

In September last year, the government responded to the Gonski Review and promised legislation that would set up a new funding framework and enshrine the government's goal of having Australia in the top five schooling systems in the world by 2025.

The Gonski Report provides stark evidence and a nationally humiliating reminder that Australia does not have a high-performing education system as it does not combine quality with equity.

Professor Kenway¹ argues in her 2013 peer reviewed paper that, on social and educational equity grounds, if independent and Catholic schools are to receive government money, they should take their fair share of students in the lower SEA quartile as part of their contribution to the economic, social and educational fabric of Australia. The educational merits of social mix in schools, which the Gonski Report points to bolster this argument for disadvantaged students.

The Australian Education Bill 2012 does just that and for the first time links funding to benchmarks and measuring educational performance.

The Australian Education Bill 2012 sets out three goals for Australian schooling:

- to provide excellent education for all students,
- for Australian schooling to be highly equitable and
- for Australian schooling to be placed in the top five countries in reading, science and mathematics. Quality and equity are to be recognised in international testing by 2025.

The Bill states that 5 strategic reforms required to make this happen

- (1) Quality teaching
- (2) Quality learning
- (3) Empowered school leadership
- (4) Transparency and accountability
- (5) Meeting student needs

I would like to address my comments to only 2 issues raised by the Bill

1. The aims
2. The need for quality teaching to achieve those goals

I would like to comment on the aims of the Bill as distinct from the goals.

The Bill states that the reasons we need these reforms are and I quote:

¹ Jane Kenway (2013): Challenging inequality in Australian schools: Gonski and beyond, Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, DOI:10.1080/01596306.2013.770254

To create a highly skilled and successful workforce, strengthen the economy, and increase productivity, leading to greater prosperity for all.

Unfortunately then these strategic reforms are not aimed at enriching the lives of Australians or enhancing equity; instead they focus on the economic imperatives of competition, productivity and prosperity.

This legislation then is must be understood with an environment about competing with other countries, not improving on our own terms – and this is where it falls down. Professor Kenway asserts that:

Social democratic and 'recognition of differences' approaches have declined as the neoliberal project in education in Australia, and elsewhere, gained and sustained its ascendancy since the late 1980s. Subsequent attempts to address inequality in school education have had to subscribe to the associated dominant logics while also needing to challenge them in order to have any effect. In terms of equity, market liberalism and school choice have been the dominant policy discourses which, as Vickers (2005) makes clear, have led to a disastrous school funding model which has supported an exodus from the public sector, serious funding inequities between public and private schools and heavy burdens on the state sector which takes a disproportionate number of students needing extra resources and care.

While Prime Minister Julia Gillard has said the bill is about providing a "quality education for every Australian child", it is unlikely to get us there. And in fact, we're at risk of copying the mistakes made in other education systems.

Australia has been privileged last year to host two of the most outstanding education thinkers of our time – Dr Parsi Sahlberg Director General, Ministry for Education, Finland and American Professor of Education Michael Apple. Both were scheduled to talk with education department officials and – both had to reschedule discussions due to the "unpalatable" nature of their messages.

But the warning from them, and the example set by their two very different countries is clear. We should be cautious about the neo-liberal experiments underway in some education systems and take a closer look at what Sahlberg calls the GERM – the global educational reform movement.

This movement favours increased competition, spurious school choice, use of data from standardised tests to determine teacher pay and funding, more curriculum prescription, and stronger bureaucratic oversight through so-called accountability measures. Measures that are at the core of the Australian Education bill.

At the moment, these ideas are like an epidemic, infecting education systems. It travels with its advocates, an unquestioning media and politicians who are all too prepared to use education as a political football.

Australia too, is infected. With the publication of NAPLAN data and the league tables made possible in MySchool, our schools have indeed become ill, our teachers and students don't feel well, and the net result is the exact opposite of the intended improvement. These measures mean our children end up learning less, not more.

This Australian Education Bill 2012 serves to only further reinforce this movement and its ill-effects on our school education by legislating for the first time in our history that all schools, whether they are public or private, will receive public funds.

The legislation states that the funds are dependent on improving the performance of schools and school students and developing benchmarks. These performance benchmarks would then notionally foster “increased transparency in relation to schools, assessing and improving school performance; gathering and sharing evidence about the most effective methods of improving the performance of schools and school students”. The current use of student achievement tests (NAPLAN and other international tests) as the basis for making the claim about who are top tier global education systems is problematic. They are a convenient measure rather than an accurate one.

