and student contributions and how they should be set are entirely unclear.

As Norton argues:

Funding per student is still largely based on a late 1980s expenditure study, modified by a 2005 increase in student contributions and a few ad hoc changes. It has nothing to do with current costs, nothing to do with the standards universities are expected to meet, and nothing to do with the kind of education students might want. It is vulnerable to arbitrary, budget-driven, cuts, like Labor's April 2013 efficiency dividend (Norton A, 2014).

Public subsidies in any form of service provision require a clear rationale linked to public policy outcomes with subsidies set on a transparent basis linked to costs and outcomes

Student contributions should also relate to relative costs and benefits. These can and in the future should include the costs and benefits flowing from the specific pedagogical approach and provision of services by individual institutions. Student contributions already vary significantly between courses and there is no clear rationale why they shouldn't vary between institutions - as long as differences relate to the costs to institutions of the level and quality of services they provide and student outcomes.

“ *The major policy shortcoming has been the failure by governments to establish a transparent and sustainable higher funding framework encompassing public subsidies and student contributions.* ”

The problem arises when fee deregulation is argued for as an apparent end in itself and as a cure all for the future of higher education, but without any constraints on price or clear benefits to students from potentially significant increases in fees or evidence that significant price competition will exist.

Equally the long-term sustainability of the demand-based system in terms of even current subsidy and student contribution levels and indexation arrangements cannot be dismissed. Nor can the long-term financial viability of individual institutions be dismissed by reference to the operating surplus of the sector as a whole. This assumes that the 'surplus' can be appropriated from some institutions and applied to others - which the Commonwealth Government has no power to do.

The level of public subsidies and student contributions can be informed by modeling of future growth requirements and the likely impact of these requirements on budget outlays, including growth in the level of HELP debt, and returns to students over their working lives. Models of this kind have already been fully or partly developed.

Should the government's proposed changes to higher education funding be blocked, or only partially implemented, 2015 should be treated as a year in which all parties take a step back from

their current positions, with a view to developing on a bipartisan basis on long term higher education funding framework. It will require the ALP to think through the kind of system it will want to inherit if and when it wins office in the future, and the government to rethink the overall design of its funding package so that the likely costs and benefits to students are far clearer.

This in turn will require higher education peak bodies and leaders to be transparent in how they will apply both subsidies and revenue from student contributions to improve student experiences and outcomes and outcomes from the community more broadly.

Peter Noonan is a Professor of Tertiary Education Policy at the Mitchell Institute at Victoria University. He was a member of the Expert Panel for the Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley Review).

References

- Davis G 2014 <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/deregulation-uncertainty-leaves-melbourne-university-unable-to-budget-20141031-11f3kb.html#ixzz3lcnemKvY>
- Norton A 2014 *Political stalemate leaves higher education exposed* Australian Broadcasting Commission The Drum accessed at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-29/norton-political-stalemate-leaves-higher-education-exposed/5850448>
- The Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee (2014) *Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014* [Provisions] Report Parliament House Canberra
- Universities Australia (2014) *Submission to Senate Committee Inquiry into Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014* Canberra

A young educator's year in review



JACQUELINE MAGEE

During its first year, the Federal Government has formed clear education policy priorities and seemingly pursued them with gusto. *Students First*, the Coalition's education policy platform released in August 2013, has four key pillars 'proven to deliver better education outcomes': a robust curriculum, teacher quality, parental engagement and a move to greater autonomy for schools. While the potential of these pillars to support student outcomes is complex and reinforced by research evidence to varying degrees, the government has certainly delivered on its promise to form and maintain its four priorities. A cohesive vision to underpin the policy platform and shape school-level practice, though, is missing.

The priorities have been writ large through the announcement and delivery of a review of the national curriculum, along with the establishment of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), consultation with experts to determine strategies for parental engagement, and the introduction of the Independent Public Schools policy.

However, the current government has not effectively pursued a preliminary and politically necessary policy priority, the neutralisation of the school funding 'issue'. The 2011 Review of Funding for Schooling refocused the attention of education stakeholders on the potential of a restructured model of school funding to degrade the pervasive, statistically

significant link between socioeconomic status and student outcomes. *Students First* indicated the Coalition's intention to match the funding commitment of the Labor Government in an offering of certainty and stability to teachers, principals and parents. The eventual announcement that any increases in school funding would be tied to inflationary measures from the 2017/2018 financial year fell well short of the aspirational needs-based model outlined in the Gonski review. The Coalition Government stumbled at the school funding hurdle, as did the former Labor Government, who constrained the review from the outset with the 'no schools worse off' provision.

For a young educator with an abiding interest in education policy, the enduring bipartisan inability to effectively reform the complex, inaccessible and inequitable school funding structure is symptomatic of a broader problem with the current government's education policy efforts over the last year.

