



## Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

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### Summary

Education systems worldwide are facing unprecedented challenges in keeping new teachers, valuing experienced staff and engaging students in learning. It seems the physical environs of our schools may not be the best match for learning in the future and change clearly needs to occur. Integrating IT, valuing student voice and implementing change at the local level with systems support are all issues outlined in my proposal. Increased compliance and accountability have weighed heavily on teachers and schools. To be the best education system we can be, collaboration at all levels, including partnerships with universities, professional associations, and valuing student voice needs to be occur more strategically. Systems improvement is not just about quantitative data, its about identifying the issues underpinning the data, asking "Why?" and then putting strategies in place at the local level to address them, with systems support. The action research cycle in action...

### Main submission

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of the author, Dr Lorraine Beveridge, and not those of her employer, the NSW Department of Education.

#### Submission questions

What should educational success for Australian students and schools look like?

- What capabilities, skills and knowledge should students learn at school to prepare them for the future?
  - be critical thinkers, problem solvers, be adept at locating information and using that inform to improve their lives, the lives of their peers, community and world. From the Melbourne Declaration (2008), "In C21, Australia's capacity to provide a high quality of life will depend on the ability to compete globally- schools play an important part in this". All students need to be encouraged to consider tertiary education and globalisation is increasingly part of our lives. Do our new curriculum

documents reflect the need for a global view? Understanding culture and language knowledge will facilitate us working successfully with others in the future.

- technological change is slow to be adopted by education systems. We have teams of experts who try hard to filter their new skills and knowledges down to classrooms with varying levels of success. It demands a paradigm change and addressing teacher dispositions as the highest priority. Teachers want to know, “How will this change positively impact my practice and improve learning outcomes for students?”

Teachers want evidence before they are open to change, particularly technological change. How much importance is placed on teacher dispositions when implementing change in schools? The gap is growing between how students learn in a technological world and how students are taught at school. Student engagements seems to be decreasing as a result. Lower level jobs are fast disappearing. ALL students need to have high levels of literacy, science and maths and learn them to collaboratively apply them to solve complex issues. We need to better address the inequitable achievement gap in our schools, related to students’ social and cultural capital, another complex and multifaceted issue.

- student voice is talked about, is now appearing in the literature (Le Fevre, 2014; Mockler, 2013; Rowling & Samdal, 2011) but this needs to be given a higher priority in relation to what a future school system that addresses student needs looks like. We are seeing strong, articulate young people leaving our school system. They have so much more than an ATAR. We want all our students to leave school as “confident and creative individuals, active and informed citizens” (Melbourne Declaration, p.10, 11)

- How should school quality and educational success be measured?

We traditionally measure learning through the cognitive domain but this is only one part of the puzzle. The affective and psychomotor domains are of equal importance (Bloom & Krathwohl). The cognitive domain, dominated by instruction and assessment tells us what students know and compares them to peers, as well as comparing systems and schools nationally and across the world (NAPLAN, TIMSS, PISA). We need to broaden our minds to what constitutes educational success and the answers possibly lie in the other domains of learning and doing. The affective domain (how students feel about what they have learned and how it has impacted on how they feel about themselves as learners) has stretched to include a child’s ability to include internalisation, wonder and risk-taking. The psychomotor domain

encompasses the senses. Dettmer (2005) extends to psychomotor domain to include a social domain- how students relate to others, their ability to collaborate, identified C21 skills.

This “wicked” question, “How can educational success be measured?” asks us to consider better ways to assess learning, and how students could demonstrate how they have been changed by the educational process from an affective perspective. We are starting to see evidence of movement towards this goal, as we ask students to identify their strengths and weaknesses in Literacy and numeracy using continuums and learning progressions, individualising learning and encouraging students to work towards specific markers or goals based on what they have demonstrated what they can do. For younger children this may manifest in “I Can” statements where students identify specific learning goals and when they have been achieved, they choose the next learning goals in the progression.

Traditionally our curriculum is falsely compartmentalised into the KLAs. By bringing together and synthesising the domains of learning into one unified domain through integrating learning, students potential and fulfilment may increase. This could be achieved by looking at the crossover of curriculum objectives and encouraging teachers to view curriculum in a more holistic way. At present we are mandated how much time in minutes to spend on each subject by registering authorities. This possibly negatively impacts holistic learning. For example, a traditional English/history unit on first contact also touches on Maths and geography, visual arts, in fact all the subject areas. I’m unsure whether our current programming and mandated priorities encourage teachers and students to link learning. This is an area we need to continue to foster, in order to better assess how students have been changed by the educational process” (Dettmer, 2005, p.70).

What can we do to improve and how can we support ongoing improvement over time?

How could schools funding be used more effectively and efficiently (at the classroom, school or system level) to have a significant impact on learning outcomes for all students, including disadvantaged and vulnerable students and academically advanced students?

- What actions can be taken to improve practice and outcomes? What evidence is there to support taking these actions?
  - a mix of formative and summative assessments that inform practice and build on student strengths. There is such a breath of student skills. We as a system need to be better able to accommodate this. Some of our students with additional learning needs achieve little success in our current system. We need to better differentiate our classroom delivery and assessment practices (ACER, 2013; Tomlinson, 1999) and allow for

student choice, student self-direction (Gore & Ladwig, 2003), and student success.

