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What is the  
future of  
Aboriginal  
education?

What is  
the role of  
vocational  
education for  
the labour  
market?

What does  
globalisation  
mean for  
Australian  
civics  
education?

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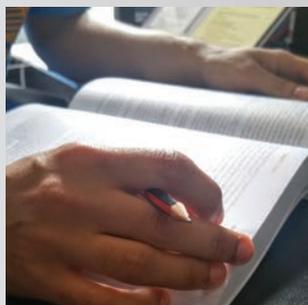
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## Timely questions for our education

This is my final editorial as ACE National President. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have the opportunity to serve as both Chair of the ACE Board and as National President over the past two years. I look forward to continuing to serve on the board for the next two years as Immediate Past President under our incoming President and board Chair, the Hon. Bronwyn Pike, MACE. Bronwyn brings a vast amount of experience and expertise to the role, ranging from classroom teaching and her role of Minister for Education in Victoria, to active participation on a number of key boards and many other roles. I am very much looking forward to working with Bronwyn and to her leadership as we continue to build ACE as an important and influential voice for the education profession.

As announced at our recent successful 2015 National Conference, I am also pleased to welcome Professor Dianne Mayer, MACE to the ACE Board as Deputy Chair and President-elect. Di is Dean of the Faculty of Education and Social work at the University of Sydney and also brings significant national and international experience and expertise to the leadership of ACE. Di will also chair the ACE Policy Committee from 2016 and at this juncture I would like to warmly thank Ian Keese, FACE who has completed his two-year term as Chair of this most important committee. Ian has done a great job in establishing and leading what is now one of three key ACE Committees. The others are the Membership and Awards Committee, ably led by Bronwyn Pike over the past year and now, I am pleased to announce, to be led by Associate Professor Tania Broadley, MACE. Our Finance Committee

has and will continue to be led by Peter Jacob. Peter has given great service to ACE both as Chair of the Finance Committee and as a key board member.

We will also be welcoming two other new board members in the new year, Rachel Hunter, MACE who is the current Chair of the Board of the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), along with a record of other significant appointments in education and the public sector more generally, and Dr Catherine Scott, MACE current Victorian President of ACE and 2016/2017 Chair of the National Council. The National Council is made up of the State and Territory Presidents plus the National President and President-elect and the Chair of the National Council is also a member of the ACE Board. I would like to thank Pat Elsworth FACE, our current Chair of the National Council, for his great leadership of the council over



ACE National President, Professor Stephen Dinham, FACE and incoming President the Hon. Bronwyn Pike, MACE

the past two years. Pat will stay on for another year as a board member. He has also chaired our National Conference Working Group for the past year and I'm very pleased that Pat will continue in this role as we plan for the next conference to be held in Sydney on 26-27 September, 2016. The re-establishment of National Conferences to form part of the education calendar in Australia has been an important and successful initiative.

I would also like to acknowledge once more the leadership and contribution to ACE of Professor Bob Lingard, FACE. Bob came into the presidency at a challenging time and had a major influence on consolidating and moving the College forward during time as President and as Immediate Past President. Bob has earned a rest from board responsibilities, although I am sure he will continue to serve ACE in various ways.

I sincerely thank all those who have contributed to the various National Committees, Working Groups and Taskforces over the past year. As a professional organisation that seeks to be independent, informed and influential, our membership is our greatest asset and the calibre of our Members and

Fellows is second to none in Australian education. I would also like to thank all the Presidents and Committee members who have contributed to the success of our State, Territory and Regional Groups. Without your energy, enthusiasm and commitment, there would not be an Australian College of Educators.

The last four years or so have been marked by a greater presence and influence for ACE in Australian education and the organisation has built a solid foundation for future growth. There have been some exciting developments such as the introduction of Associate Membership (AACE) for those engaged in teacher pre-service education. We are actively seeking to engage more with both early childhood and VET educators, in part through our board members Rachel Hunter and Erica Smith respectively. There are some significant developments planned for 2016 that you will hear about shortly.

We are an organisation of committed volunteers, but we also depend on our National Office staff, and I would like to thank our CEO Catherine Pickett, our Manager of Operations, Finance and Planning, Katherine Wilkinson,

Paola Ghirelli who is our Manager of Communications and Publications, Elise McLellan our Manager of Member Services and Events, Jessie McFarlane, our EA and Administration Officer, our Policy Officer Maren Klein and our Membership Administration Assistant Catherine Keely. Our National Office staff has faced significant challenges over the past four years as we have developed new policies and procedures to better serve our members and to advance the mission of the College. Also special thanks to Tony Ryan, FACE, our volunteer College Archivist. We have a rich, diverse and complex history and contribution to Australian education that needs to be preserved, recognised and utilised by future scholars.

I have no doubt missed mentioning many people who have and continue to make an outstanding contribution to the College. Thanks to you all and for your contributions to Australian education more generally.

**Professor Stephen Dinham OAM, FACE**  
ACE National President

# What does globalisation mean for Australian civics education?

EMILY MARGRET-GAY



*Whereas citizenship previously served the patriarchal modern state and its capitalist classes, it must now reflect the globalising imperatives that are creating the conditions of possibility for new identities and new working conditions. For some theorists this means uncoupling nationality from citizenship and promoting global citizenship and responsibility. For others it demands a deepening of one's democratic citizenship of a nation. (Matthews & Sidhu 2005: 55)*

As noted above by Matthews and Sidhu, in the past few decades, rapidly increasing processes of globalisation have led to subsequent conflicts in discourse regarding what it means to be an Australian 'citizen'. Historical conceptions of citizenship and civic duty to a specific, bounded nation are considered by some to be outmoded and inadequate in addressing the needs of a globalising world, with phrases such as 'global mindedness', 'global citizenship', and 'cosmopolitanism' proliferating in both policy and school documents. Others, however, believe that forces of globalisation increase the importance of

continuing such traditional conceptions of citizenship to ensure Australia's strength and global security.

Education, seen by many as a major vehicle through which citizens are created, is at the frontline of tensions between nationalist and cosmopolitan ideologies, as demonstrated in educational discourse and policy. And whether this needs to be the case remains unclear, yet given its importance, further exploration and discussion of Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) in Australia is warranted. In particular, the question that arises is 'does the current CCE curriculum help students to develop not only into active 'Australian' citizens, but also into active members of the broader global community?'

The following sections will briefly explore the concept of globalisation and give an overview of civics education in Australia. This will then lead into a discussion of 'global citizenship' and Global Citizenship Education' (GCE), how they are leading to the increased incorporation of global themes into civics education in the current Australian Curriculum, and why this a trend that should most certainly continue.

## Globalisation and education

In order to consider the changes brought about by globalisation, some understanding of what is meant by that specific term seems necessary. Despite its ubiquity, globalisation remains a contested notion. Broadly, it represents not only tangible shifts in transnational economic activities, political discourse, and cultural configurations. It also represents continuing advances in information communication technologies (ICT) and a particular ideological construct and 'social imaginary'. Although various conceptions and forms of globalisation remain hot topics of debate, it is arguably certain that many issues are no longer nation-bound but comprise transnational dimensions, requiring transnational responses.

Consider, for example, the global mobility—both physical and virtual—afforded by the increasing ease of access to domestic and international travel, and, of course, the veritable boom in ICT since the 1980s. Whilst this mobility, or 'access' to the world, has allowed for unprecedented rates of migration and other transnational social and economic activities, it has also allowed inequity and



inequality to flourish on a global scale. It is increasingly recognised that many globalising processes, far from creating a 'world community', are significantly widening the gap between the 'haves and have nots'. It becomes clear, then, why traditional 'nation-centric' conceptions of citizenship and civic duty are disputed. As Hughes (2001: 8) says:

*It is now impractical in the extreme to think that peaceful societies can be built in isolation. The relationship with others is as important beyond national borders as it is within them.*

The corresponding implications for education abound. Education must now not only provide students with the knowledge they will require in their individual future careers and endeavours, but also those skills and understandings that will help to ensure a peaceful future for all humankind. Thus, whilst calls are made for increased attention to be given to literacy and numeracy standards, simultaneous calls are being made to elevate civics education to the same level of importance (Tudball 2009).

### Civics education in Australia

Civics education in Australian schools can be traced to the early 1900s when the New South Wales primary school syllabus included a 'Civics and Morals' course that saw students learning about imperial history, as well as civic responsibilities, duties, and patriotism. In the 1930s, after being deemed too nationalistic, most of these courses were abandoned, retained only in Victoria as 'Social Studies' and later as 'Politics' during the 1970s.

The 1980s saw a re-emergence of civics and citizenship at the national level due, in part, to increasing discourse on the political relations between the State Governments and the Federal Government, Australia's place in Asia-Pacific, as well as the impending Bicentennial. In the late 1990s and 2000s the 'Discovering Democracy' (1997-2003) program and the 'Values Education Good Practice Schools Projects' (2005-2006; 2006-2008) saw the Federal Government allocating funding towards

the development of CCE in Australian schools. These programs, however, did not stop the diminishment of civics at many locations, nor did they lead to improvements in civic knowledge. Indeed, national testing conducted at the time for the future showed that participants' understanding of the history, mechanics and structure of Australia's Government and political systems was significantly lacking (Tudball 2009, for full report ([www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/CCE\\_Forum\\_Report\\_2007.pdf](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/CCE_Forum_Report_2007.pdf))).

It is argued by Tudball (2009), amongst others, that civics education in Australia has historically been quite 'thin', with a narrow 'Australia-centric' focus in regards to content, and with few opportunities for students to experience and engage in citizenship activities. What is required, if we are to improve students' civic knowledge, is the adoption of 'maximal' citizenship education, an apparently more activity-rich inclusive civics education that 'promotes, values-based, interpretive approaches that encourage debate and participation in democratic processes' (Tudball 2009: 36). A key aspect of this approach is its call for recognition of globalising processes and their inevitable implications for CCE.

Key educational theorists and policymakers have ostensibly heard this call, with global themes and cosmopolitan perspectives proliferating in policy and other documents in the past decade. *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young People* (MCEETYA 2008: 4), for example, says:

*Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship.*

However, calls for a more globally oriented citizenship education seem not to have led to an integration of global themes into current CCE, but rather a wholly separate, and much contested, stream of learning called GCE.

## Global Citizenship Education (GCE)

Global citizenship has been, and remains, a topic of much debate. Despite being an item of apparent priority in governmental and school policy around the world it lacks clear definition. Citizenship is not only associated with an intangible feeling of connection and responsibility towards a certain nation, but also represents a legal status with a concurrent set of legal obligations and rights. This often leads to global citizenship being labelled as impracticable, illogical, and impossible. However, it is commonly understood that the term 'global citizenship' does not imply any legal status. Rather, it is broadly defined as a sense of connection to a common humanity, a global perspective that sees the relationship between local and global, and a way of acting based upon a respect for universal values and rights.

Such conceptions of global citizenship have had a significant impact on the educational landscape, with schools, governments, and non-governmental organisations around the world placing it and global citizenship education as major agenda items in policy and discourse. For example, the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2014: 5) states:

*Beyond cognitive knowledge and skills, the international community is urging an education that will help resolve the existing and emerging global challenges menacing our planet, while wisely tapping into the opportunities it provides. In this context, there is growing interest in global citizenship education (GCE), signalling a shift in the role and purpose of education to that of forging more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies.*

Yet, the abstract nature of global citizenship and GCE as concepts results in different interpretations and understandings between and within contexts, leading to significant confusion regarding how global citizenship may be facilitated. The answer to this question is beyond the scope of this article, and indeed a single answer seems unlikely. As mentioned earlier, the more pertinent question is: 'Does the current CCE curriculum help students to develop not only into active 'Australian' citizens, but also into active members of the broader global community?'