While I have only worked in education for a handful of years, I have been struck by the absence of an abiding vision for future generations of young people to anchor my role and sustain my purpose. The partisan and sectoral interest that is seemingly inherent to Australian education policy is both disappointing and fundamentally disconnected from the realities of teaching at the chalkface.

While the *Students First* platform is clear and each policy pillar has ostensibly been pursued over the course of the last year,

the education platform of the current Federal Government, like those of most State Governments, lacks a long-term vision for what we want teaching and learning to become in our schools.

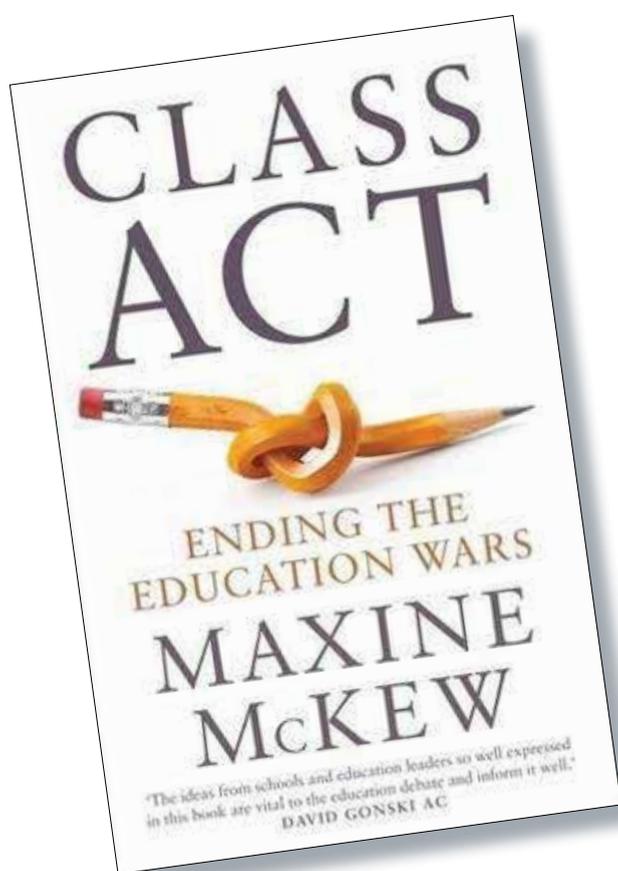
The four pillars of *Students First* do not represent a cohesive or aspirational vision for the future of education in Australia, particularly in the context of a confused and politicised funding model that struggles to reflect what is valued. The federal policy platform should provide some indication of what educators, parents and young people should expect the system to achieve; it should also offer a narrative of where we have come from and where we are headed.

I received news of the Review of the National Curriculum like a blow to the stomach, not because I was especially wedded to its content, but because of the enormous time and effort that had gone into its adaptation and rollout at the school level, potentially so quickly undone by changes to the political environment. On reading the review, though, I was buoyed by its discussion of the purpose of education, and the need to establish what we collectively value in education at a national level. Along with a great number of my peers, I would be excited to participate in the conversation to establish a long-term, non-partisan plan for supporting teaching and learning in the classroom to really put our students first.

Jacqueline Magee is the Policy Manager for the Centre for New Public Education at the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA).

Class Act: Ending the education wars by Maxine McKew

Book review by Ian Keese



Maxine McKew (2014) begins her book by drawing attention to the fact that over fifty years, Australian schools have moved from a predominantly public school system to one of the most fragmented in the world. In *Class Act: Ending the education wars*, she notes that while there have been some gains overall, there has been growing inequity and an increasing decline in the overarching quality. There are world class teachers and some world class schools, but Australian school quality is highly variable.

As Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE), puts it succinctly in his introduction to the book...the Finnish have created a system where the 'best' school is the closest one, we are a long way from being able to say this in Australia'.

If every child is to be able to attend the 'best' school, three things are needed. The first is for funding equity to happen and for Federal and State Governments to implement the Gonski reforms, even if in a tight budgetary system. This means redirecting money away from some of the best-resourced schools. McKew notes that Minister Adrian Piccoli in New South Wales is already implementing the Gonski model without waiting for the Federal Government to get its act together.

The second is for State and Territory Governments to focus on directing material and human resources to where they are most needed—money by itself will not solve anything. And finally, nothing will be achieved without strong leadership at school level. This is where *Class Act: Ending the education wars* becomes particularly relevant.