- students having a stronger voice in curriculum design and implementation (Ainscow, 2005; Le Fevre, 2014; Mockler & Sachs, 2011).
  - the increasing importance of technology in teaching and learning (Ge et al., 2016; Johnson, 2016). Use more technology in learning to present learning in multiple formats and decrease the cognitive load on working memory, improving information processing and understanding.
  - in particular, writing data across the western world suggests students are NOT responding well to the practices of the past. We need to incorporate more digital tools in the teaching of writing. Simply providing digital tools has minimum impact. The pedagogy is the important focus. Student choice in what digital tools to use when is an important motivator to learn. As well, equity and access are important considerations.
  - We seem to be moving from a skills approach to teaching writing to a process based approach. Calkins identified three basic beliefs in teaching students to write effectively:
    1. Students involved in /own the writing process (importance of student choice re mode, topic)
    2. Students share what they write to an authentic audience (including lots of teacher modelling, mini lessons to individualise learning and address particular student learning needs)
    3. Students positively perceive themselves as writers (Writing like a Writer (Gleeson, 2016)
- What works best for whom and in what circumstances?

We are all accountable to our students and the system in which we work. The “what works” literature (Marzano, 2001, 2003, 2009; Hattie 2007, 2008, 2012; Graham 2015, 2016) is clear in that we need to focus on those strategies that have been proven to work best eg: providing feedback by adults (.87), peer feedback (.58), self assessment (.62), computer feedback (.38) in relation to teaching writing. The research needs to be put into a form that teachers can pick up and run with. For example, video snippets of what effective teacher feedback on writing looks like, as a model and guide to teachers in embedding best practice research into their practice in an action learning mode with support. That said we do not need to dumb down research for teachers. We need to ensure it is in a time effective, accessible format eg: synopses of key papers listing main findings, podcasts, Youtube channel sharing best practice research in a teacher friendly form.

Teachers sharing their classroom –based research to the wider profession eg: authentic action learning reports and stories of what works from the mouths of teachers would increase their confidence in themselves as researchers at the coalface, building teacher efficacy and professional confidence. Stories of practice are highly regarded by teachers as they are steeped in practical application (ie Stenhouse 1975, 1981)...teachers doing research from the laboratory of their own classrooms, opening up their practice for critique from the wider education field, moving knowledge forward.

From a Stenhouseian lens (1981), the following points are evidence that teachers should be competent and ongoing researchers of their own practice:

“It is the case study data rather than test data which consolidates” (p. 139)

“It is not enough that teacher work should be studied, they should be studying it themselves”, leading to “the extended professional” (p.143, 144).

Hoyle’s extended professional (Hoyle, 1977):

The importance of teachers in the innovation process

- she can be independently innovative at the classroom level
- she can act as a champion of an innovation at the classroom level.

We need to foster in our teachers the commitment to systematically critique their own teaching as a basis for development. We need to ensure they have the skills to study their own teaching, to question and test theory in practice.

Ladwig (2013) confirms that school reform will be enacted in multiple ways in multiple contexts, through a process of “loose coupling”, and the success of school reform lies with the people who enact it at the local level. We need to ensure teachers have the skills and systems support they need to enact positive change at the school level. Education systems are littered with the remnants of unsuccessful and unsustainable school reform (Apple 2005, 2012).

Top down models rarely work, suggesting we need lateral capacity building (Fullan, 2005, 2011) and collaborative cultures, peer-based, up close. Too much top-down authority demotivates people, too much intrusion results in drift. Capacity building is the central component for sustained improvement. Fullan refers to this as the “Too loose, too tight delimita”.

3rd generation activity theory (Engestrom, 2001) impacting teacher professional learning. Promoting ideas on dialogicality in relation to building relationships between professional learning and teacher learning partnerships that present opportunities for joint work. University- school partnerships, school-community partnerships are examples of this. Professional associations having a greater voice in curriculum research and development.

Instructional leaders in English classrooms works well in some cases, and is threatening for teachers in others, related to the level of professional trust between staff...

How can system enablers such as targets and standards, qualifications and accreditation, regulation and registration, quality assurance measures and transparency and accountability provisions be improved to help drive educational achievement and success and support effective monitoring, reporting and application of investment?

Teacher professionalism seems to be eroding due to systems requirements and top down measures that dictate to teachers what to do, often originating from UK and USA with scant evidence of success (Kemmis, 2005, 2007, 2011). Having teachers represented on curriculum panels and think tanks is essential for current and problematic educational issues to be addressed, and educational change to be implemented in practice. The theoretical perspective contributed by academics and steeped in research is one view, but putting that research into practice requires teachers' collective and collaborative voices. This seems to be where implementing systems change falls down, evidenced in the wider literature (Bourke & Ryan, 2013; Power, 2003; Kemmis, 2011).