## CCE in the current curriculum

The current Australian Curriculum, following the goals set out in the Melbourne Declaration (2008), has made CCE a clear priority. Indeed, CCE is now placed as its own area of study within the Humanities and Social Sciences

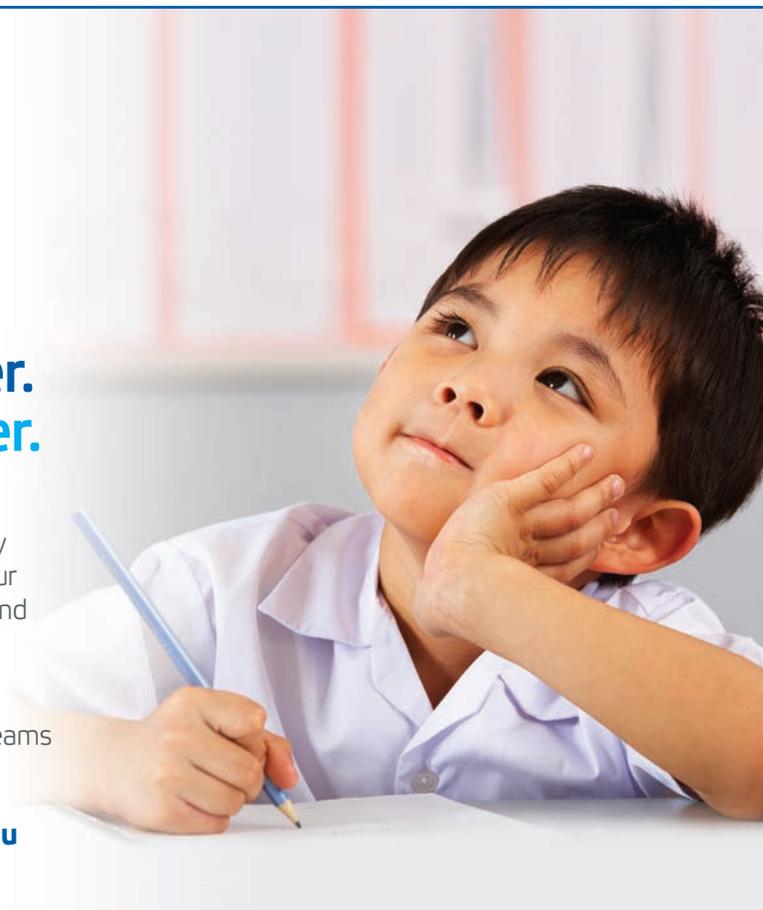


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(albeit awaiting full approval). Its 'content descriptions' and 'key inquiry questions' are consistent with previous iterations of CCE in Australia. For example, the key inquiry questions for Year 6 include:

- *What are the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government/ in Australia?*
- *How are laws developed in Australia?*
- *What does it mean to be an Australian citizen? (ACARA 2015: 294)*

However, CCE in the current Australian Curriculum also includes broader attempts to incorporate global themes. For instance, Year 10s compare the key features of Australia's system of government with another in the Asia region. They are also asked to investigate 'Australia's role and responsibilities at a global level' (ACARA 2015: 314) and explore the key inquiry questions:

- *How is Australia's democracy shaped by the global context?*
- *How are government policies shaped by Australia's international legal obligations?*

Particularly in Years 6, 9, and 10, the curriculum consistently requires students to make links between local, regional, and global citizenship formations. Moreover, the cross-curricula priorities and general capabilities in the curriculum recognise globalising processes and encourage students to explore them across disciplines with the explicit intent of developing traits associated with global citizenship. For instance, the 'Intercultural Understanding' capability:

*... involves students in learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect... It assists young people to become responsible local and global citizens, equipped through their education for living and working together in an interconnected world. (ACARA 2015: 2578)*

However, also evident in the curriculum are the missed opportunities to more cohesively integrate GCE and CCE. As with previous CCE curricula, the current iteration still tends toward nationalist

ideologies, particularly in Years 3, 5, 7, and 8 where few (if any) global themes or connections are included. Indeed, even when global themes are explicitly explored, they are done so from a firmly Australian perspective. This is problematic. A defining feature of many conceptions of 'global citizenship' is the ability to recognise and celebrate cultural difference, and without the maintenance of local customs and cultures there can be no difference to celebrate.

This does not, however, mean that nationalism in the CCE curriculum should go unchecked. It is often assumed that the ever increasing cultural diversity and global mobility brought about by processes of globalisation will lead to a weakening or diminishment in the regulatory capacities of the nation state and a natural increase in global citizenship. The evidence would suggest, however, that more often than not it often has the opposite effect, with governments attempting to 'compensate' for (and capitalise on) processes of internationalisation and globalisation by increasing nationalist agendas and pressuring education systems into supporting the social and economic interests of the nation (Matthews & Sidhu 2005). It is, therefore, a mistake to assume that a multicultural, globalising context is sufficient to precipitate more agential forms of global citizenship.

### Where to next?

What is needed is a more significant and explicit commitment to forms of GCE and their integration into the CCE curriculum in Australia. Using globally oriented vocabulary in the curriculum, whilst a positive step, does little to ensure that students are engaged in learning activities that develop their sense of responsibility both as a local and global citizen. This is especially the case if those global themes are limited to specific (and few) year levels. Whilst the general capabilities and cross-curricula priorities suggest that incorporation of global themes should occur throughout all disciplines, given the already controversial amount of content teachers are already expected to deliver,

it is unrealistic, to expect that this will (or should) transpire in all cases.

CCE and GCE are unquestionably important and should also be inextricably linked and inherent to the curriculum. The Australian Curriculum has made positive steps in incorporating global themes into certain content areas, as well as into the general capabilities and cross-curricula priorities. Nonetheless, there is scope and opportunity for continued in-depth discussion into ways that GCE and CCE may be meaningfully and effectively integrated in order to facilitate the development of our young people into active Australian *and* global citizens.

**Emily Rankine is a recent graduate from the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. She is currently teaching in the Western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria.**

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CHRIS SARRA

# What is the future of Aboriginal Education?

As we contemplate the future in Aboriginal education and the inevitable challenges ahead, it is worthwhile taking a moment to reflect on where we've come from. For me I still remember very well the day I finished high school way back in 1984. I rode out of Kepnock State High School in Bundaberg on my blue pushie, kind of nervous about what was to come next. On that final ride out of the school gate I gave no thought to the notion that my brother and I were the only Aboriginal students in Bundaberg completing Year 12. By some elements of chance, and lots and lots of hard work I went on to have a very wonderful and well-documented career as an educator. My sense of purpose in life became about standing up for my people, and standing up for my profession. Thirty years later 55 Aboriginal students from Bundaberg would complete Year 12. ▶



As an educator I came to understand that the challenges in and around education for Aboriginal students are in many ways dramatically complex. Clearly we have made many leaps and bounds forward, yet we continue to have a long way to go. To me it seems the fundamental challenge into the future for all of us in this space is the same challenge that has underpinned our gross failure in the past. Specifically this challenge calls out our core beliefs and attitudes about Aboriginal children and the extent to which this manifests as behaviours of collusion with low expectations and a negatively stereotypical view of them as learners.

Describing it as systemic or political failure often euphemises the challenge. This is somehow convenient, as it renders nobody accountable for the gross failure we inflict upon Aboriginal students and their communities. Yet whilst I hesitantly concede there is some validity to this notion, the ultimate truth here is those same failing systemic and political structures are made up of individuals. The actions and behaviours of every individual within those structures, signal whether they are colluding with that negative stereotype, or whether they are committed to enabling transcendence beyond it.

Education literature, government reviews and conversations about our children abound with such complexities ranging from language differences, racism, low expectations, curriculum relevance, impoverishment and the perils of remoteness, to name just a few. In most cases there is of course a sense of validity and differential depth to these complexities, but experience tells me that at some level it becomes profoundly simple. As educators, we either believe Aboriginal children can learn; or they cant! It really is that simple.

On reflection upon times well before my own high school days, an abhorrent lack of belief in the learning ability of Aboriginal children was obvious. Various accounts of history help most of understand there never really has been a golden age of Indigenous education under the missionaries and governments of the last century. For instance,

Protectorate reports for Doomadgee describe missionaries delivering an education focused primarily on religion and enabling Aboriginal people to serve white Australians by working in the pastoral and agricultural industries, or as domestic servants. Often the school was closed for much of the year, the curriculum was very limited, and qualified teachers were not available until 1957. Of course while Aboriginal education limped along, the Protectorate Reports were full of the rhetoric of the importance of education. Even today we can point to well meaning policy documents nourished with ambitious rhetoric about Aboriginal education, yet severely malnourished on substance and any means to hold individuals accountable for outcomes.

Mindful of my very strong desire to transcend such a negative and toxic dialogue about our gross failures in Aboriginal education, it is worth drilling down a little on just some of the dynamics that enable many of us to embrace and tolerate such failure. My intent here is not to dwell on such negative dynamics and be accused of colluding with a sense of 'victim status', but rather to offer an honest identification and appraisal of such filthy beasts, so they can inevitably be slayed as they must be, from the landscape of Aboriginal education.

Regrettably even today, there are many reasons to question the extent to which all of us as educators harbour a strong belief in the learning ability of Aboriginal children. While data in some areas signal we are making great progress, it also offers clues that still too many of us subscribe to that stereotypical view about Aboriginal learners as chronically disengaged and chronic underachievers. The presence of this widely held, yet thankfully diminishing, negative view enables teachers, principals and bureaucrats in the systemic chain to shift the blame for 'our' failure here, onto the complexities of children and their communities. This way of thinking is problematic.

To be blunt, we as educators are actually paid to be in the relationship with Aboriginal learners. With this comes professional incumbency to reflect on our own practices and contemplate what

we must change to enable our children to learn best from us. Of course there are complexities that do exist, often beyond our control, but I have seen enough now to know that when teachers and principals work hard to establish very positive relationships with children and parents, even the most complex circumstances can be overcome. On occasions teachers and principals have suggested to me that children are disengaged from their classrooms because of prolific levels of alcoholism, gambling, domestic violence and sexual abuse in the community. My usual response to such 'awfulising' is...

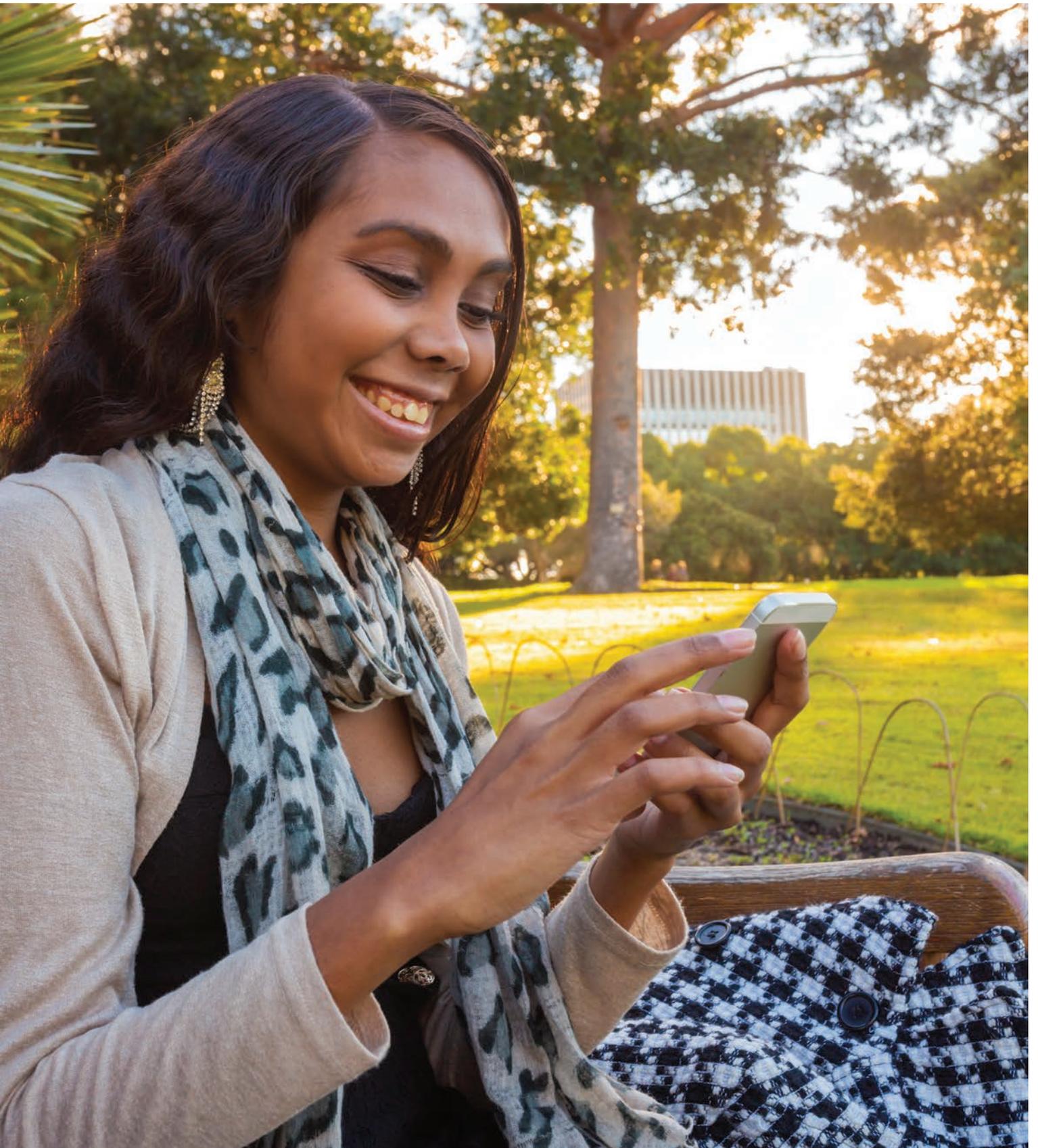
*If what you describe to me is actually true, and your children are choosing to locate themselves amongst alcoholism, gambling, domestic violence and sexual abuse; what does this actually say about the quality what you offer to them here at school?*

It is a line of enquiry brutally understood, but not easily embraced. Those with courage can and do embrace this challenge, and in a sense purge their own sense of professional impotency in order to reclaim their professional integrity and agency. Aboriginal education is complex in some ways but ultimately the formula for success is very simple; and whilst the formula for success is simple, the work is always very, very hard.