In the first half of her book McKew focuses on six schools within the primary and secondary, Catholic and government school sectors in NSW, Victoria and ACT and one independent public school in WA. In five of these, a gifted leader has inspired a team to transform what would have been seen as a 'problem' school, to one where students are achieving success far beyond what their Socioeconomic Status (SES) ranking might indicate, while in the sixth—Garran Primary in Canberra has underachieved at the higher end.

In my opinion the most inspiring is Our Lady of Mount Carmel Primary school in Waterloo located in inner Sydney. At this school 60 per cent of students are

**The Australian College of Educators (ACE)
proudly presents a unique opportunity to
engage with colleagues and explore...**



EDUCATORS ON THE EDGE: BIG IDEAS FOR CHANGE AND INNOVATION

***ACE 2015 NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN BRISBANE
24 & 25 SEPTEMBER***

Educators across all sectors are adapting to changes and challenges (including technological, economic and social). Through adopting innovative approaches, educators are now at 'the edge' and going beyond it to improve student learning.

ACE's 2015 National Conference will provide educators the perfect forum to share and highlight cutting edge, creative and innovative practices, nationally and globally.

The **ACE 2015 National Conference – Educators on the edge** promises to be an inspiring and forward looking event.

Block out these dates in your diary and keep informed by visiting the ACE website **www.austcolled.com.au** for further details as the program unfolds over the coming months.

in the lowest SES quartile and 69 per cent are Indigenous. The Myschool website indicates that this school now far outperforms similar schools. McKew also discusses how outside organisations can provide key support. It is good also to note that the funding provided by the Catholic Education Commission per student is 50 per cent more than the ACT Government provides to Garran: directed funding remains part of the answer to the school quality question.

There are lessons to learn from all the schools studied in McKew's book, and one of these, is that transformation cannot take place overnight: years of hard work are involved. Another is that change

can only succeed when staff are working as a team.

In the second section of her book, McKew provides studies of eight 'thought leaders' in education. Each chapter focuses on one aspect of quality learning: Linda Darling Hammond focuses on teaching as a 'Team Sport'; John Hattie discusses measuring quality teaching not by what the teacher does, but by the impact teaching has on students, and Ken Boston's focus is on education as a public good.

McKew combines academic rigour with her journalism skills making this book eminently readable by both academics and the general public. My only quibble

is with the cover, the subheading 'Ending the education wars' and the illustration of a knotted pencil belies the strong positive message that the book provides.

Ian Keese BSc, BA (Hons), Dip Ed, FACE, was a secondary school history teacher, and is now a writer and commentator and Chair of the ACE Policy Committee.

Class Act: ending the education wars

By Maxine McKew

Melbourne University Press 2014

\$19.99 RRP

Australian College of Educators

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

Contact Details

Phone	03 9035 5473
Fax	03 9341 6021
Email	ace@austcolled.com.au
Web	www.austcolled.com.au
Postal address	PO Box 73 Carlton South VIC 3053
Street address	Level 5, 100 Leicester Street Carlton VIC 3053

Board

Chair	Professor Stephen Dinham OAM FACE Associate Professor Tania Broadley MACE Mr Peter Jacob MACE Mr David Kronenberg MACE Professor Bob Lingard MACE Dr Norman McCulla FACE Ms Bronwyn Pike MACE Ms Annette Rome FACE Mrs Cristina Sandri FACE Professor Erica Smith MACE
-------	---

National Council

TAS	Dr Jillian Abell MACE
WA	Associate Professor Tania Broadley MACE
NSW	Mrs Heather Causley FACE
QLD	Mr Patrick Elsworthy FACE
SA	Associate Professor Susan Hyde MACE
VIC	Dr Catherine Scott MACE
ACT	To be advised
NT	To be advised

Fellowships Committee

Chair	Dr Margaret Batten AM FACE Dr John Grant FACE Ms Bronwyn Pike Dr Alan Rice AM FACE
-------	---

Publications Committee

Chair	Dr Norman McCulla FACE Dr Elaine Blake FACE Ms Kira Clarke MACE Associate Professor Susan Krieg MACE Ms Paola Ghirelli Dr Julie Rimes FACE Dr Glenn Savage MACE
-------	---

National Office

Chief Executive Officer	Ms Catherine Pickett
Manager communications & publications	Ms Paola Ghirelli
Member services & events manager	Ms Elise McLellan
EA & administration manager	Ms Jessie McFarlane
Policy officer	Ms Maren Klein
Membership administration assistant	Ms Catherine Keely
College archivist	Mr Tony Ryan FACE

Membership

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

- the opportunity to contribute to an informed advocacy body for the education profession
- the entitlement to use the letters MACE as a recognised, professional post-nominal
- opportunities to network with your colleagues and cutting-edge presenters at ACE conferences and events
- an annual subscription to *Professional Educator* as well as free or discounted access to a range of other ACE publications.