The academic divide was addressed in the GTIL initiative in NSW. Queensland took it on board further, and teachers and academics swapped roles to better understand each other's views, in the process ensuring ITE (initial teacher education) reflected school practice and ITE students were school ready on completion of their courses. NSW would benefit from same (Hardy et al., 2008).

- Are there any new or emerging areas for action which could lead to large gains in student improvement that need further development or testing?

Yes- teachers and academics/ researchers working together as equal partners, swapping workplaces to share each other's professional knowledge and practice for the accumulation of deep knowledge and understanding (Engestrom, 2001; Bevins et al., 2014; Bourke, 2013).

Yes- students having a greater say in curriculum implementation and assessment for, as and of learning. Eg: students creating their own marking rubrics for assessment based on their specific, identified learning needs.

Yes-integrating learning and breaking down the artificial barriers between key learning areas

Yes- students having a greater say in planning assessment for, as and of learning so they own the learning, identify where they need to go and increase their engagement in and ownership of the learning process at school

Yes- automated essay writing marking is NOT the answer (Wilson & Czik, 2016). Useful for identifying lower order writing skills, but poor for providing higher level feedback to students. Effect sizes identified in the research across the western world (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Graham, Hebert & Harris, 2015) clearly identifies teacher feedback as a powerful influencer of student learning (.87 Graham et al, 2015). Meta analyses clearly identify providing support to students in classrooms, as part of everyday teaching and learning improves student learning.

Yes- using IT (information technology) to authentically enrich learning. Governments have spent millions of dollars over many years, but classroom practice, confirmed by research (Cuban, 2001; Jonnson, 2016) suggests many teachers have taken this on board at a surface level only. Students are leading the way here- should this not be celebrated? Using mobile phone technology and BYOD is frowned upon by a large group of the teaching service, however NOT by students. We should be aiming to better utilise our digitally mediated culture in education. Students are not responding well to teaching practices from the past, evidenced by increased behaviour issues in schools and low engagement in some education sectors.

- What are they and how can they be further developed?

School-university partnerships

Schools and universities working closely together with a clear focus on improving teacher and student outcomes.

How?

Using the practical expertise of teachers in initial teacher education courses to ensure currency, and using academics in schools to ensure best practice research is evident in classrooms. Teachers and academics acting as critical friends to each other (Beveridge, Mocker & Gore, 2017). This process needs to be formalised at a systems level to ensure it happens eg: teacher secondments, academics being valued for their joint work in schools. Presently there exists barriers in both systems, preventing this from happening.

Breaking down artificial subject barriers in our schools

The Australian curriculum documents reinforce that literacy and numeracy are embedded in all subjects. Yet teachers still purport they teach subject content and literacy and numeracy is the domain of primary teachers.

NAPLAN identified that many students reach secondary school not achieving proficient levels in literacy and numeracy. All teachers are literacy and numeracy teachers, across all subject.

How?

- Data analysis skills for all teachers. Digging deeper into the data to identify where students made errors and why. Teachers being encouraged to use predata, formative and summative assessment when planning teaching, in collaboration with peers so there is consistency of teacher judgement in relation to expectations and understanding of standards based curriculum frameworks.
- Getting students involved in assessment, ie students focusing on what they want/ need to learn and collaboratively creating assessment rubrics that may span key learning areas.
- Action learning projects across subject areas. In my space is a secondary project where teams of teachers plan and implement a project. For example English, Maths and Science faculties in a large secondary school collaborated on a project that resulted in students creating a range of educational apps, used across the school, that resulted in exciting new knowledge for students, teachers, school support officers.
- Teachers identifying the literacy and numeracy demands of their secondary subject areas and ensuring they program for these in their teaching.

Online Essay Marking during national testing programs (automated essay marking systems AEE)

This is gradually being phased in/ increasingly adopted however the evidence to support this is mixed (Johnson, 2016; Hayes, 2012; Conolly, Gee & Walsh, 2007; Wilson & Czik, 2016). The professional learning teachers obtain from marking student writing is reportedly of great value in improving teacher practice. It provides insights into how students learn and enables teachers to individualise writing instruction as a result. Essay marking is a slow process and automated essay marking systems have merit in identifying lower order errors in student writing to save teachers time and avoid burnout eg: punctuation and spelling. However, the research suggests combined teacher feedback and AEE is the best means of providing instructional feedback to students on writing. Computer feedback on writing has a much lower effect size than teacher and peer feedback (Wilson & Czik, 2016). It seems a possibly unsubstantiated systems direction which is being followed, and possibly disempowering for teachers.

Authentic integration of IT in schools

Systems have spent billions implementing IT in schools. Still, it appears to be an access and equity issue in schools. Bring your own devices (BYOD) seems to work in many schools, yet others report it does not work at the local level. Many teachers, particularly in secondary schools, report they cannot access computer labs as they are monopolised by computer science subject. Students have powerful computers in



their pockets (mobile phones) yet they are not utilised in teaching and learning. These are some of the dilemmas facing schools today.

How:

Teachers, schools, systems need to increasingly and authentically adopt IT to strengthen/ improve their practice and motivate their students to learn. Those reluctant teachers could be mentored at the school level with competent peers (Heppell, 2009).