

PERSPECTIVES



Secondary schooling and the education revolution: Looking for means towards the end?

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In working in the area of education policy over the past decade he has concentrated upon the effectiveness of post 16 education and training provision and curriculum. Recently in working with the Foundation for Young Australians he has proposed a set of structural reforms and program initiatives that are designed to address problems of growing social exclusion in Australian schooling. This paper has been written as a supplement to and continuation of these proposals.

Over the past two decades his research and publications have been concentrated upon the areas of social inclusion in education and post 16 education and training. He has undertaken work for state and national governments, international agencies, and governments in other countries. He has extensive experience as teacher, union official, and ministerial adviser, and in policy roles and as an academic and commentator on education and training.

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About the Whitlam Institute



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and policy. The Institute exists for all Australians who care about what matters in a fair Australia and aims to improve the quality of life for all Australians.

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Foreword

The Whitlam Institute, together with the UWS School of Economics and Finance, recently convened a symposium on Governing the Economy featuring, among others, Treasury Secretary Dr Ken Henry.

Dr Henry's address was remarkable in several respects. In it he elucidated the thinking behind Treasury's policy processes. In his own words:

Treasury's perspective on freedom and opportunity has been heavily influenced by the work of Amartya Sen on the contribution that 'substantive freedoms' make to development.

According to Amartya Sen, the true measure of human development is the capabilities that an individual has to choose a life they have reason to value. Capabilities allow an individual to fully function in society.

These words came to mind when reading Professor Jack Keating's reflections on the Rudd Government's 'education revolution' in the opening paragraphs of this paper. The Prime Minister also sees this revolution as 'enabling'.

Secondary schooling and the education revolution: Looking for means towards the end? is the second in our *Perspectives* essay series. Professor Jack Keating offers a deeply thoughtful and considered exposition of the structural factors that have shaped secondary schooling in Australia. He takes the challenges of the education revolution several steps further by positing a package of reforms that he argues would deliver on the promise of a truly enabling secondary education for all young Australians.


Jack Keating brings to the question his extensive experience, knowledge and expertise not just in educational research but in the development and implementation of educational policy reforms.

This paper builds on Professor Keating's more recent work at the University of Melbourne and as Education Thought Leader for the Foundation for Young Australians.

This paper throws down the challenge for Government leaders and education policy makers to take a much more serious look at structural reforms when it comes to the future of Australian schooling.

I have great pleasure in commending this paper to you.

Eric Sidoti
Director
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University of Western Sydney



Secondary schooling and the education revolution: Looking for means towards the end?

Introduction

Two decades ago Bob Hawke set a goal of achieving a society where “no child will be living in poverty”¹. The clarity of this goal was appealing. However the apparent failure to achieve it has been prominent within Hawke’s political legacy and the statement has been recorded as one of his biggest regrets (Masanauskas and Martin 2007).

This is unfortunate because the political rhetoric of that time has hidden the historical legacy of the Hawke Government’s substantial achievement of halving the number of Australian children living in poverty and the Howard Government’s failure to stop the number doubling during its term. The deep social issue of child poverty has languished on the political agenda across the subsequent decades, despite the work of the Senate Committee and its seminal report on poverty (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2004) and the worsening of the economic and social settings that exacerbate child poverty. The agenda of the elimination or reduction of child poverty has languished in part because of lack of political will, but more fundamentality because of its complexity and location within seeming intractable global problems of growing social and economic exclusion.

So what will be the fate and legacy of a more recent piece of grand policy rhetoric in the form of the Rudd Government’s ‘education revolution’? The objectives of this revolution also are relatively clear. They are to build human capital that ‘enables’ people to achieve social and economic inclusion (Rudd, 2009).² The objectives are manifest in a range of targets for the achievement of standards, participation in stages of education, and the completion of sets of qualifications.³ The targets have been supplemented with objectives for greater equity in patterns of participation and outcomes, including the Bradley (2008) goals for participation in higher education.

1. Prime Minister Bob Hawke, June 23, 1987.

2. Kevin Rudd appears to have adopted the idea of the ‘enabling state’.

3. The Council of Australian Governments has agreed to the following targets:
(a) lift the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate to 90 per cent by 2020;
(b) halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade; and
(c) at least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

Following the Bradley Review (2008) of higher education the Commonwealth Government set a target of 40 percent of those aged between 25-34 years to have a degree by 2025, a doubling of the percentage of those with diplomas by 2020, and a goal of 20 percent participation in higher education amongst young people of the lowest socio economic status quartile by 2020.