Against this background it is easy to become frustrated at some of the other dynamics that have stifled our efforts to transcend the toxic stench of low expectations of Aboriginal children. Specifically I refer here to the problem of the political appetite for quick fix gimmicks like 'cracking down on truancy', and so called 'magic bullets'.

One of the worst of these gimmicks has been the imposition, at great public expense ([www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/leading-indigenous-educator-chris-sarra-slams-teaching-approach-used-in-772m-cape-york-trial/story-e6freoof-1226490937841](http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/leading-indigenous-educator-chris-sarra-slams-teaching-approach-used-in-772m-cape-york-trial/story-e6freoof-1226490937841)), of the Siegfried Engelmann model of Direct Instruction ([chrisarra.wordpress.com/2011/05/26/not-the-only-way-to-teach-indigenous-students/](http://chrisarra.wordpress.com/2011/05/26/not-the-only-way-to-teach-indigenous-students/)). It is important here to distinguish between direct instruction, the effective classroom pedagogy, and Direction Instruction, the





▶ product bought from the US. This is the latest of several exorbitantly costly 'magic bullet' products brought to Indigenous Education by Indigenous person, Noel Pearson. Noel's background is in law not education and this might explain his claims for the efficacy of Direct Instruction, the United States product, in his Quarterly essay, Radical Hope. I am well-supported by Australia's best principals and teachers who readily join me in considering such claims as naïve, signalling a gross lack of insight into the realities of working in a challenging school environment. While some try to describe this approach as 'radical' and 'innovative' it actually reflects a return to teaching approaches of more than 70 years ago. The latest data from the Education Queensland shows quite clearly that DI, the US product, whilst costly, has not proved to be the 'magic bullet' (research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=indigenous\_education) that Noel claimed it would be (www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=439). Curiously such reports do not get the same flamboyant media exposure as those cherry picked incidences of moderate success, which, while welcomed, do not adequately provide a sense of the overall success or failure of this approach. The problems with this 'magic bullet' product are extensive. Besides the cost, it is essentially a remedial product, which effectively prescribes the words spoken by the teacher and the student, sucking every aspect of magic out of the teacher/student relationship. When contemplating the pursuit of excellence with children this teacher/student is the very aspect that must be enhanced, not undermined nor scripted. Accordingly the product, even if executed superbly, will only ever deliver very basic learning outcomes. My very strong belief is that all Aboriginal children, regardless of where they live, deserve education programs and approaches that deliver excellence, not mediocrity.

While Noel might be praised for bringing attention and political interest to the challenges in Aboriginal education, there is room to seriously question those politicians who completely ignore any adequate sense of policy logic to buy

into policy and program approaches that are in fact proven to be ineffective. Again to be blunt, it seems to me as if some politicians lack the courage or intellectual ability required to put such things into logical policy perspective. I am also left wondering if some politicians are thinking,

*Hey... it's only black kids in remote communities! The main thing is it looks like we are investing money into this and if it fails we can always blame the community... again!*

The other 'big-ticket' item on the Aboriginal education policy landscape worth questioning is scholarships for Aboriginal children to attend so-called elite schools. Advocates for this costly approach will argue, sometimes rightly, that it creates a sense of choice and good opportunities for children to move beyond difficult and complex home and community circumstances. I get this to some extent but again I cannot help wondering about whether or not the substantial dollars spent on this approach, should be spent in local schools so that children and parents do not feel they have to leave their communities to access 'quality education'. I am also left concerned about the majority of children left standing on the runway in communities, not cherry picked for such an opportunity, and their human right to choose a quality education.

As I noted earlier, the formula for success in Aboriginal education is simple, and the work is very, very hard.

Having spent almost seven years successfully leading a team of hardworking, dedicated and passionate teachers and Aboriginal teacher aides at Cherbourg some years ago, and 10 subsequent years working with school and Aboriginal community leaders in more than 450 schools, I have developed a very strong insight into just how hard it is to achieve success here. I have also developed an uncompromising belief that regardless of the complexity of an Aboriginal child's home circumstances, achieving success certainly is possible with hard work.

The Stronger Smarter approach with educators across all parts of Australia, with its genesis in Cherbourg State School, has unlocked a newer, more positive and more honourable reality to emerge. It is a philosophical approach that honours a positive sense of cultural identity, as opposed to colluding with negative stereotypes; it acknowledges and embraces positive Aboriginal leadership, enabling innovative and dynamic approaches and processes that are anchored by high expectations relationships. High expectations relationships honour the humanity of others, and in so doing, acknowledge one's strengths, capacity and human right to emancipatory opportunity. It is an approach intent on doing things with Aboriginal people, not to them.

The future of Aboriginal education must be about authentic delivery of quality education and the pursuit of excellence for all Aboriginal children in all parts of Australia. It must be about innovative and dynamic high expectations relationships that take us as teachers and students into an exciting future, not a dreary and unsavoury past. It is fair to say there are some attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that must be purged from the Aboriginal education landscape. This is perhaps the greatest challenge as it calls into question some very long held beliefs about Aboriginal children that are no longer valid.

Today hard working and passionate educators from a range of complex schools and communities are delivering quality education and success to Aboriginal students. Teachers with low expectations and stifled beliefs about Aboriginal children are running out of places to hide. This is a good and honourable thing for Aboriginal children; this is a good and honourable thing for our profession.

**Chris Sarra is the Founding Chairman of the Stronger Smarter Institute, Caboolture, Queensland.**

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PIP ROBINSON



# What is happening in music education?

Australia is in a unique position in the world. It is full of possibilities and has the potential to be a country unlike any other. Implicit in this are a raft of factors, not the least being education in the school setting. The Australian Curriculum and Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), responsible for the development and implementation of the new Australian Curriculum, suggests that educational curricula act as vehicles for the transmission of beliefs and knowledge that are considered important and valuable by particular societies (ACARA 2013). Australia as the *Creative Nation* was first espoused in 1994 with the release of the Australian Government Cultural Policy. In the subsequent 2012 document entitled *Creative Australia* the Prime Minister of the time, Julia Gillard affirmed 'the centrality of the arts to our national identity, social cohesion and economic success' (p. 2).

Reading this, it could be assumed that Arts subjects in the school curriculum emphasise creative thought and processes, allowing students to explore their individual creative potential. However is this actually the case? What happens in the Arts in schools? What is valued? What impact do cultural influences have? Attempting to answer these questions probably raises more questions than provides answers, broader discussion is essential to understanding where Arts education is positioned in Australia, in particular the issues in terms of Music education.

## What is Australian culture?

My belief is that Australia has not yet developed a specifically identifiable 'Australian culture' but Australian society does reflect the internationalist nature of the world. It is a fact that the arrival and settlement of the first Europeans saw the inexorable decimation of the

Indigenous Australian cultures. The waves of subsequent migration and diaspora from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas have resulted in the development of Australia into a culturally diverse nation. We are uniquely positioned to draw on this rich cultural knowledge, school curricula generally revolve around notions and cultural ideals found in the Western European traditions. Surely the development of a rich and inclusive cultural identity should be engendered through our educational institutions. This can be achieved by drawing on the cultural knowledge and heritage, the arts and musical traditions of all members of Australian society.

## The nature of music

Central to any discussion about Music education is the issue of 'music'. My preferred way of viewing music is using the analogy of a garden. I lived in the country for 15 years and in that time



developed an acre of beautiful garden. However, I was constantly engaged in battle with one particular weed that would seemingly appear at will. When I attempted to dig it out, I discovered a vigorous network of roots: connected, disconnected, thick, delicate, but always popping up somewhere else. This weed had little rhizomes that allowed it to flourish and emerge unscathed despite my ferocious attempts to control it.

French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari refer to music as being rhizomic in nature and as a gardening musician I have to agree. They suggest 'the rhizome is organic...amorphous, promiscuous, even chaotic' (Jorgensen and Yob 2013 p.38). Similarly, Tenzer suggests:

*It is music's nature to fuse, recombine, and proliferate like genes. Musicians and composers, witting or unwitting, acting independently or constrained by beliefs and institutions, are the matchmakers in these sonic reproductive trysts: no human*

*intolerance nor any reservations about propriety stopped Spanish melodies from eloping with West African rhythms to form rumba in racist, socially segregated, late nineteenth-century Havana. (2006 p.17)*

Music continually flourishes, develops and expands. It holds the potential for development within its cultural and stylistic rhizomes and is essentially creative, but is this evident in music education?

### Value

Important questions concern what music should be included in the Music Curriculum and what is considered important or valuable?

The Australian Curriculum (2015) suggests dynamic exploration between the art forms, however, curricular timetabling within schools does not generally allow for this to occur in secondary schools. The Arts are more

likely to be integrated in primary schools, with some schools employing specialist teaching staff. The National Curriculum further states:

*In Music, students listen to, compose and perform music from a diverse range of styles, traditions and contexts. They create, shape and share sounds in time and space and critically analyse music. (n.p.)*

It is important to note that this curriculum has not yet been enacted into practice and as a result shows only possibilities at this point, rather than reality.

Although all policy documents outline the importance of creative activities in the music classroom, in reality many music programs are limited in this area. Debate continues as to what types of music should be taught in schools. Western classical music is the central pillar of many programs, yet others focus on jazz or popular music. Assumptions may be made about the levels of creativity in these approaches but this is open to debate. Just because a program is jazz or popular based does not necessarily mean that it takes a creative approach. The focus may simply be on recreating, rather than creating.

The validity of including popular music is sometimes challenged. Walker (2009) asserts:

*...popular music, its sources among the uneducated and oppressed, was seen as an educational panacea, because it eradicated the alienation supposedly caused by western art music, the music, traditionally of privilege an authority. (p.33)*

Despite this view, popular music is seen as an important and relevant part of an engaging Music Curriculum. The work of British educator Lucy Green (2008) has been central to the inclusion of popular music and informal teaching pedagogies in the school curriculum. My own teaching in schools using informal approaches yielded fascinating results, especially my recognition that as teacher I was programmed to intervene in student learning rather than allowing students to explore their own creative process (Robinson 2013). The classroom looked chaotic, but I learned that students explore creative and collaborative tasks

much more openly and productively when they are allowed to discover on their own terms.

Another issue is that of 'other' Music in the school curriculum: world music, folk music, fusion music. Sometimes they are included, but often teachers delivering music programs have little or no experience of these types of music and so they are ignored or avoided. Furthermore, diversity can masquerade as creativity. I believe that integrating cultural practitioners from the community in the more formal school setting would enable not only the sharing of knowledge and ideas but would help to preserve traditions within a creative framework in a shared understanding.

## Music education

Since the introduction of the high stakes NAPLAN testing in 2008 there has been a distinct move towards centrally focusing the school curriculum on the 'important' subjects of Literacy and Numeracy. Combine this with a changing world, where economic contraction is both a fear and a reality for many countries, and the Arts are placed in a more vulnerable position in schools. Arts programs are expensive to run. Music programs require a range of resources including musical instruments, IT software, sheet music, amplifiers, music stands, recorded music and texts. Recently I have heard of at least two large and thriving Music programs in Melbourne schools being cut to save costs, but at what real cost?

Lines (2013) suggests that despite the fact that each Music education context has its own unique conditions and musical expectations, music education thinking tends to be dominated by persistent and reactive ways of thinking that are based on certain conceptions on music, music pieces and musicians' (p.24). Narrowness of thinking can endanger creativity. Merrick (2012) goes further:

*While there are valid arguments to support the ongoing development of traditional instrumental programs and music curriculum in schools, universities and conservatories, we seem to be entering a new phase of music education in which music learning is becoming increasingly*

*aligned with the processes and new digital technologies that are becoming available in society each day' (p.672).*

While the emphasis on Technology is beguiling, the tendency may omit creativity from the process.

