

This will be a short submission, not because there is little to be said, but because the huge problem that is Australia's schooling system has been analysed elsewhere and ignored. I will summarise this, as it relates to NAPLAN.

- \* NAPLAN tests a small area of the curriculum.
- \* Because we have a shattered system devoid of socio-politically developed and unifying Social Purposes, this system is overwhelmingly stratified and competitive resulting in a "high performance – low equity" system [OECD]
- \* into this overly competitive environment, individual schools and teachers judged by NAPLAN results will teach-to-the-test. This is a form of cheating and corruption ... and, of course, skews the entire system towards the interests of the top half of performers
- \* if we require a form of testing to monitor the system [and we do] then the testing needs to be

[a] across-the-curriculum

[b] non-intrusive to best curriculum and teaching practice

\* THAT IS THE END OF A NAPLAN=FOCUSSED ANALYSIS

\* HOWEVER, what is 'across-the curriculum' ... what is 'good' curriculum and teaching practice? These are the real questions. NAPLAN oriented questions address the pimple on the sick elephants bum. School autonomy addresses another pimple.

\* The big issues with Australia's schooling system is to be found in the elephant itself, or to switch metaphors, in the socio-political landscape that is schoolings context. I have examined this in a 150,000 word thesis, examined independently by Professors McGaw, Kenway & Reid [amongst the most eminent education Professors in the land!], earned the maximum mark for a Ph D of "3 top boxes", won the University Prize for best thesis in 2009, but has been read and acknowledged by no-one.

In brief, the major issues are:

1. Social Purposes: Australia has no socially determined Social Purposes for its schooling system. This should be a prior issue. Management excellence requires that organizations/enterprises collaborate with their stakeholders in the formulation of Purpose prior to subsequent alignment of all [!] internal policies, structures and procedures. The absence of a socially determined set of Social Purposes for Australia's schooling system, and the existence of a vested interest-serving set of bureaucratically-determined "goals" which assume the continued existence of all major political, physical, religious and public structures, as well as curriculum structures ... exacerbates the effect of this absence. As a consequence Australia's schooling system is fractured along state/territory boundaries, religious restrictions, socio-economic exclusions ... and increasingly shaped by the dictates of the private, competitive and exclusionary values to the detriment of community and national interests. No surprise that the top half of Australian students do well while the bottom half are disgracefully under-researched and relentlessly underperforming.
2. Curriculum Structure & Content: with no widely supported politically legitimate Social Purposes there is nothing of public authority to drive the major arms of schooling policy. As a consequence, it is not surprising that the schooling system is fractured and its component parts play to the purposes of vested interests rather

than to national and community interests: the Common Good. Living inside this fractured system lives an entirely obtuse curriculum regime:

- a. the curriculum structure supported by dominant interests remains unchanged in its subject 'silos' ... the worst possible structure for good pedagogy. With Human endeavour and mighty interest separated from each other from the early years of schooling, arranged in rapidly specialized strata unrelated to Life's experience, then chopped into 40-60 minute 'bits' separated again by the other silos, frequent school movement, annoyance, harassment and general distraction ... we maintain a curriculum structure with minimal meaning and relevance to students, a set of circumstances pedagogically bad for all kids, but entirely disastrous and unmanageable for those from variously disadvantaged backgrounds
- b. with curriculum structure guaranteeing poor levels of student interest in the content it is no wonder that a large minority of teachers suffer the same pedagogical illness.
- c. the kids who drop off this slippery pole first, are those who cannot see the 'lolly' rewards at the end of the misery [motivation] and who live in environments where attitudes towards schooling is [understandably] cynical and discounting, and peoples who live lives of relative deprivation and powerlessness and study a curriculum with zero 'intrinsic value' to them: low SES; Aboriginal.
- d. the education of low SES students cannot be addressed with just [a] more money – this is necessary but not sufficient [b] better teachers – in the absence of research that identifies 'intrinsic value' within curriculum and teaching practice, what can be a 'good' teacher of low SES kids [or Aboriginal kids]. There needs to be a multi-faceted PLAN for the education of low SES students. There is no such thing now, despite the National Equity Agreements which focus on 'literacy and numeracy' [same problems as NAPLAN] and 'good teaching'. Dribble! Are we to believe that all the poor teachers are concentrated in low SES and Aboriginal schools. More dribble ... peddled by the self-servers. Experience tells us that these difficult schools have concentrations of committed and energetic teachers committed to making a difference whereas many of the erroneously reported 'elite' schools are staffed with higher concentrations of those who have 'retired' into a comfy school, 'coasters' relying on last year's notes, double-jobbers who have commercial distractions away from their students , and so on.

NB: NAPLAN does nothing to affect this pot-pourrie of educational misery...it just encourages corrupt practices within the soup, and measures the results emanating from the soupy mess.

3. Social Cohesion: when a country voluntarily splits its children and youth for 15 formative years, along ideological and privileged lines, it provides a fertile bed for the growth of nasty social ignorances, suspicions, jealousies and behaviours. Australia's social cohesion benefitted from 120 years of public schooling and

close-to-public Catholic schooling. The private-public landscaping engineered in recent decades has changed all this. This is not a matter of school funding. Gonski will do nothing to remedy this perilous situation. Nor will NAPLAN. Nor will “better teachers”.

4. No, it is a matter of [a] political perspective ... that is, one must be capable of SEEING the big picture] [b] agreeing on national purposes which reflect the nation’s preferred society [c] using those purposes to generate a curriculum structure and content to serve those purposes [d] place this new paradigm into Australia’s schools and fund those that follow the nation’s will.

Question: Then what is required? Answer: a new curriculum paradigm which has 2 parallel streams from Kindergarten to Year 12.

1. Essential: for 40-60% of the time schools will teach an Essential Curriculum, generated from the socio-politically generated set of Social

Purposes. It will be studied by all students in all schools, be cross-curriculum in its contributory research, engineering, construction, presentation and engagement/delivery, and will, by its intensely relevant nature, be of high interest to all students and, crucially, of intrinsic value [empowering] to otherwise disadvantaged students

2. Elective: for 40-60% of the time schools will teach the Elective Curriculum which will comprise all the currently well-know subject silos +

sectarian offerings + TAFE – related courses...and so on. The elective curriculum, including the sciences and performing arts, will be offered from Kindergarten this extending the power-inducing phenomenon of ‘choice’ to pervade the schooling years, and providing another source of high interest, high motivation in SPECIALISED areas not provided now, and, prospectively, a means of magnifying student interest ... al of which will play well for traditionally alienated disadvantaged students: low SES and Aboriginal

THIS [!!] is the elephant!!! What is needed more than NAPLAN, more than Gonski ... is a fair dinkum Education Research Centre, well resourced [maybe \$50 million/year] which has the job of researching what appears in this submission.

I have written on these matters in more erudite fashion in my Ph D thesis which can be accessed by anyone prepared to acknowledge their interest to me. It is entitled: Australian Schools: social purposes, social justice, social cohesion. It is long, but it deals with the 4 main problems confronting Australian schooling. It is hated alike by public school systems, private school systems, unions, subject ‘professional’

associations, the wealthy and privileged. Why? Because it challenges all their existence in their current form.

Thank you for this opportunity to enter a submission.

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