A redefined, and impressive, set of national goals for Australian schooling (MCEETYA, 2008), expectations of accountability and reporting of outcomes have added further expectations for the performance and behaviours of the education and training sectors.

As the Bradley report observes, there has been little progress in more equitable access to higher education, and there has been no progress in year 12 completions over almost two decades. The standards of Australian schooling are high by international standards, but appear to be slipping in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)⁴ rankings.

The mission is clear and justified. Its achievement will be more difficult. Apart from accountabilities and expectations that are being directed at the education and training ‘system’, extra funding has been allocated for education needs and more equitable access to tertiary education, and a series of National Partnerships (COAG, 2008) have targeted different aspects of schooling for interventions.⁵ The stimulus package has brought an unprecedented level of investment in school capital works. While these initiatives must be welcomed the evidence of the effectiveness of extra resources in the absence of other interventions is not strong (Hanushek, 2007). To be realised the educational revolution will need to dig deeper into the fabric of education in Australia.

Schooling absorbs the vast bulk of public and private investment and the time that individuals devote to formal education. For the education revolution to be realised substantial improvements in educational outcomes and equity will need to be achieved across the schools sector. I have argued elsewhere (Keating, 2009) that Australian schooling has deep-seated structural weaknesses that will restrict and possibly reverse advances in quality and equity. These weaknesses stem from the intersection of the structural separation of public and private schooling and the distribution of responsibility for schooling within the Australian federation. These structural features concentrate the issue of inconsistencies in resourcing and governance, or more specifically the unequal distribution of autonomy across different types of schools. The effect of these features has been growing concentration of educational under-achievement and associated patterns of social and economic exclusion.

4. PISA (PISA) is an internationally standardised assessment for the major industrialised countries. It is administered to 15-year-olds in schools every three years.

5. The three National Partnerships are directed towards Teacher Quality, Literacy and Numeracy, and Low Socio Economic Status Communities, respectively.

Structures: autonomy and resourcing

In the end the education revolution will be a fizzer unless it can address the core structural problems. Central to this has to be a renegotiation and restructuring of the distribution of autonomy and school resourcing across the federation.

At this stage, the Rudd Government appears to have adopted a strategy that has been informed by innovations in England and parts of the USA. It is essentially built around the idea that all schools will become more autonomous. It is a 'post system' concept of schooling embracing the third wayish idea of the 'enabling state' (Rudd, 2009; Botsman and Latham, 2003): the state accepts responsibility for building stronger, more consistent regulatory and accountability frameworks; institutional mechanisms are established to enhance practitioner performance or productivity; there is increased support for educational need; and stronger forms of intervention in those cases where schools fail.

This strategy has not been fully articulated by the Commonwealth Government. However, it has obvious appeal in that it would seem to avoid the political pitfalls of attempting to directly challenge the autonomy of non-government schools. If all schools can be seen as autonomous then any strategies to achieve educational objectives can be applied equally to all schools.

All Commonwealth governments of the post Fraser era have regarded state education systems as monolithic enterprises with restrictive management and work practice modes. The Rudd Government is no different and the 'post system' approach also has appeal in an apparent or potential capacity to undermine these modes. In contrast to the previous Labor and Coalition governments it has a strategy in the form of building a national framework for schooling: a national curriculum, stage based testing, public availability of absolute and relative performance measures, performance pay for teachers, the building of a 'leadership class' and practices amongst principals, greater accountability, and area based interventions (Gillard, 2009). The national framework can be seen as replacing the antiquated and 'captured' state systemic frameworks, or at least large parts of them.

The obvious problem with the strategy is that virtually all other experiments in market liberalism in schooling have led to greater inequity. Examples as wide as Chile (Carnoy and McEwan, 2000), Sweden (Skolverket, 2005), and of course Australia (Lamb, 2007; Bonnor, 2009) testify to this trend. Furthermore, countries and systems that separate students on the basis of early school performance, which is one of the behaviours of market based systems, have weaker overall school performances, as shown by successive OECD PISA results.

