



# Professional Educator



Australian  
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Educators

## Provocation



### Professional Educator 2021 Edition 1 Volume 25

#### Title: *The Problem*

The problem with education is...

Commentators, politicians, academics, parents, students, and just about anyone who has ever been exposed to a learning system all have opinions as to how to solve everything that ails Australian education. Those working in the education profession have been bombarded for years by commercial businesses, governments and the like, with the 'silver bullets' that are the solution to education's problems.

But what exactly are these problems that need solving? What is their cause, and where is the evidence that these problems are actually... problems?

In this edition of Professional Educator, we are seeking responses from contributors to the (perhaps not so) simple statement: The problem with education is...

The article is to focus solely on clearly articulating and providing supporting evidence as to what the problem with education is and what are its causes and effects. We are not seeking solutions. (That will come later!)

To ignite potential contributors' writing sparks, we have included some notable commentary and research as a starting point:

*The problem with education is... it isn't teaching students the basics!* According to Dr Jennifer Buckingham, "a large number of children in NSW begin secondary school with levels of literacy that are too low for them to succeed at this level of education".

*The problem with education is... it isn't preparing young people for life and work in the 21st century!* According to the Mitchell Institute: "Young people need different skill sets to what is taught in the traditional curriculum if they are to thrive in high-tech, global, competitive job markets".

*The problem with education is... it isn't addressing Australia's skills shortages!* According to the Business Council of Australia: "Taxpayers contribute \$20 billion annually to fund the post-secondary education and skills system but the current approach to funding is distorted and unfair, favouring higher education at the expense of vocational education and training".



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The problem with education is... **we are falling behind our competitors!** When the 2019 PISA results were released, former Education Minister Dan Tehan talked about "alarm bells ringing" while PISA national project manager and ACER Deputy CEO (Research), Dr Sue Thomson, said Australian students were either declining or treading water while other countries in the OECD were improving: "There's no sign of any change. There's no sign of anything recovering. It's got to a point where we say, 'if we don't do something now, then next time I'll have to stand here and report that we are below the OECD average'."

The problem with education is... **social inequality and growing inequity!** According to Jonathan Douglas of the National Literacy Trust: "It is a national scandal that, in 2018, a child's chances of leading a successful life are seriously limited by the situation they find themselves born into. Socioeconomic disadvantage is rooted in all corners of our education system from early years through to further education".

The problem with education is... **a toxic compliance and competition culture!** As noted in his opinion piece published by ABC News (Mon 9 Mar 2020), Pasi Sahlberg opined:

"Not so long ago, Australian education was admired by many countries as a forward-looking and inspiring model for them and others... Sadly, today we are not anymore among those progressive and future-looking education systems that lead the way and provide good learning for all children... World-class education nations don't do what seems to be our main strategy: Insist schools compete against one another, use toxic accountability measures to control and measure what schools do, and hold teachers as scapegoats for plunged education rankings."

So, what **IS** the problem with education? These are just some of the problems, and their root causes, that have been raised by many notable education professionals and organisations in recent history. Contributors may agree with these and would like to add to the discussion on these topics or believe there are other problems (and associated causes and effects) that have presented themselves and are worthy of exploration and commentary.



## Submission Deadlines

- Article submissions close on **Tuesday 31 August 2021**
- Accepted articles edited/proofed by **Friday 10 September 2021**
- Authors to review suggested edits and return final article by **Monday 13 September 2021**
- Scheduled release date **Friday 29 October 2021**

**Please submit articles to: [editor@austcolled.com.au](mailto:editor@austcolled.com.au)**

\* Please ensure all articles adhere to the Professional Educator reference and style guidelines (available on the ACE website: [www.austcolled.com.au/publications](http://www.austcolled.com.au/publications))