Many years of involvement in Music education have confirmed to me that the individual teacher is pivotal to a successful Music program; therefore music teacher education is a vital ingredient to a creative program. Music educators often come to pre-service education courses from quite narrow backgrounds, with set beliefs about what should be included in school Music programs. Teachout (2012) suggests 'for the most part, today's teachers were once students learning the same materials in the same ways that they are teaching today' (p.686). This is a common theme, but it is incumbent on pre-service Music teacher education programs to provide future teachers with the diverse tools, skills and approaches they will need to cater for the diversity they will encounter in schools. Educating teachers who are capable of developing Music curricula that enable students to explore creativity is the underrated key.

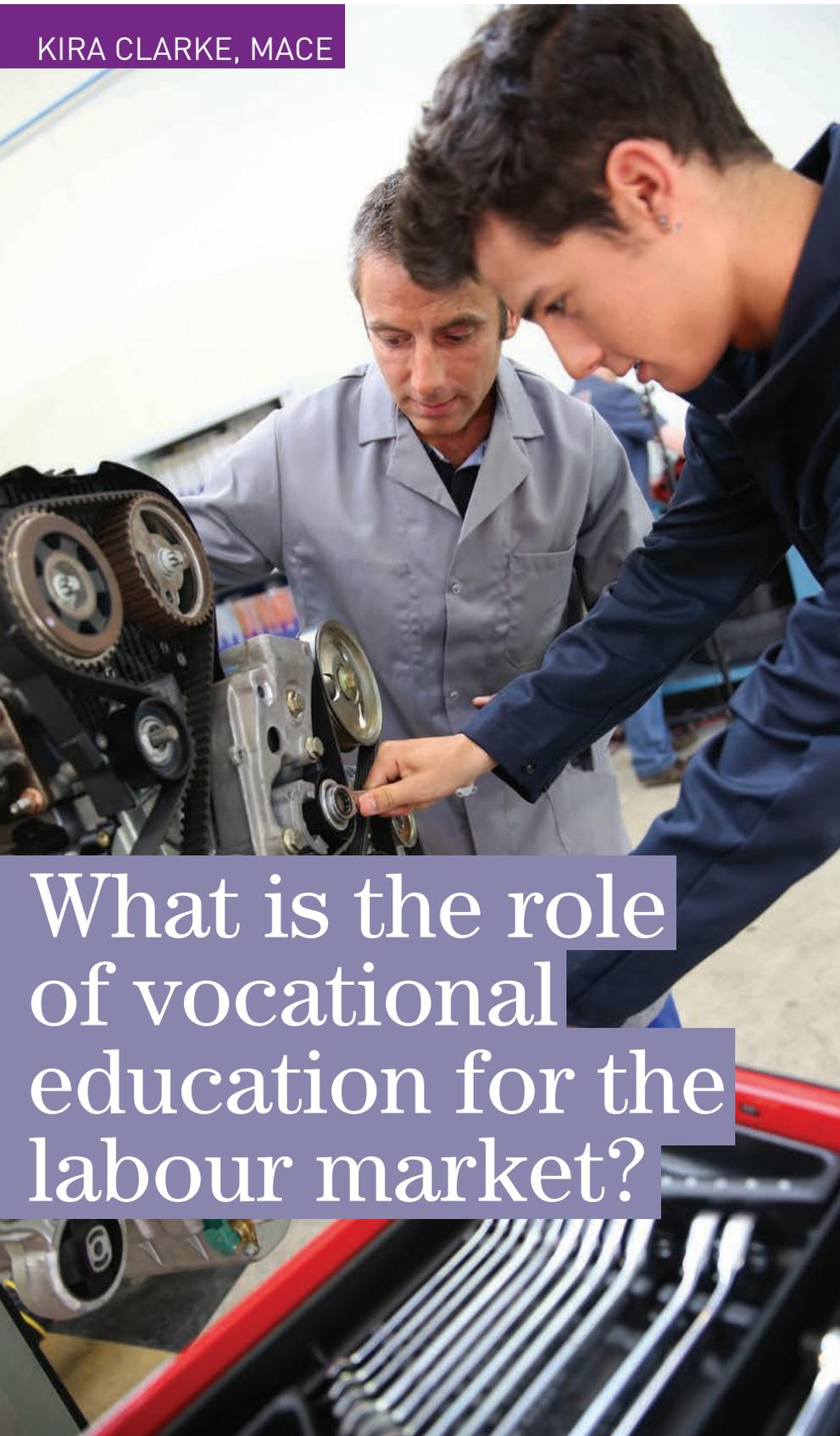
Unless one has personally experienced engagement in worthy and rich arts experiences it is very difficult to understand the transformative power that these can have. It is important to note that there is no age limit to this. Even quite mature adults can discover the creative power of music and experience the richness of musical engagement. If we limit the experiences of students in schools in discovering their musical and creative potential what will the future of this country look like? In investing in explorative, diverse, culturally inclusive arts programs in schools Australia has the potential to develop a nation of cohesive creative thinkers who embrace difference readily and can develop new ways of engaging with an ever-changing world. Well-designed, Creative Arts programs are positioned perfectly to enable this.

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KIRA CLARKE, MACE



# What is the role of vocational education for the labour market?

Education systems play a pivotal role in ensuring the development of skills and knowledge required to meet the demands of labour market growth and economic stability. In Australia, like in many Anglophone and European countries in particular, there has been a renewed policy focus on the role of vocational education for young people and for people with precarious or insecure connections to the labour market. There is a widening social and economic gap in occupational and educational attainment between those who participate in and complete post-school education and training and those who don't. Young people in disengaging from post-compulsory education face a difficult entry into the long-term labour market and an often-bleak economic future. As industrialized economies demand higher and more flexible skills, the negative impacts of being unskilled or lacking a post-school qualification are intensifying.

So what role is the Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector playing in supporting labour market entry, progression and security for a range of learners? Firstly looking at where the Australian training system is working well, then some challenges within the system that we should all be concerned about, and lastly some useful critical questions moving forward.

## Where it is working well?

There are several aspects of the Australia training system that are seen to be working well. Within contemporary Australian education and training policy, the VET sector is often conceptualised as an adult sector, providing post-school and higher level VET. The VET sector has been conceptualised as a key economic and human capital policy mechanism in several recent Federal and State/Territory Government initiated strategies. This includes the March 2014 announcement by then Federal Assistant Minister for Education, Sussan Ley, of a government initiative to boost the number of young people undertaking School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) during their latter years of school. Employment-based pathways are also on the political agenda at the state

level, with the Queensland Government investing '\$86 million over six years to create an extra 10 000 apprentice and trainee commencements' (Queensland Government 2014, p7) and the Victorian Government announcing in early October 2014, a \$5.2 billion investment, one of the aims of which was to create 60,000 new apprenticeships. There is an empirical rationale behind the political investment in employment-based training, with generally strong outcomes for apprentices who complete their contract of training. In fact, there is evidence that economic, social and life satisfaction outcomes for apprentices are on par with those who complete undergraduate degrees (Karmel & Liu 2011).

Demand for VET programs is also steadily growing, with more than 1.07 million enrolments in the first half of 2015 (NCVER 2015). There is particularly strong and growing labour demand for intermediate level skills, commonly those attained at Certificate IV level and above. Recent research by Gavin Moodie and colleagues (Moodie et al 2015) highlighted the need for vocational qualifications, particularly those at the tertiary level (for example Diploma level and above) to be reflective of both

the applied and theoretical demands of occupations. Achieving this requires investment from the full spectrum of social and economic partners, including educators and industry.

### Issues to keep an eye on

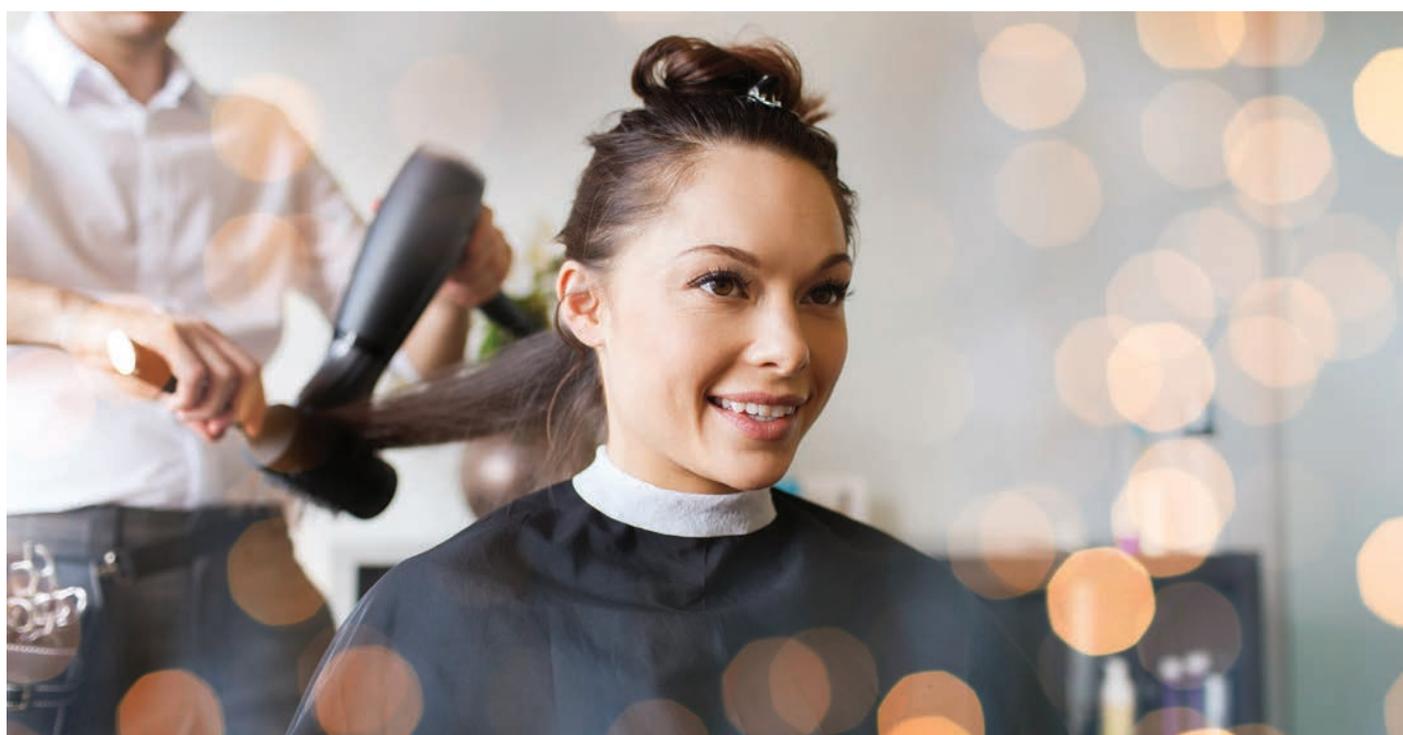
Australia shares much in common with European and Anglophone counterparts where 18 to 24 year olds both inside and outside of schools are increasingly accommodated within adult vocational learning environments and work-based learning environments.

This policy trend is sharpened against the backdrop of growing youth unemployment rates across the industrialized economies; school drop-outs consistently the most vulnerable to labour market exclusion. Youth unemployment rates have risen sharply in many Australian urban communities (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2014). It is in this hostile youth labour market context where stark differences between those with a post-school qualification and those without, becomes evident. One of the key challenges facing our training system is the problematic reliance on low-level qualifications as second

chance pathways for those who don't complete school or who complete school with low achievement. These low-level qualifications, at Certificates I and II level, have declining currency in the labour market.

Certificate I and II level qualifications are known to have weak labour market currency and poor outcomes for learners (Stanwick 2005; Stanwick 2006). This is particularly concerning for those learners who participate in low-level certificates as an alternative to completing high school. Almost half (46 per cent) of early school leaver VET learners come from the two lowest socioeconomic quintiles of (NCVER Vocstats Students and Courses 2014). For the predominantly low socioeconomic and low achieving cohort of early school leavers in VET, rates of completion of lower level qualifications (Certificate I and II), are also relatively poor (Stanwick 2005, Stanwick 2006), compounding the risks of undertaking these qualifications as an alternative to completing school.

A second issue that is often brushed aside, as a bi-product of broader social and systemic factors, is the gendered patterns of participation in VET programs. There is still strong gender segregation





in enrolments in particular fields of education in VET programs. Despite a strong policy-focus on traditional trades and growth Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) industries, participation data indicates that women are much less likely than their male counterparts to enrol in engineering, building and architecture, and science related fields. This ongoing pattern of gendered educational participation reinforces occupational outcomes, with women occupying more of the low-skilled and insecure jobs in competitive job market.

Finally, the media attention that has been given to stories about 'dodgy' VET providers, over the past twelve months, means that it is necessary to touch on the issue of the training market. In recent years, the market share of private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) has increased significantly; due in no small part to the introduction of competitive market based policies for funding and governance of VET systems at the state and federal level. Where young, at risk or unemployed learners have traditionally been viewed as a target cohort of the TAFE and adult and community education sectors, increasing numbers of these cohorts are undertaking programs within private RTOs.