This post system strategy is built upon an assumption of a seemingly inevitable process of greater school autonomy, in the post structural age. This assumption faces the difficulty of a highly unequal distribution of autonomy across Australian schools. Private or non-government schools

have greater autonomy over their enrolments, staffing and curriculum. Autonomy within the two broad sectors also is unequal. Selective entry government secondary schools have greater autonomy than neighbourhood based schools. This autonomy is protected by the constituencies of these schools. Here lies the rub for Labor governments that have social inclusion and equity principles. On the one hand any attempt to reduce the autonomy of those sectors and schools that already are highly autonomous would have electoral consequences. On the other the distribution of this level of autonomy to all schools would inevitably deepen patterns of educational and social exclusion.

At some point governments and other major stakeholder agencies – especially the National Catholic Education Commission – will have to bite the bullet on school resourcing. Most non-government schools are mostly publicly funded and as they become the majority sector, which they will on current trends in secondary schooling within a generation, they will be forced to renegotiate a public funding that is currently based upon the principle of entitlement with almost complete autonomy.⁶ The difficulty with funding is that any substantial reform will require a major restructuring of Commonwealth and state and territory roles. Whether the Rudd Government has the longevity and political will and momentum to carry this through within the frame of its planned funding review remains to be seen.

It would indeed be an educational revolution to fundamentally restructure school resourcing systems and in doing so restructure the respective roles of the two levels of government in schooling and re-cast the concept of school autonomy within a frame of public purpose, or 'public good', as the new Goals for Australian Schooling state (MCEETYA, 2008). This may be too much to expect, and in the meantime there are other structural features of Australian schooling that clearly weaken its capacity for quality and equity. Early childhood education and secondary schooling are the stand-outs.

Australia's comparative performance in early childhood education is weak by international standards. We have close to the lowest levels of public investment in pre school education (OECD, 2006) and have not made the types of investments in foundation learning that have occurred in countries such as Finland (Grubb et al, 2005). This area has the advantage of being a relatively green field site with a relative lack of politically influential sectoral interests, compared with primary and secondary schooling that would act as blockers to national initiatives. With a large body of international literature pointing to the long term impact of early childhood foundation learning, investment in this area is justified as well as opportune.

6. The enrolment trends are shown in the following table:

Enrolment share by sectors, secondary schools, 1988 - 2008

| | 1988 | 1998 | 2008 |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Government | 69.13 | 65.24 | 60.82 |
| Catholic | 19.73 | 20.79 | 21.65 |
| Independent | 11.14 | 13.96 | 17.53 |

4221.0 - Schools, Australia, 2008

Secondary education

Secondary schooling is the other stand-out for different reasons. It is burdened with major and politically influential stakeholders and has deeply entrenched characteristics of curriculum, autonomous schools and client communities, structural relations with higher education, and established images of 'good schools'. It also is located in a highly robust educational market where the principle of choice is widely and strongly realised. Large and growing numbers of students forsake their local government high school for other schools, government and non-government.⁷ The combination of entrenched characteristics and a robust market work to create a path dependency towards greater selectivity and associated patterns of scholastic and social exclusion (Lamb, 2007; Achterstraat, 2008; Bonnor, 2009). This path has both market and policy dynamics: as those parents who are in a position to do so exercise choice of schools state governments respond by introducing more opportunities for selective practices in their secondary school systems.

On a more practical level secondary schooling has been subject to a series of year 12 retention and completion targets set by the Australian Education Council in 1991 (Finn, 1991); the Queensland Government in 1998; the Victorian Government in 2000; and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2008. The first was not met and the second and third seem unlikely and could only be achieved through the dubious inclusion of vocational education and training certificate (VET) II as equivalent to a year 12 certificate.

As the youth labour market continues its three decade trend of weakening (FYA, 2009) the imperative for more inclusive school and tertiary education strategies grows stronger. Yet structurally secondary schooling is not well equipped to facilitate such strategies. The relatively static levels of school year 12 retention rates over almost two decades and Australia's weak levels of educational participation rates amongst 17 year olds (OECD, 2009) attest to this.

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and adult education offer a supplementary alternative to school completion. In Victoria, for example approximately 10.5 percent of 'year 12 or equivalent' completions were contributed by these sectors.⁸ However, they include a number of VET certificate II completions, and the TAFE and adult alternatives to schooling have inherent weaknesses within a policy frame of educational inclusion (Volkoff et al, 2006).

The imperative of structural reforms in secondary schooling remains. The Bradley and the Commonwealth goal of increased levels of participation in higher education amongst lower socio economic status (SES) students is unlikely to be met without improvements in the supply from the school sector.