Such tests demonstrate student achievement across a relatively narrow range of student outcomes (generally knowledge rather than skills that are claimed by some such as Jensen, 2010 and takes no account of the goals of education in these jurisdictions, nor the contextual factors that impact student achievement including mono- cultural as opposed to multi-cultural contexts. Of more relevance is Australia’s comparison to countries such as Canada, who share a similar multi-cultural demographic

The Bill suggests that this will be accomplished through an emphasis on quality teaching and quality learning, empowered school leadership, transparency and accountability and meeting student need.

The implication is Australia does not have quality teachers, quality teaching and learning; that it has a disempowered leadership, lacks transparency or accountability and is not meeting the needs of students. Of course no one, to paraphrase noted education commentator, Sir Ken Robinson would want to lower standards.

But this is, by and large, untrue. And the problems that are there are unlikely to be fixed by performance pay raises, achievement scores, and standardised national testing.

There is robust evidence that these do not make curriculum better, prevent school drop outs, or enhance student achievement – in fact, it is exactly the opposite.

In her speech to Parliament Julia Gillard stated that “we now have clear evidence about how disadvantage holds many students back” and repeated a fallacy that teachers are the **biggest** factor in student performance.

It is without question that teachers have a major impact on the educational outcomes of any system. To say that it is the single greatest impact overstates and oversimplifies a very complex situation.

Our student teachers repeatedly answer the question: *Why Teach? With I want to make a difference*. Research with teachers in the field shows that and what defines and drives teachers is that fundamental belief in the transformative power of education and what it means to each individual child and the nation as a whole.

But to the extent to which teachers can actually transform the world of children? Noted Indigenous educator head of the Stronger Smarter Institute states that as a teacher:

“I can't do anything to fix everything out in the community, and it's probably not even my place to do that.”

We would like to think we can, but we cannot change the whole world.

Peer reviewed international and Australian research confirms that Professors David Berliner, Michael Apple Linda Darling-Hammond, Diane Ravitch, from the US Dr Parsi Sahlberg from Finland and Professor Hattie, at University of Melbourne—shows that when it comes to student outcomes and variables and attainment, teachers are responsible for between 20 to 30 per cent of the variables in student attainment. Fifty per cent of it is influenced by external factors to the school.

In fact, Coffield in his 2011 paper *Why the McKinsey Reports will not improve school systems*², tackles this claim which has been made in two McKinsey Reports. It is well established that while a wide range of factors that influence student learning outcomes apart from their teachers.

While the Bill is right in emphasising the need for high teacher quality – no-one calls for lowering standards as Sir Ken Robinson is famous for saying - would we want to revert back to the 1980s teacher shortage which saw importing those who couldn't get a job in England and the USA.

What we also need is relevant and well-designed curriculum and assessment; ordered and disciplined environments; acting early and providing student support; and a co-ordinated and joined-up education, in addition to quality of teaching.

All these contribute to a top tier educational system, rather than any one factor being dominant.

For example, relevant and well-designed curriculum will not have much impact if the assessment of the intended outcomes of such a curriculum is not well aligned to both the curriculum and the times. A 21st century curriculum and assessment regime must value knowledge not just as concepts that are understood, but also as ways of using such knowledge and creating new knowledge. So there needs to be more emphasis on what you can do with knowledge rather than the acquisition of it. Schools are knowledge institutions with particular characteristics that do not always fit into simple organizational management models.

What is missing from the Bill is the relationship between learning outcomes and well-being. In the education of the “whole child” as dictated by the Melbourne Declaration of Schooling, the well-being of a student as well as what and how they learn needs to be the focus in any system.

So while some may assert that a “good teacher can take an average child from the middle of the class to the top of a class within three years” – and this may or may not be valid, it cannot be the only measure of a successful top tier education system. A strong sense of belonging and attachment to society, community and family should also be part of judging success.

² Coffield, F., (2012) *Why the McKinsey Reports Will Not Improve School Systems* Journal of Education Policy, v27 n1 p131-149

Federal opposition education spokesman Christopher Pyne said a Coalition government would shift the education debate from a discussion about "more money" to one about "values"

"The first thing we could do is to make sure the training of our teachers at university is at world standard, and I don't believe it is"

He said a priority in government would be to improve the quality of teachers by bringing back "more traditional" teaching methods.