Australia is not alone in this trend. Across OECD education systems, private providers are playing an increasingly significant role in the provision of post-compulsory education (Anderson 2007). This shifting landscape poses many implications for both public and private providers. There is demand for greater flexibility, more innovative and productive cross-sectorial partnerships and collaborations, and a growing need for the architecture to respond to the needs of growing numbers of disadvantaged learners' access VET programs.

### Questions moving forward

Moving forward, the myriad of different resourcing, curriculum, quality and provision challenges facing our training system all link back to a central tension—the often competing demands and needs of two users of the system—the learners and the employers. Key objectives of

an efficient, effective and meaningful training system must surely be the improved both social and economic mobility of learners and responsiveness to the needs of industry and employers. Reconciling this, often-competing objectives, is a challenge that the Australia training system has yet to fully come to terms with.

Future efforts to mitigate unemployment through VET as a policy mechanism must be cognisant of the need for foundation level theoretical skills as well as the development of generic employability skills and workplace capabilities. Research has affirmed the importance in the VET system of support for disadvantaged, learners through cross-sectorial partnerships and wider community networks (Brown & North 2010, Considine et al 2005). Research beyond the Australian setting has also pointed to the advantages of dual-system models of delivery that necessarily involve a blending of training and business involvement for the purposes of workplace training. While the central role of the Australian training system to ongoing economic and social prosperity is undeniable, the efficacy of the system in balancing the competing social and economic imperatives remains in question.

There is a strong body of literature examining the role of vocational education in reproducing or ameliorating social inequality (Rumberger 2010). There are two key perspectives that emerge from the literature. A group of theorists adopting a human capital theory approach argue that any knowledge and skills attainment strengthens an individual's labour market prospects (Shavit & Mueller 2000, Becker 1975, Rumberger & Daymont 1984). This approach to understanding the role of education in the school to work transition of young people dominated the policy discourses of Western education systems in the latter decades of the twentieth century (Krumboltz and Worthington 1999). A second group of theorists (Collins 1979, Iannelli 1997) point to the strong correlations between disadvantaged family background and participation in vocational education means. These scholars argue that the concentrations of disadvantaged young

people in vocational education programs works to reproduce social inequality and social exclusion.

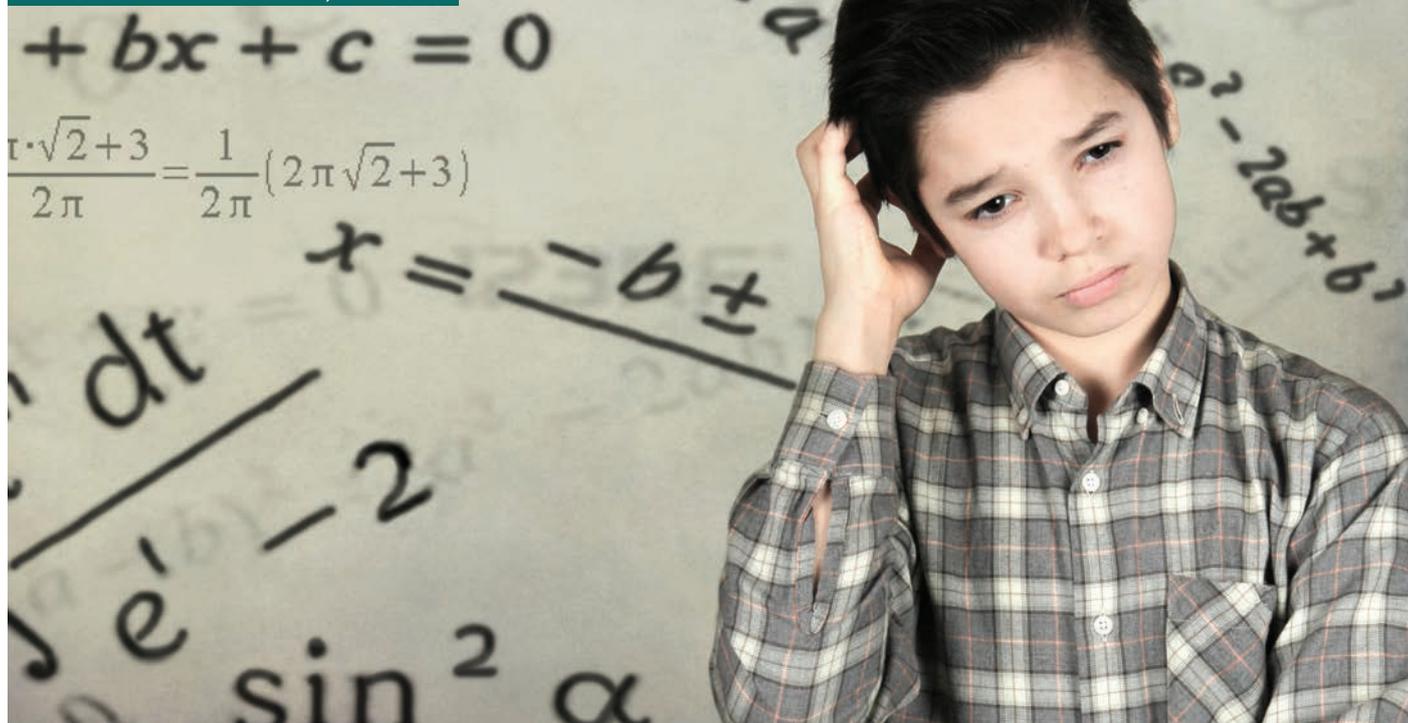
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# How big is the challenge of student engagement in today's learning?

TANIA BROADLEY, MACE



The topic of student engagement has received heightened interest in recent years, regardless of the sector, system or level of education. From schools through to universities, teachers and administrators alike are concerned with increasing the levels of student engagement in learning and teaching. While considering this, a response to increasing student learning, achievement and retention could be seen as a response to a more consumerised education system, where through the introduction of contemporary learning contexts, students have unprecedented choice in obtaining their qualifications anywhere in the world. While choice has never been greater, why then is there

importance of student engagement? Aristotle would say: 'For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.' So in a world where learners have such choice, would students choose to learn at a school or university where they are engaged in learning; where they are required to actively participate in a challenging learning activity; where they develop higher order thinking skills; and where they have the opportunities to interact and collaborate with peers and the teachers? Or would they prefer to be passive receivers of information, rote learning concepts and regurgitate the answers back to the teacher?

## What are the challenges for schools and universities?

Today, possibly the biggest challenge for schools and universities, is the importance placed on the level of student engagement as a measure of quality, which are often self-reported by existing and previous students. In Australia, the Federal Department of Education provides this data for the community to compare higher education institutions on a number of indicators, including student engagement (Australian Government, 2015). The recently released Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT), has further positioned the importance of student or learner



engagement as a measure of quality in higher education in Australia. This raises concerns around the very basic issue of defining student engagement. However of equal importance is the capacity to measure student engagement, where many measures are in fact student perceptions of their learning experiences. In schooling, Shernoff et al. (2003) applied the principles of flow theory to measure concentration, interest and enjoyment using a self-reporting instrument that predominantly relied on student perceptions. Similarly in undergraduate education in the United States, the National Survey for Student Engagement presents a range of indicators to the students who self-report on items such as the number of times they have 'formed a new idea from various piece of information' or 'reviewed your notes after class' (Indiana University, 2015). Further challenges for institutions are developing teachers that understand the need to change traditional teaching practice and providing them with sufficient time, funding and opportunities to access professional learning that will support this. In a competitive education market, where choice is colossal, it is more important than ever that student engagement is a focus for educational institutions.

### The three big ticket items for student engagement

Regardless of the mode of delivery, there are a number of key considerations to contemplate in contemporary learning and teaching that might assist with student engagement. Here are three big ticket items as a starting point:

#### 1. Active learning

The advent of the flipped classroom, which originated in K-12 schooling, has been one particular strategy being implemented by innovative universities both in Australia and internationally (Pearson, 2013). The learning design applied by the teacher means that outside of the dedicated classroom time, students are undertaking more individual and passive tasks such as

listening to lectures and reading texts. The time spent in class with their teacher and peers requires them to participate in more active learning where they collaborate with others in discussions, problem based tasks and projects. These pedagogical approaches are thought to engage students in higher order thinking within class and in turn, increase student engagement. Large universities such as Curtin and the University of Adelaide have already begun to phase out many traditional face-to-face lectures. Unless there is added value for students spending time in the lecture theatre, it is difficult to justify why it shouldn't be online. Even when working with teachers, face-to-face or online, students need to be actively involved in their learning to increase student engagement.

#### 2. Learning spaces

While changing pedagogy and learning design can increase student engagement, it is important that the physical space, whether face-to-face or online, be prepared to support the pedagogy. Rapid developments in technology to support online learning have meant that a skilled educator can provide an equivalent experience to that offered in a face-to-face classroom. Collaboration software, such as Webex or Collaborate, provide tools that allow teachers to operate in a virtual classroom environment in a similar manner to a physical classroom. At Curtin, we have recently implemented technology in classrooms that will allow online learners to participate in real-time face-to-face experiences with on-campus learners through a distributed learning environment. This experience has proven to engage students and provide diverse learning opportunities through connecting students across geographical locations. Refurbishing or building new learning spaces that support collaboration and technology enhanced learning is a critical investment for schools or universities. One might even propose that changes to physical learning spaces can actually assist drive some of the pedagogical change.

#### 3. Twenty-first century skills

Where a high school qualification or a university degree was once most important to demonstrate the achievements of our students, employers are focusing more and more on skills where students can enter their career with a base level of 21st century skills preparing them to work in teams and solve problems. Universities have traditionally listed a generic range of graduate attributes that should be included in a degree program. However, often these can be superficially represented. A good example of this is where group work is considered to be addressing the skill of collaboration. A task including collaboration is far more difficult to design than merely placing students in groups. Teachers require professional learning to understand how they can design learning activities which foster collaboration, knowledge construction, skilled communication, self-regulation, real world problem solving and innovation, and the use of technology for learning (not just replicating a paper-based activity).

While the challenge of student engagement is a relatively big beast to tame, many institutions appear to have started the journey. A large list of educational providers include language like 'student centred', 'engaging', 'relevant', 'innovative', 'accessible' and 'flexible' in their learning and teaching strategic plan documentation. This indicates that many schools and universities are aware of what students are looking for in their learning experience, what policymakers expect from them and are focusing on moving their institutions to offer such an experience.

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# What are the issues for digital education?

GERALD WHITE, FACE

**Here is one view of education issues in Australia today, focussing on school education and some related bodies such as Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA), educational administration and teacher education that support education. Firstly examining contradictory tensions between the simplicity and complexity (Snyder, 2013) of education, and then taking into account the current education climate arguing a case for two dominant issues that currently hinder national educational improvement and will continue to do so until they receive the attention and resourcing that they deserve and demand.**

Education is a simple yet complex endeavour which has become complicated; simple because education is about learning and teachers are provided to develop an environment for students that encourages, enables and

values learning. Education is a public good (Riddle, 2014) and not a commercial enterprise, nor an economic endeavour.

Education has become both complex, but also complicated through the need to address issues about funding, curriculum, teacher accountability, equity and the effects of technological disruption. To make a complex system work takes solid, experienced and educationally qualified leadership complemented by national educational leaders with vision and insight.

## The education environment

The quality, educational credentials and experience of teachers in schools has never been at such an all-time high with teachers required to have degrees to be registered and a proportion having post graduate qualifications and a number of years of experience (ACARA, 2014a). The same can be said of principals for whom the percentage with post graduate

qualifications may be even higher. School support officers can also become qualified for their role in education.

Professional standards for teachers, principals and for teacher education are articulated and implemented nationally (AITSL, 2014). The National Curriculum has been specified after extensive cooperation and agreement across all education jurisdictions including Catholic and Independent education authorities (ACARA, 2014b). Annual national tests of recall are administered to all students through National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for complicated political and economic purposes even though education is not a political or economic endeavour. Australia also participates in broad international comparisons (OECD, 2014) through a number of other mechanisms the best known is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a national test of a sample of 15 year olds. However, the best teaching tests for students are diagnostic assessments that teachers use to assess the level of learning in classrooms because those assessments are designed to improve student learning. 'Diagnostic assessments require information about relatively detailed aspects of learning... to establish and understand where learners are in their learning' (Masters, 2013, p. 6).