7. In the North West suburbs of Melbourne, for example, half of the government high schools have less than 25 percent of their local student enrolments (unpublished data, Dept. of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008).

8. Unpublished data, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009.

The COAG targets for year 12 completion will not be met unless those schools and areas with the lowest completion rates can substantially improve their outcomes. Basic economic laws of falling marginal rates of return dictate that improvements across those schools and regions with high completion rates will have little impact upon the targets.

The path dependency of secondary schooling in Australia is intensified by its relationship with tertiary education (Moodie, 2008). The three sectors of secondary education, higher education and VET have evolved into dependent relationships, built on combinations of linkages and exclusions. Linkages are through student flows and articulation between qualifications. Exclusions have been built upon funding systems, curriculum, status, and forms of demand and resultant selections.

The scope for structural reforms in secondary education, therefore, is restricted. For example, it would not be possible to limit the market flexibility of the academically and socially selective schools, or de facto grammar schools across the government and non-government sectors, as was attempted with 'comprehensive reorganisation' of British secondary schooling in the 1960s and 1970s (Heath and Jacobs, 1999).

The grand ideal of a comprehensive secondary school, the omnibus school that provides for all has been expressed at various times in Australia (e.g. Wyndham, 1958; Blackburn, 1985) and remains the foundation concept across the government and much of the non-government (notably the Catholic) sectors. However, its realisation has been sullied by the socially and scholastic selective enrolments of the independent school sector and large elements of the government sector, and the associated unequal distribution of autonomy across secondary schools.

There is a need for a post comprehensive form of secondary schooling, but one that can still deliver the core democratic ideals of the comprehensive secondary school. In the wake of the dynamic of social and scholastic selection different forms of specialist schools and different school structures are emerging. They include Polytechnics in Tasmania that combine upper secondary schooling with adult education; educational precincts in all of the mainland states that combine secondary education with elements of TAFE and higher education; TAFE based secondary schools in Victoria and NSW; and different forms of senior colleges. Different forms of curricula are also beginning to emerge. Apart from the multiple programs that deliver forms of applied learning in combination with student mentoring and guidance the most dramatic of these is the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, with over 15,000 enrolments.

These innovations raise the question of whether they will exacerbate the selectivity within secondary education or whether the principle of diversity needs to be embraced within the idea of social and economic inclusion. If the answer is positive, and in a policy sense it has to be so because of the strength of the secondary education market, there are the tasks of conceptualising what a new or reformed secondary schooling would look like, and how it can be achieved.

In turn these tasks bring a focus upon what policy instruments are at hand. For example, there is little policy capacity to directly engineer enrolment behaviours. The principle of choice is firmly established in Australian schooling and any push back on it would have electoral consequences. There is a need to accept the reality of the robust secondary education market, as well as its main driver – the scholastic competition for university entrance. This market has created dependent relationships between university selection, curriculum and school types.

So the core of the secondary education problem is the mutual capture of the dependent relationships between curriculum, tertiary pathways and selection, and provision – within the dynamics of the school market. Curriculum cannot change because new curriculum and qualifications would forsake the enormous cultural and pathways capital of university selection. Schools with diverse provision risk losing their scholastic student capital and the consequential enrolment impact. Schools that concentrate upon non-tertiary pathways run the same risk. Universities that forsake the tertiary entrance rank (TER) for other student entry mechanism run the risk of weakening their status and scholastic capital. Strategies to reform secondary schooling need to take account of the three sets of variables: curriculum, provision and structured pathways.

Curriculum

Over the past five years there have been attempts by the Howard and Rudd governments to move towards a national senior secondary curriculum. The initiatives have been through different strategies. The Howard Government's independent attempt to establish an Australian Certificate of Education contrasts with the Rudd Government's attempt via the newly established Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to establish common content across senior secondary subjects. Both of these initiatives have concentrated upon the content of the established academic subjects (see Masters, 2006; ACARA, 2009). Within the COAG goal of "*lifting the Year 12 or the equivalent retention rate to 90 per cent by 2015*" (COAG, 2008) both miss the point.

Australian senior secondary curricula and qualifications suffer from three major structural problems. One is a lack of diversity in curriculum. In most cases the senior secondary certificates are made up of essentially academic subjects that are constructed and assessed in standardised modes. There is a weak range of applied learning courses. A second weakness is that vocational subjects are drawn from national VET Training Package qualifications that have been developed within the VET system's industrial training model that gives little consideration to school based education. The derived VET curriculum is not necessarily suitable for school students and delivery and there are inherent problems with levels and equivalencies between the VET qualifications and year 12 certificate (Wheelahan, 2007). At the upper secondary level Australia arguably has the most academic curriculum across OECD countries. Less than 40 percent of students take a VET subject in the senior years, and this is mostly one subject at year 11 (NCVER, 2008).

A third and more fundamental problem is that the certificates are mostly based upon a single design principle of subject choice. This has several consequences. It has led to a hierarchy of subjects that has emerged through the scaling procedures that are used to adjust the relevant assessment scores across the subjects. The hierarchy locates the more applied subjects at the bottom and requires almost all schools to deliver a core group of academic subjects if they are not to suffer the consequences of a flight of their more scholastic students. Consequently small schools, which typically serve the poorest students, face major diseconomies of scale and a restricted curriculum. The subject choice principle also leads to a lack of coherence and purpose in student programs, with weaker students being forced to take leftover or residual subjects in the senior years. It also means that students' programs have no structural or theme definition leaving a vacuum that is filled by the assessments and the resultant and iconic TER.

Within this context there is an opportunity for a combination of the initiatives of ACARA and the National Partnership to be used for the development of a series of *national diplomas* for senior secondary schooling. They should draw from the experiences of some of the European countries, such as Sweden and Norway, and more recently the English 14-19 Diplomas (DCSF, 2009). All of these qualifications combine core and broad areas of specialist academic or vocational learning. They have the attributes of continuing to deliver mainstream areas of learning such as literacy and mathematics, allowing for specialisation, and allowing access to higher education. They also constitute a real qualification, in contrast to the Australian certificate that in reality delivers an assessment ranking.

National diplomas can also draw from the experience of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), which now has 15,000 enrolments. Like the European vocational models it involves students spending a substantial time in the workplace. The major difference would be that the national diplomas should maintain the option of university entrance.

The English Diplomas derived from the Tomlinson Report (2004) which proposed a series of national diplomas to replace the iconic 'A' (advanced) level qualifications. The British government in the face of stakeholder and some media reaction was not willing to abolish the A levels, and opted to establish the diplomas alongside of them. One view apparently supported by the Secretary of State for Education Ed Balls (2007) and Mike Tomlinson⁹, the chair of the Tomlinson Review, has been that the diplomas would eventually replace the A levels.

This now seems unlikely with a probable change of government in the United Kingdom, but the approach is instructive for the Australian context. The Australian certificates, with the partial exception of the NSW High Schools Certificate (HSC) do not have the icon status of the A levels, and at the Australian national level would lack the constituencies that protect the A levels in England.

9. Interview, 15 November, 2007.

A national partnership between the states and the Commonwealth that combined the proposals for common content in the academic subjects that has been put forward by ACARA (2009) and the development of national program based diplomas to fill the large gap in applied and skills based learning could have a substantial impetus. It could be properly resourced. It would draw industry support, and the Commonwealth would be in a stronger position than the states to negotiate its acceptance by the university sector.

Provision

Australian secondary education is tacitly understood as being based upon the comprehensive model. However, as has been argued above this model has been substantially weakened through increased social and scholastic selectivity and the emergence of forms of specialism.

The major form of specialism is academic, in the form of the large number of de facto non-government and government grammar schools that offer few or no vocation and applied programs, and have various mechanisms of formal and informal enrolment selection. Schools that try to be truly comprehensive in their clientele and their curriculum are likely to struggle with their enrolments and image if they have competition from the de facto grammar schools. This is something that Miliband (2003) has noted in England and Bonnor (2009) has observed in Australia.

Despite the emergence of different forms of senior colleges and some specialist colleges the dominant mode of secondary education is that of years 7 to 12 and mainly academic schools. These schools consist of grammar schools, those that are striving to be grammar schools, those that attempt to be comprehensive, and those that compensate for the consequences of this hierarchy.

A potential and core problem with specialist and vocational secondary schools can be a lack of clarity and certainty in pathways. The grammar schools provide strong pathways into university. High fee private and selective entry government schools virtually guarantee this pathway. A specialist school has the danger of becoming a de facto selective entry school, such as mathematics and science specialist schools, or one that offers only vague or limited pathways into tertiary education. Specialist schools need stronger and more certain pathways.