Education in Australia would appear to be mature, systematic, sophisticated, regularly monitored and constantly improving. And so it is. Why then do we hear public figures criticise and meddle in education rather than build on extensive research, proven quality and a solid foundation? For example, a former prime minister at a launch in the Northern Territory recently (ABC, 2015) suggested that schools should use 'direct instruction' instead of using progressive methods of teaching. While one method of teaching can be useful in some specific contexts, building on accepted educational research and successful innovation is the way to improve teaching and education. Research and innovation have shown very clearly what the issues in education are and how to improve schools and educational outcomes (Dinham, 2008).



## Equity

A proven key to achieve educational outcomes is equity (OECD, 2011). That is, the opportunity for educational success in learning for all Australian students. Student populations represent those who are disabled (physically or intellectually), who live in poverty, whose first language is not English, who are Aboriginal or who live in rural or remote locations (Australian Government, 2011). There is ample evidence of the national and educational benefits of addressing the learning needs of all Australian students. To achieve this will require special measures in funding and teaching strategies (Australian Government, 2011). Where all students have the opportunity of learning success then education outcomes are known to improve along with learning confidence and motivation.

However, for this to happen, schools need to be funded adequately and teachers need to have the opportunity and flexibility to address the needs of students and their learning. Rigid administrative control of curriculum and national testing, and rigid adherence to teacher standards, excessive teacher accountability and over-burdensome teacher reporting mitigate against addressing the needs of students. 'Too much accountability stifles innovation' (Fullan, 2014, p. 56). When the learning needs of students are constrained and their opportunity for learning success is limited, then educational improvement is stifled and motivation is diminished for both students and their teachers.

## Digital transformation

Although the digital environment began in the early 1970s, today the availability of digital information and social interaction are commonplace. In education, nationally driven determinist policies in 1983, 1996 and 2000 (Beale, 2014) attracted some attention and did achieve some notable research, innovation and examples of good practices in education. However, the debate about teaching and learning with digital technologies continued with evangelists and computer companies arguing the advantages and cynics trumpeting the problems and constraints (Beale, 2014). Then in 2007,

a policy by the national government for the distribution of digital devices to all Australian students from years 9 to 12, finally settled the argument. However, 'the focus was on rolling out computers rather than mapping any change in teaching and learning' (Beale, 2014, p. 152). Today, digital technologies are accepted in education and not just for economic savings purposes but also for the teaching and learning benefits they may enable (White, 2013, p.1). The problem now is how to transform traditional, hierarchical school environments to include digital technologies with normal teaching and learning practices (Laurillard, 2012).

Considerable work has begun on the transformation of schools towards digital normalisation although it is still not common practice because of the major cultural changes that are involved. These cultural changes are being driven by online professional development, personalised and collaborative learning, parent and community engagement, and online student text books, (eg free to students in Manitoba, Canada) all of which will require expert and sustained educational leadership. A number of pathfinder schools in Australia, the UK and the USA have done just that and taken teaching and learning to a higher level of engagement and achievement (Lee & Broadie, 2013). Researchers have isolated the stages that are involved in this transformation to digital normalisation as: early digital, digital, early networked, networked and finally digital normalisation (Lee & Ward, 2013, p. 8-9). Progressing through these stages of cultural transformation is a process that may take a number of years, argue the researchers. The rewards include a networked school that can foster collaborative teaching and learning, and embrace the diversity of its school community (Lee & Finger, 2010).

The information, social, collaborative and communication environments in which schools operate have changed dramatically since the turn of the century. They have become more diverse where print and digital environments now co-exist and in fact complement each other. As an example, this article is being written on a computer prior to printing

in preparation for editing and then it will be sent via digital networks to colleagues for review before being finalised and printed in this publication. The print and digital environments have both become standard in society.

Teachers and educational leaders need to be fully competent with both print and digital information skills needed in a transformational digital age (Koehler & Mishra, 2009), in order to properly develop engaging and effective learning environments and learning processes for their students. Teachers also need to be given the time and resources to further develop, discuss, share and hone their increasingly diverse skills needed for this transformation to occur (Lee & Finger, 2010).

The issue of equity for all students regardless of socio-economic status, location, disability, ethnicity and language is imperative in order to achieve successful learning outcomes for all Australian students. After all, our greatest future resources, as a country, are our students and if we fail them by not addressing equity then we have no-one else to blame for the consequences but ourselves.

There is also a necessity to maximise the transformational digital environment, while balancing the inherent risks and advantages, for teaching and learning. Progressing to a stage of digital normalisation will be a major cultural challenge for educational leaders but it is necessary in order to maximise opportunities for equity in teaching and learning. The social, vocational, scholastic and personal domains of our Australian society demand it.

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DAVID CURTIS

# What is the future of tertiary education in rural Australia?

## A rising tide does not float equity boats

**In considering access to higher education for identified disadvantaged groups; it is useful to examine the situations for regional, rural and remote students and for low-SES students together, largely because there is a strong association between location and SES. Low-SES families comprise about 33 per cent of non-metropolitan communities (Curtis, 2011). Further, it is necessary to consider policy settings for higher education and to evaluate the influences of those settings on disadvantaged groups.**

## Policy in higher education

A brief overview of selected major initiatives in higher education is warranted in order to establish the context from which the current situation has arisen. Three policy themes are identified, namely size, efficiency, and equity. Size may be taken as a proxy for investment (by the state and individuals) in future productivity, since higher levels of education are associated with greater productivity (Coulombe, Tremblay, & Marchand, 2004; Hanushek & Wößmann,

2007. The discussion of the important themes of quality and funding are not included in this article).

The Dawkins' reforms, best remembered for ushering in the unified national system of higher education, was designed to increase the size of the higher education sector and, by increasing its size, to create more equitable access (Dawkins, 1988). That policy paper refers specifically to increasing higher education opportunities for low-SES and non-metropolitan youth, although it made no specific policy recommendations to enhance opportunities for these groups.

Efficiency has been driven by competition policy. The National Competition Policy Review (Hilmer, 1993) began a conversation in Australia, aimed at enhancing economic efficiency, that has culminated in marketisation of goods and services, including higher education. The Productivity Commission (2014), in its submission to the Competition Policy Review, while advocating competition, recognised its limits especially in human services (health and education), noting informational asymmetry and the desire of governments to achieve equity objectives as likely contributors to market failure.

Treating higher education as a market is problematic, given the characteristics of competition in the sector and on a shortage of information. Marginson (1995, 1997, 2013) has long argued that the positional competition that characterises higher education leads to no real advantage to consumers. His position is supported by Norton and Carroll (2015) who show that attending high status compared with other universities yields a very small gain in initial and longer term earnings (3 per cent to 6 per cent, depending on whether earnings are adjusted for ATAR). Despite efforts to provide information to consumers, for example, through the Quality Indicators for Teaching and Learning website, Graduate Careers Australia and the Good Universities guides\*, students make course choices that do not optimise their returns. Moreover, institutional choice is limited by physical access, especially for non-metropolitan learners.

The *Review into Australian Higher Education* (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008) recognised the persistence of limited access to higher education among low-SES and regional and remote citizens. Bradley et al. (2008) recommended growth and equity targets. ►



The report recommended the removal of enrolment caps (Recommendation 29, pp.154-158) and this was enacted in 2012. For low-SES individuals, the report recommended that measures of SES should be based on individual circumstances rather than on postcode and that 20 per cent of higher education enrolments should be of individuals from a low-SES (lowest quartile) background (Recommendations 3 and 4, pp.39,45). Changing the basis for calculating SES has not occurred; it is impractical in large-scale administrative systems to collect the information required to provide sufficiently precise estimates of individual SES. It will be necessary to continue to area-based measures, but to recognise that they almost certainly overestimate the participation of low-SES individuals (James et al., 2008).

The Bradley et al. recommendations (16-18) on regional and remote higher education called for consultation and consideration of collaborative arrangements in provision, and exploration of the feasibility of a national

regional university (2008, pp. 111-114). These recommendations did not deal specifically with the barriers to participation experienced by regional and remote residents. There appears to have been little if any progress on these recommendations.

The then government's response (DEEWR, 2009) to the *Bradley Review* endorsed most of the 46 recommendations. The response designed to increase participation among low-SES learners included a component for partnerships between universities on one hand and schools or VET providers on the other. A larger funding allocation created incentive payments to universities for meeting enrolment targets. The effectiveness of this response is discussed below. The response to recommendations on the provision of higher education in regional Australia included a review of the loading that had applied to enrolments at regional universities and encouragement for regional universities to consider partnership arrangements.

A range of changes to student financial support were announced (DEEWR 2009, pp.35-38). These included relaxing the parental income test, reducing the age of independence from 25 to 22, the personal income test was relaxed, while the workforce participation criteria were tightened in order to improve the targeting of Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY payments. These changes were expected to improve the participation of non-metropolitan and low-SES individuals.

The removal in 2012 of enrolment caps (except in medical courses), enabling universities to enrol as many students as they believe they can accommodate in their various courses, has fuelled an increase in enrolments, but it is not clear that this rising tide as facilitated access for identified equity groups. This issue is explored below.

The current policy situation is unclear. The Government's stated position is that 'higher education providers such as universities, TAFEs and colleges in Australia would be able to set their own

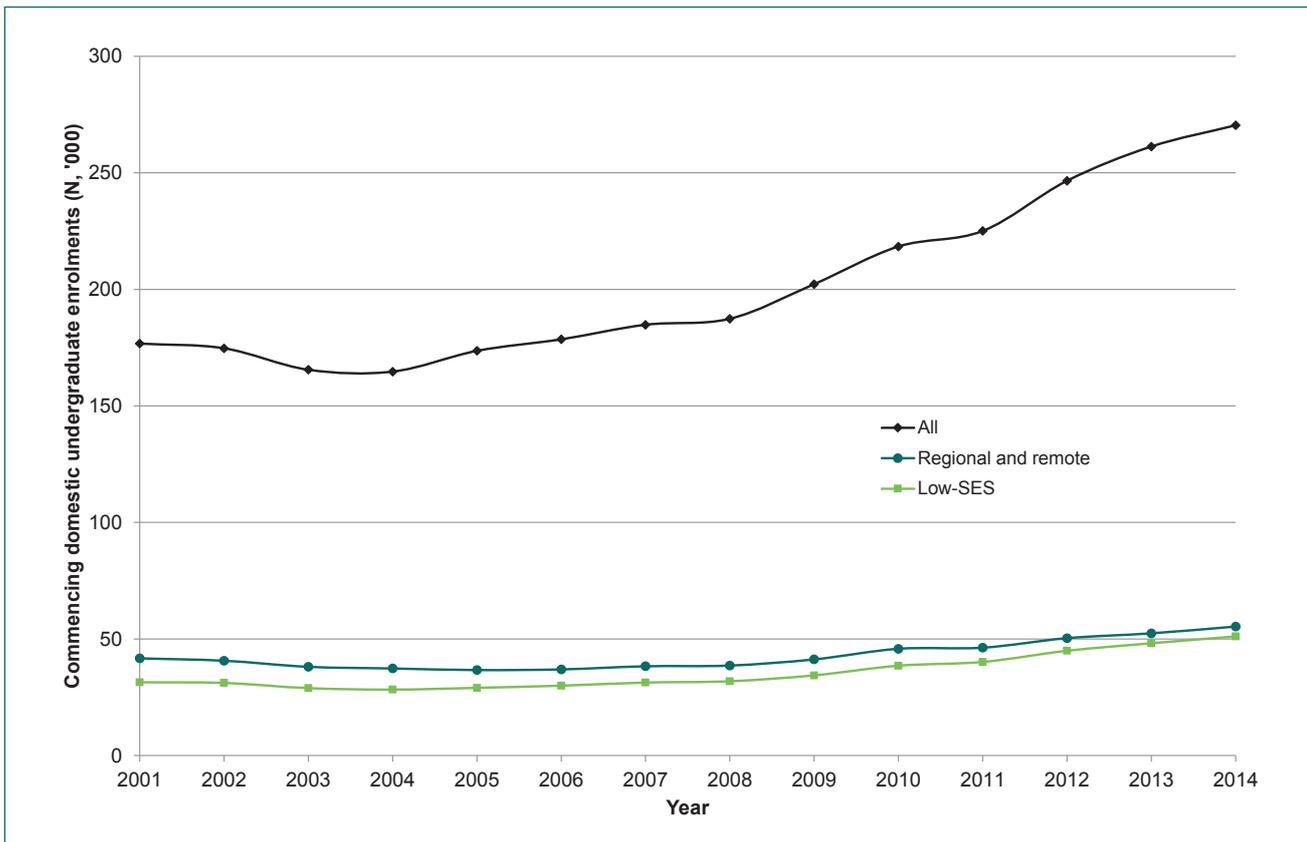


Figure 1. Commencing domestic undergraduate enrolments by selected equity groups (Source data: <http://docs.education.gov.au/node/38145>)

tuition fees.' \*\* This position represents a determination to proceed further in the marketisation of higher education. Originally, this policy was scheduled to be implemented from January 2016, but following opposition in the Senate, enacting this intention has been deferred.