The grammar schools are now firmly entrenched within the Australian secondary school market. No government would be willing or able to curtail their selection practices or intervene in their client relationships with the universities. Indeed during the mid 2000s all five mainland state Labor governments took measures to strengthen grammar school selectivity by introducing more selective schools and programs within the government school sector. While the talk of doing away with the TER continues (James, 2009), as it has for the past four decades, it is highly unlikely that the universities will abandon practices that deliver them students who achieve the highest academic assessments with apparent efficiency.

The culture of the grammar schools pervades the secondary education market in Australia. The vast majority of Australian secondary schools now have school uniforms, in contrast to secondary and certainly upper secondary schools in Europe and North America. Schools, government and non-government, frequently advertise their wares that typically include senior secondary assessment scores and the values and behaviours of the grammar school.

The grammar school culture is a mixture of university scholasticism and primary school organisational and behavioural modes. The evolution of secondary education in Australia has been that of a meeting between mostly private grammar schools established as finishing and pre university schools and the extension of primary and elementary schooling, mostly in the public sector (Hannan, 2009). The senior secondary certificates have embedded a grammar or pre university curriculum (Teese, 2000).

The patterns of the school day, class groupings, the relationships between students and teachers, and industrial conditions are all similar to those in primary schools, and contrast with those in tertiary education. Sweet (2009) speculates whether this Australian model of secondary schooling is a core factor in the high rates of early school leaving in Australia. He observes that Australia is only one of a few OECD countries (Scotland and New Zealand being the others) that do not have a separate upper secondary phase of education for most students.

This situation suggests that two elements are necessary to reform secondary education provision in Australia. The first is the need for diversity. Senior colleges that can assemble the economies and breadth of programs to serve a wide range of students in an adult learning environment, specialist colleges that can offer high quality programs and strong and more certain pathways including apprenticeships, and colleges that directly link schooling with tertiary education should all be part of the menu. All of these innovations could and should include the option of partnerships between the government and non-government sectors, including those designed to provide area based provision.

The second element is the need for these types of initiatives to be complemented with reforms in the curriculum and qualifications and with innovations in post school pathways.

Pathways

The most recent edition of *How Young People are Faring* (FYA, 2009) indicates that we have now reached an era where full time work is not a realistic option for most school leavers. Within this context the maintenance of the TER system as the primary pathway mechanism for the majority of school leavers approaches madness. This 'system' simultaneously constricts the curriculum, sabotages alternative pathway systems, encourages schools to engage in exclusionary behaviours, weakens student career planning, and places enormous competitive pressures upon students and schools.

Attempts to do away with it have spanned four decades (Hannan, 2009), with no success. The main problem with all of these attempts has been that the alternatives that have been proposed have been other forms of *point in time* systems for selection of year 12 graduates. Compared to alternatives such as ballots of eligible applicants, interviews, and the use of portfolios of work, the TER system is efficient and objective, and one that offers a relatively tight defence against appeal and litigation.

Any solution to the decades old conundrum of the TER needs to be located in a broader approach that incorporates curriculum and provision. The key is to take pathways beyond a point in time university selection system to one that spans a longer period and different forms of connections between school education and post school destinations, most of which will be education and training pathways. These connections need to go deeper into the curriculum of both the school and the tertiary sector and have implications for provision.

The inter connection between the three sectors of secondary education, university and VET is axiomatic. Their inter relationships run deeper than the formal processes of selection, transfer and credit for the student traffic between them. Curriculum and qualifications, funding, fee regimes, and location all influence these relationships. This point appears to have been missed by the Bradley (2008) report that largely concentrated upon the formal processes of student traffic between the sectors.

The starting point is the curriculum: one that accommodates a variety of pathways, including apprenticeships, and learning situations, including the workplace; offers substance and definition in the form of programs; and that can link to tertiary studies. This will facilitate different provision modes, including specialist providers and programs that overlap with the tertiary or post school sectors.

There also need to be structural changes in the tertiary sector and its relationship with the school sector, which is another point missed by Bradley. Decisions about pathways through tertiary education need to be made over longer periods of time and extend back into the secondary years and forward into the tertiary years. This implies overlaps in provision between secondary and tertiary education and direct linkages between school and tertiary education programs. The opportunity for school age students to begin diploma levels studies in the Tasmanian polytechnics is an example of this.

Structural changes in schooling also need to accommodate part-time work, which in most cases will be in combination with full-time education (FYA, 2009). Senior secondary schooling should allow more adult learning environments, and at the same time maintain and increase their mentoring, advisory and support roles.

The concept of multiple pathways has been used frequently in the abundant literature of post school transition in Australia. Yet it is located with curriculum and assessment and provision arrangements that are designed for a single pathway and point in time allocation of pathways. Broader and more flexible pathways must be built upon changes in these arrangements.

Delivering the revolution

Education systems are notoriously slow to change (Durkheim, 1977). This is likely to be very much the case in a sector which appears to well serve the better off and politically powerful sections of the community. For this reason opportunistic and multi-faceted approaches to changing secondary schooling in Australia are needed.

Although the Commonwealth Government's apparent acceptance of the idea of a secondary school market may rankle, it is more or less accurate. So strategies should accommodate and if possible exploit this narrative. However, to do this a parallel narrative of social inclusion and one that is linked to the human capital mantra needs to be promoted. The current human capital mantra is a modern form of nation building that has always driven public investment in education and the systematisation of schooling (Green, 1990).

The social inclusion and human capital narrative needs to adjust the historical idea of a standardised school system owned and managed by the state, and accommodate the idea of diversity, which has been associated with the principle of choice. The weakness and the fraud of the current secondary school market is that there is little diversity. Therefore, choice is built upon systems of exclusion and advantage. This exacerbates problems of educational disengagement.

However, a social inclusion narrative in secondary schooling should not abandon the principle of the collective. The traditional form of the collective – a state school system – has been and continues to be substantially undermined. In part this is because the state systems as social constructs in Australia were always flawed. They were never fully community based, with such a large proportion of students located in non-government schools. Alternative forms of the collective need to be constructed and the two obvious forms are partnerships between schools and area and community based approaches to provision.

Strategies also should be through the federalist frame. The state governments working alone would face major obstacles in taking simultaneous initiatives that are needed for deeper structural reforms to secondary education. The Commonwealth Government, as it has recently shown, has the revenue base to fund the provision infrastructure that would be needed for a more diverse and high quality secondary provision. It also would be in a better position to negotiate the curriculum changes and frameworks that are needed and their acceptance across the tertiary education sectors.

So a set of mutually supporting reforms and initiatives based upon an extension of the National Partnerships and capital investment programs of the Commonwealth Government needs to be advanced. Three sets of reforms are proposed in the area of curriculum and qualifications, provision structures, and post school pathways. As a package of strategies the following are suggested:

- » The development of national diplomas that incorporate core areas of learning in combination with broad discipline and/or vocational themes.
- » Support for new provision models that allow:
 - Different locations and processes of learning;
 - Linkages with tertiary education provision;
 - Combinations of government and non-government sector provision;
 - Area or community based provision guarantees; and
 - Full service modes that include mentoring, advisory and support services.
- » Combinations of these two for new pathway modes that:
 - Allow direct articulation into tertiary education;
 - Different relationships between education and work; and
 - Dilute and distribute the point in time pathways selection processes.

Conclusion

A fine set of national goals for schooling for the common good, objectives of social inclusion, targets for school completion and tertiary education, and financial investment from the Commonwealth all speak of a commitment to match the rhetoric of an education revolution. But some hard thinking and well thought out strategies also are needed if there is to be any real progress towards this collection of goals, objectives and targets.

Central to all of this must be secondary school. It is within this stage of education that tangible educational outcomes are realised. These are in the form of completion and non-completion of schooling and assessment grades that will open or close pathways from schooling into work and inclusive social life. A secondary education system that fails to do this effectively and fairly disadvantages the individual young person and burdens the community, weighing down the human capital and social inclusion agenda. A secondary system that is paralysed through its institutional and cultural relationships with higher education and relationships with client schools and their constituencies is limited in the scope of its effectiveness.

Fine goals, expansive objectives and ambitious targets, and even more funding won't change this. Upon the basis of trends in secondary education and participation over the past decade (FYA, 2009) the national goals and targets for secondary education will not be met. Correspondingly and consequentially those for tertiary education will become difficult to achieve.

Structural reforms are needed. The current structural arrangements are locked-in to such an extent that a systematic set of initiatives is needed across curriculum and qualifications, schools as delivery systems, and pathways systems. Partnerships across the two levels of government, government and non-government school sectors, and the schools and tertiary education sectors to build these initiatives would constitute something of an education revolution.

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