### Evidence of change in equitable access to higher education

Given the policy changes implemented since the Bradley review, increased levels of participation in higher education by low-SES and non-metropolitan students might be expected. In order to evaluate this expectation, data on enrolments in higher education are used. Figure 1. shows higher education commencing enrolments for domestic undergraduate students between 2001 and 2014 for all students, regional and remote students (combined), and for low-SES students. After a decline in enrolments to 2003/4, overall enrolments have grown since 2005. A sharp increase in enrolments is apparent in 2012, corresponding to the removal of enrolment caps.

Although an increase in higher education commencements of low-SES and non-metropolitan students is apparent, it is not clear whether enrolments from these groups have kept pace with the overall growth in the sector. The proportion of non-metropolitan students declined from a little over 23 per cent to 20 per cent between 2000 and 2008 and since then has stabilised. It is worth noting that non-metropolitan individuals constitute 25.5 per cent of the population, and they remain under-represented in higher education.

The enrolment share of low-SES individuals declined from 18 per cent to 17 per cent between 2001 and 2008 then grew to 19 per cent by 2014. The location-based measures of SES (SEIFA, ABS, 2008) over-estimate low-SES participation (James et al., 2008). Thus, although the low-SES participation measure (based on postal area) has approached the 20 per cent target endorsed by the then Government (DEEWR, 2009), there remains a gap in the real (individually measured) level of participation.

### Attempts to enhance access for equity groups

The policy settings identified above create conditions that are expected to facilitate participation. The initiatives most likely to influence participation of low-SES and non-metropolitan individuals are the changes to Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY. In addition, the funding incentives to universities to enrol low-SES students encourage universities to improve access for these students. Universities' responses include schemes under which low-SES applicants gain bonus points that are added to their ATARs and outreach programs that involve mentoring of secondary students. Li and Dockery (2014) support admissions procedures that favour low-SES applicants.

In order to redress the lower levels of participation in higher education of low-SES and non-metropolitan individuals, it is necessary to understand their barriers to enrolment. For non-metropolitan individuals, barriers include limited social capital and therefore limited information and networks that provide inadequate information and support, lower aspirations for school completion and post-school study, lower achievement scores (for example ATARs), and lower career aspirations (Curtis, 2011; Curtis, Drummond, Halsey, & Lawson, 2012; Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman, 2002). Many of these barriers are unlikely to be addressed simply by making additional funding available.

Mentoring programs have been used extensively to enhance higher education participation among equity target groups (Gale, Tranter, Bills, Hattam, & Comber, 2010). Gale et al. observed that for mentoring and other interventions to be effective, they need to be implemented in early years of secondary schooling and they need to be sustained. Many programs do not meet these criteria. An exception is a mentoring program run in one rural and one low-SES school in South Australia (Curtis et al., 2012).\*\*\* This commenced with students in Year 9 at school and the mentoring continued weekly over seven school terms. Mentors were current university students who assisted students and provided information about being a university student. School students visited the

university campus twice. On four occasions, school students completed questionnaires that sought information on the perceived 'cognitive distance' of university and their likelihood of applying for university entrance on school completion. Students who were mentored showed reduced cognitive distance to university and an increased likelihood of enrolling. Thus, the mentoring appeared to address some of the barriers that deter non-metropolitan and low-SES students from higher education participation.

If the various policy initiatives worked as intended, a sharp upturn in enrolments of non-metropolitan and low-SES students might have been expected from 2010. There was an increase in commencements for both equity groups in 2010. However, this was largely reversed in 2011 before recovering in 2012, corresponding to the removal of enrolment caps.

Since 2008, growth enrolments of low-SES students have exceeded overall growth in domestic undergraduate commencements. However, this has not been the case for non-metropolitan students. For them, there has been growth, but in most years, the growth has been slower than the overall increase in domestic student commencements. Thus, we might conclude that the policy settings in relation to low-SES students with incentive funding for meeting low-SES targets has worked. However, it appears that the policy settings have not addressed the barriers that inhibit higher education participation among non-metropolitan individuals.

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\* See <http://www.qilt.edu.au/>, <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/>, and <http://www.gooduniversitiesguide.com.au/> respectively

\*\* See <http://www.education.gov.au/strengthening-higher-education-system>

\*\*\* Dr Aaron Drummond led the mentoring component of this study

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# What does resilience mean for the teaching profession?

SUSAN BELTMAN & CAROLINE MANSFIELD, MACE

**A key issue for the teaching profession in Australia is supporting and sustaining committed, motivated and passionate teachers who will continue to grow and thrive throughout their career. International research has shown that resilience plays an important role in sustaining teachers and that resilience has been associated with positive outcomes such as professional commitment and engagement, enthusiasm, motivation and job fulfillment (Day and Gu, 2014; Gu and Li, 2013). Resilient teachers may also promote positive outcomes for students in terms of academic achievement, social and emotional development and student resilience (Day and Gu, 2014).**

In Australia, research has focused on early career teacher resilience (Johnson et al., 2014, Mansfield et al., 2014) with findings highlighting the role of personal skills and strategies as well as relationships, leadership, school culture, policies and practices. Recent publications from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) also emphasise the role of building resilience skills in teacher induction programs (AITSL, 2014) and the importance of resilience for school leaders (AITSL, 2011).

Resilience has been understood as a psychological, multidimensional and socially constructed concept (Day and Gu, 2014) and typically refers to 'positive

adaptation in the context of risk or adversity' (Masten, 2014, p. 9). Drawing on an extensive review of the teacher resilience literature (Beltman, Mansfield and Price, 2011) as well as our own empirical research, we define resilience as the process by which individuals use resources and strategies to respond to challenges or risks.

In the context of the teaching profession, resilience involves the *capacity* of an individual teacher to harness personal and contextual resources to navigate through challenges as well as the *dynamic process* whereby characteristics of *individual* teachers and of their personal and professional *contexts* interact *over time*, to enable the

outcome of a teacher who experiences professional engagement and growth, commitment, enthusiasm, satisfaction, and wellbeing (Beltman, 2015). Building teacher resilience therefore, involves developing capacity for teachers to draw on personal resources (motivation, sense of purpose) and contextual resources (relationships with colleagues) and use adaptive coping strategies (help-seeking, problem solving) to effectively manage everyday challenges in their professional life.

Although resilience is often associated with 'bouncing back', we advocate that teacher resilience involves 'bouncing forward' (Walsh, 2007) whereby the resilience process promotes professional and personal growth over time.

## A starting point

Teacher education is often heralded as a logical starting point for building teacher resilience and studies of in-service teachers often recommend that changes be made at the pre-service level to better prepare teachers for the demands of the profession. Furthermore, aspiring teachers enter teacher education with a wide variety of life experiences that may or may not have afforded opportunities to develop skills and strategies associated with resilience. As teacher educators, we were concerned about the longevity of our graduates' careers and their capacity to successfully manage the multiple and diverse challenges of the profession. Responding to this concern we developed two consecutive projects to support pre-service teacher resilience.

In the *Keeping Cool* project (Mansfield et al., 2012b) we developed a website with an annotated bibliography and resources to support teacher resilience ([www.keepingcool.edu.au](http://www.keepingcool.edu.au)). We also conducted research with graduating and early career teachers and developed a four dimensional framework of teacher resilience (Mansfield et al., 2012a) which identified some key professional, emotional, social and motivational aspects of teacher resilience. Findings from this project demonstrated a greater need for resources to support teacher resilience, which led to *BRiTE: Building Resilience in Teacher Education* (Mansfield et al., 2013).

The BRiTE program ([www.brite.edu.au](http://www.brite.edu.au)) consists of five online interactive learning modules, which aim to help pre-service teachers build awareness of the skills and practices that will help facilitate resilience in their teaching career. The modules are informed by a fifteen-year review of teacher resilience research and connected to the profession through links to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), the Australian Curriculum and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

The BRiTE modules were evaluated in 2014, with 161 users providing ratings and comments on module content and online design. The overall mean for the rating scale responses was 4.17 on a 5 point scale (where 5 equals strongly agree). Some comments from the evaluation are included in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Brite's conceptual blocks of teacher resilience

## Building resilience

This module describes the conceptual underpinnings of teacher resilience that inform the BRiTE modules and uses our definition of resilience as explained previously ([www.brite.edu.au/BRiTE/Module1/TheResilienceProcess](http://www.brite.edu.au/BRiTE/Module1/TheResilienceProcess)). Users can reflect on what they know about resilience, why it is important for teachers, and how it may assist them in preparing for their future career.

## Relationships

This module explains how relationships are a critical part of the resilience process. Users are encouraged to consider strategies for maintaining support networks with friends and family, university colleagues, and social media networks, especially when work gets busy and stressful. Strategies for building new relationships with colleagues, mentor teachers and parents are provided as well as tips working in teams and establishing themselves in a new community.

*This module gave me some great suggestions on how to build and maintain relationships in a new school environment.* [Pre-service Teacher, module evaluation]

## Wellbeing

This module addresses the topic of self-care and the benefits of being mindful of and managing personal wellbeing effectively in and out of the classroom. The module offers tips and strategies for effectively managing personal wellbeing by taking care of mental health, ways of responding to stress and healthy living. Maintaining other interests and managing time to enable healthy work life balance is discussed and approaches for maintaining career motivation and optimistic thinking are provided.

*It reminded me to take care of myself as well as the students ... [and] helped me with ways to think about how I would manage stress and problem solving skills in the classroom.* [Pre-service Teacher, module evaluation]

## Talking initiatives

This module addresses the professional responsibility of teachers to develop autonomy and the ability to take initiative in their daily practice and effective interpersonal relationships with students, colleagues, peers, parents, and the wider community. Problem solving processes, being flexible, goal setting, connecting with the profession and help-seeking strategies are described. Strategies for effective listening, assertive communication and getting involved are given.

## Emotions

This module continues the theme of effective self-management, with strategies and skills to assist in the development of emotion management. Questions such as 'what is an emotionally competent teacher?' are raised and strategies for responding to and managing emotions are provided. Using intentional optimism and humour (where appropriate) are also described.

*The modules provide some great strategies for pre-service teachers to learn to cope with the stressors of the profession, and hopefully these strategies will be carried forward well into their careers. The importance of this cannot be underestimated.* [Teacher Educator, module evaluation]

## Structure and design of each module

Each module begins with a self-reflection quiz, which informs a personal plan for completing each segment. Modules contains questions to reflect upon to activate prior knowledge, information about skills and strategies, tips, interactive learning activities, videos, scenarios where skills can be applied, 'What do the experts say?' sections, which show how the content is informed by latest research, and further resources. Throughout each module, users may 'pin' items of interest to their personal toolkit, which also includes responses to reflection questions. Users can also download their personal toolkit and receive a certificate after completing all modules. The modules can be accessed as required and can be revisited at any time, so that users are not confined to completion in a defined time frame.

*A good balance of theory, videos of personal experiences and practical advice. It is easy to navigate and the tips and advice are given in a supportive non-judgemental way.* [Teacher Educator, module evaluation]

The BRiTE project responded to the need for resources to support pre-service teachers' capacity for resilience. Teacher educators and pre-service teachers positively evaluated the modules according to content and online design. Through data obtained via the website

and the pilot implementation and feedback provided by participants. There is evidence that engagement with the modules can positively influence pre-service teachers' resilience and adoption of particular strategies to manage challenges. This is a topic for further longitudinal research.

## Teacher resilience—whose responsibility is it?

Programs like BRiTE emphasise the personal skills and strategies that are important for building resilience and encourage early career teachers to consider the resources in schools and their personal lives that will support their resilience. Teacher resilience however is a shared responsibility. The contexts in which teachers work play a critical role in the resilience process, providing not only challenges, but the essential relational, social, emotional and professional support to foster resilience and sustain teachers in the profession. Teachers play an important role in supporting each others' resilience and school leaders have a critical role to play in developing school culture and structures that support positive resilience development of staff and students alike.

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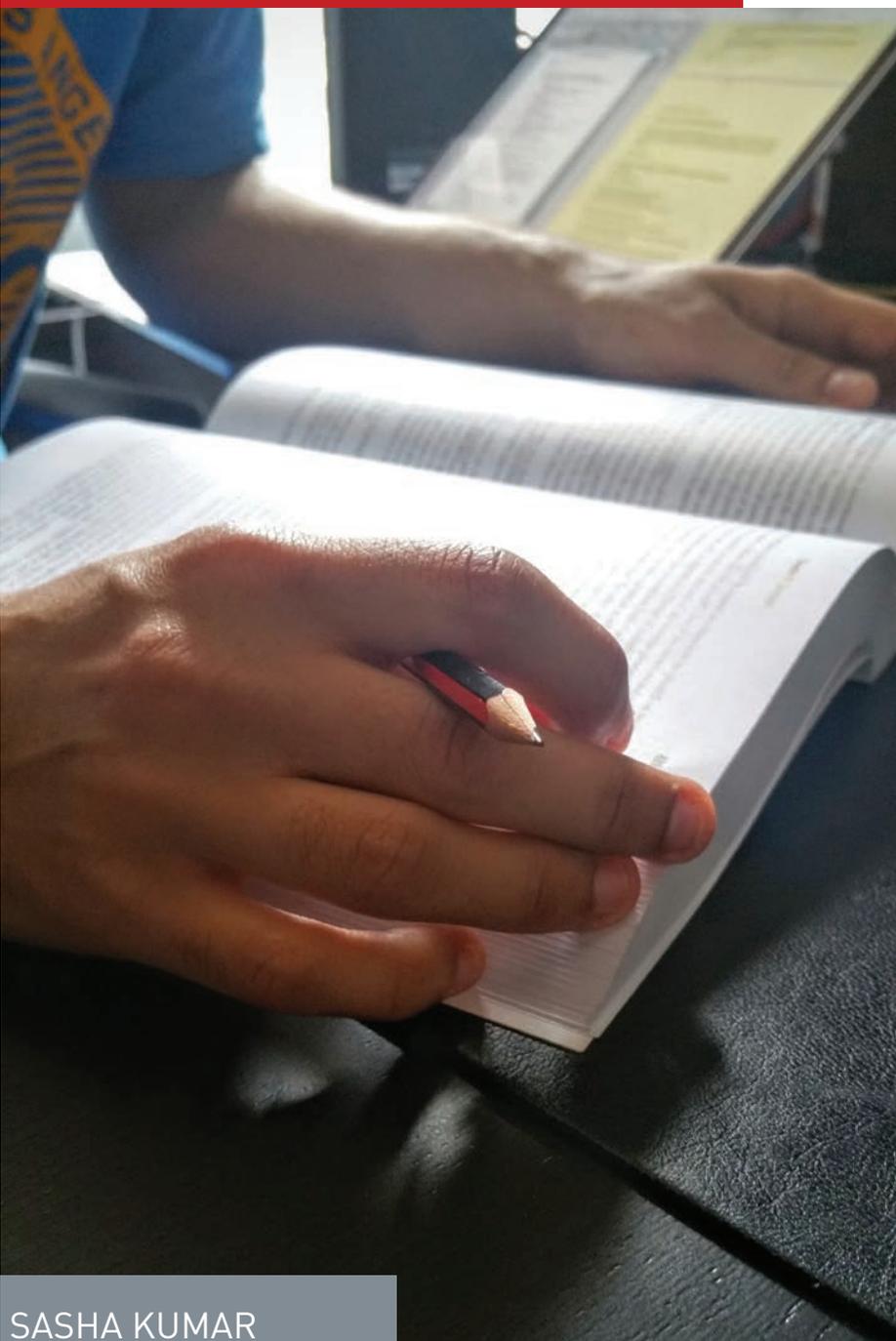
# How do we support refugee and immigrant learners in our schools?

Australia is a country that has been built on the idea of migration and opportunity. Since our colonisation, people from all over the world have been immigrating to Australia, each with their own reasons, bringing with them a vast array of cultures. As a result, graduate teachers need to be aware of the different backgrounds students bring with them and ways to support their learning at school.

The term immigrant is used to describe someone who chooses to permanently resettle in another country. In this article, only first generation immigrants will be classified as immigrant learners. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) describes 'refugees' as someone having a fear of persecution in their country, unable to seek protection from their country or to return to it (UNHCR 1951). Although there are different circumstances for migrating, both refugees and immigrants may not have social connections in the country they resettle in (Ryan, 2011).

Like all students, learning encompasses developing knowledge and skills on subject areas. However, for refugee and immigrant learners, there are many other aspects of their development in their learning. Their self-identity and belonging, as well as integration are important aspects of their learning and life at school. Although all adolescents go through these changes, refugees and immigrants must learn to adapt to a new culture while going through stages of life (Crozier & Davis 2008).

School allows students to form relationships, pursue interests and develop their self-identity. For a refugee student or newly arriving immigrant, the social aspect of school can have a profound effect on their wellbeing. For most of these students who have no



▶ previous social bonds, forming a network for support is very important. Ways of achieving this is participating in extra-curricular activities, which are offered by the community or the school such as Music, Sport, Debating or Performing Arts, giving students a chance to make friends, learn about the culture of the host country, learn new skills and encourage academic achievement (Camacho & Fuligni, 2015). An example of a successful extra-curricular program is a football club located in Melbourne. It is a predominantly Somali football club where children and adults come together to play and socialise. The players get the chance to talk to other Somali individuals as well as participate in a sport they enjoy assisting them in connecting with the community and develop their identity in the context of Australian social structures (Spaaij 2012).

As teachers, we are taught to acknowledge and seek to understand the social context of our students. In our training we are taught how to approach students who have different contextual backgrounds and discuss ways to make them feel welcome. Although this is a positive initiative, it can lead to stereotyping. Furthermore, among the literature of refugee and immigrant studies there can be a tendency to use

deficit discourse which can lead to lower expectations for these students, regardless of their capabilities (Roy & Roxas 2011). Refugee and immigrant students are active agents in developing their belonging by creating their life at school. They participate in activities after school to improve their language skills and make friendships (Oikonomidou 2007). This level of confidence, strength and resilience can assist refugee and immigrant learners in becoming well-rounded students and successful community members.

The thought of planning lessons, corrections, and improving on our teaching in addition to pastoral care can be an overwhelming experience for any graduate teacher. There are actions we can take to facilitate the process of navigating identity in refugee and immigrant students, some of which are plausible for graduate teachers to achieve.

Firstly, we can create a safe and inclusive environment for our students to learn. This means creating a space where students can be proud of their backgrounds and share this with their classmates. The Shaw Academy in the US executes this to a high degree by employing staff members of different

ethnicities and providing a range of activities where students can share their cultures. These activities build on the self-efficacy of students as well as their confidence and interpersonal skills (Nwosu & Barnes 2014). We can take a leaf out of their book by including students' contextual backgrounds into our lesson plans.

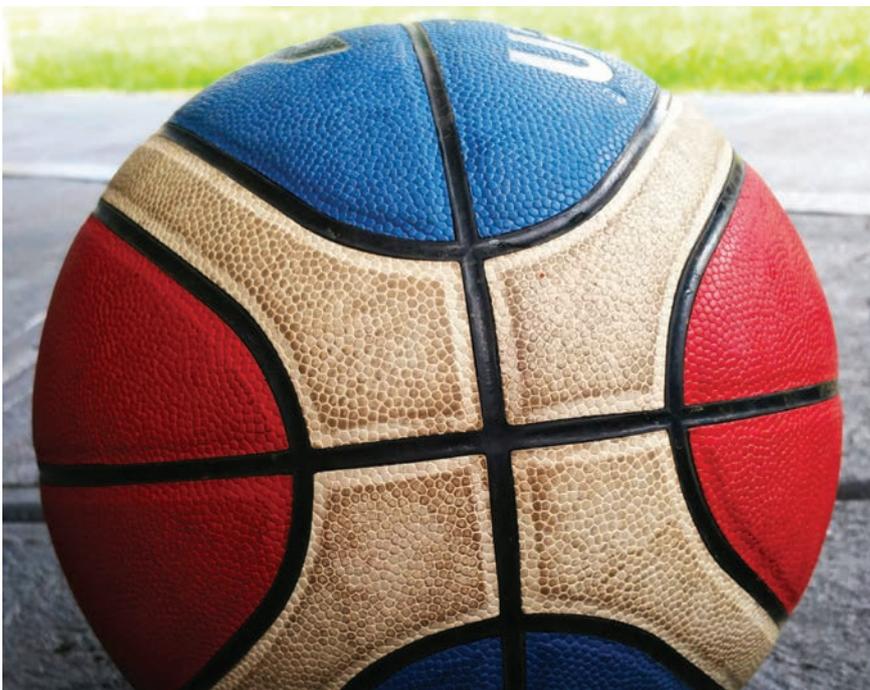
Secondly, teaching all students to have the basic values of respect, kindness and tolerance can foster relationships to build a social network for refugee and immigrant students. Encouraging students to participate in extra-curricular activities can also develop these basic values as well as providing the opportunity for personal growth and a sense of belonging (Bhattacharyya 2009).

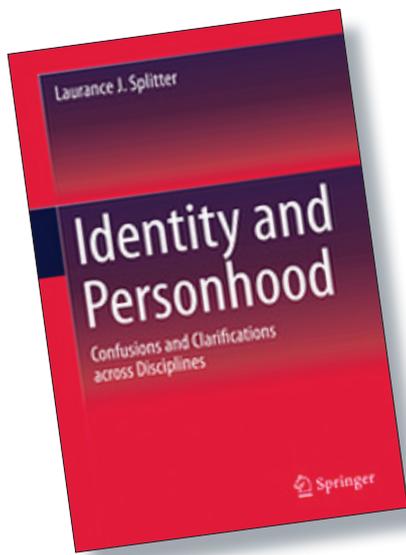
Lastly, we should be setting a standard that pushes these students to achieve their maximum potential. As graduate teachers, our goal is to see our students succeed and at times, we may get lost in trying to achieve this. With the help of more experienced colleagues, we can develop the ability to use different pedagogies for the various learning needs of students. This not to say we should disregard the contexts from which they have come however, we should be seeing our students as individuals first and differentiating our teaching to cater for their learning needs (Roy et al., 2012). Not only does this have positive outcomes for our students, seeking help facilitates our progress through the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership standards for teachers (AITSL, 2014).

Fulfilling our roles as educators, we must be aware of the difficulties refugee and immigrant students may face as they go through school and ensure we support them in their journey of self-identity and belonging into a new community. Looking beyond the academics, with the right support, these strong and resilient students have the capacity to be our most powerful members of society.

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## *Identity and Personhood – Confusions and Clarifications across Disciplines* by Laurance J. Splitter

Book review by Aristides Galatis, MACE

Laurence Splitter is an Australian philosopher, educationalist and author. Recently based in Hong Kong, he has worked extensively promoting Philosophy for Children in Australia. Published by Springer, his latest book is titled *Identity and Personhood*.

In his latest offering, Splitter embarks on a philosophical journey to shed some much needed light on the concepts of identity and personhood; concepts that historically have been the source of considerable confusion and debate. Chief among these has been the tendency to conflate quantitative with qualitative identity. The issues of what identity means and of what personhood entails, however, are eloquently discussed in this highly accessible book that traverses a range of disciplinary contexts; from Mathematics, Biology and logic to the broader Social Sciences.

'Who am I?' and 'What does it mean to be a human person?' Splitter asks. 'What does it mean to *belong to*, or to *identify with*, a particular group, tribe, culture, religion, nation, etc.?' And 'How are these issues related?' That these are juicy concepts ripe for philosophical picking goes without saying. But why are such questions important?

The answer does not require casting one's net too far. Recall one ex-prime minister's appeal for stragglers to join to team Australia; to jump on board? Consider, too, the psychological pull of belonging that persuades young disenfranchised minds to make their way to hot forsaken deserts and die for some barbaric medieval cause. What is it that prompts some to embrace victims of famine, poverty and war, whilst others erect fences, turn back boats and design xenophobic laws? The deceptive lure of an 'us and them' mentality is all-pervasive. Splitter's timely book equips us with the conceptual clarity and semantic tools with which to resist such temptations.

*'I am who I am (qua person) because I am one among others'*

He seeks to shift us away from the various ways in which persons seek to unite—and, therefore, divide—along, what he calls, 'such *supra-personal* [collectivist] lines as citizenship, religion, culture and so on; and towards those crucial characteristics which truly unite us as persons'. What unites us, Splitter suggests, are language, morality, and a triangulated sense of awareness [awareness of myself, of others and of a

common world]. Building on the works of Jonathan Dancy, Alasdair MacIntyre, Immanuel Kant, David Wiggins, John Dewey, Donald Davidson and others, what emerges is an argument against both collectivist mentalities as well as rampant moral individualism.

In their place (Chapter 8), Splitter sets out to defend the primacy of language and to 'confirm the central place of collaborative inquiry through dialogue as the pivotal dynamic in teaching and learning'. Personhood for Splitter is a relational concept; where the relationships in question are both semantic and moral. No surprise, then, why Splitter is a proponent of communities of inquiry, one of the central pillars of the *Philosophy for Children* movement.

There is definitely plenty here, then, to rouse the interest of anyone who has ever wished to be philosophically prodded and provoked, or felt the urge to ask the question: 'Who am I?'

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