Mr Pyne said the first thing he would do in government would be to establish a ministerial advisory group to advise him "on the best model for teaching in the world".

He would ask the advisory group how the Coalition might:

"bring out more practical teaching methods based on more didactic teaching methods, more traditional methods rather than the child-centred learning that has dominated the system for the last 20, 30 or 40 years".

Mr Pyne refers to "Mounting evidence that suggests that primary school children or students with particular types of disadvantage would be better off being taught ... by direct or explicit instruction".

But the incoming president of the Australian College of Educators, Professor Stephen Dinham chair of teacher education at Melbourne University, said that teachers are being demonised in the debate about raising the standard of education and unfairly blamed for the nation's education system problems.

Professor Dinham cautioned against a return to a traditional "chalk and talk" method of teaching but saw some room for changes - without abandoning the need to be mindful of individual students' needs.

"The current funding model does work, it's not a broken model," Mr Pyne said.

Asked whether he agreed with the basic principle of the Gonski review, which is that Australia needs a world-best school system regardless of where you live, your income or the school you go to; Mr Pyne said "of course I agree with that" but he believed Australia already had such a system.

"Education is not just about money," he said. "It's about values, it's about teacher quality, curriculum, pedagogy and principal autonomy. That's where the debate needs to be, not this facile argument about who's offering more money."

Yet current research by Dr Joel Windle of Monash University, indicates that parental choice about school is a major factor influencing the increasing gap between our highest and lowest performing schools. His research shows that:

high SES families with children who are strong academic performers tend to be more active in school choice and more successful in gaining admission to high-demand schools. As a result of patterns in school choice, some schools have a concentration of relatively well-supported students, while others have a concentration of students with fewer resources from home and high learning needs.

This places an uneven burden on schools, and on teachers working in different settings.

In Professor Dinham's words "teaching had become the "battered profession" that was blamed for falling student scores".

Professor Dinham laments:

"the growing chorus of ill-informed half-baked solutions to the 'problem' of teacher quality", which misunderstood the profession and its challenges.

"However, it is apparent that rather than regarding teachers as our most precious assets, they are now being seen as our biggest problem when students fail to learn or reach the standards we have set for them individually and collectively."

Is it about money?

What are the facts?

Recent [pronouncements](#) by opposition education spokesperson Christopher Pyne, are replete with false assumptions based on flawed data. The claim that Australian school education funding has increased by 44% since 2009 has been repeated so often that it is now accepted as truth.

The fact is that the fundamental pattern of Australian government funding for schools is that most additional funding goes to non-government schools. OECD figures tell another story.

In 2001 Australia's education expenditure was 4.9% of GDP falling to 4.4% in 2008 before rising to 5.1% in 2009 as a result of the BER capital investment in all schools. Over the same period government education expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure in Australia fell from 14.2% to 12.9%.

Annual government expenditure on Australian government schools was \$US6980 per student, compared to the OECD average of \$US7262. Australia ranked 15th of the 22 OECD countries. The difference in spending on secondary students is even lower.

Finland's government expenditure on schools was \$US7178 per student. In Finland government expenditure on education was 6.1% of GDP in 2001 rising to 6.8% in 2009.

The Gonski reforms to school funding are front and centre in this election year. But despite their prominence, much of the plan – including who will pay – is yet to be decided.

But while we watch what happens next, some are still suggesting that funding isn't the problem in Australian education. They point to the funding spent on reducing class sizes as an example, arguing that this extra funding did not see better academic results.

The [Grattan Institute](#)'s [Dr Ben Jensen has recently revived this argument](#). And [many politicians](#) and those who want to reduce public school funding seem to agree.

Australian schools are struggling to meet the achievement levels of OECD leader Finland.

With the [release of the commissioned research reports for the Gonski Review of school funding](#) it is crucial that Australian education and the people responsible for its delivery take into consideration what policies work and do not work in equivalent educational systems in the OECD.

For 50 years education reforms adopted in Australia have been copied from (failed) projects in the USA or England.

These countries are well below Australia on [OECD rankings](#).

Our schools and teachers suffer from “[reform fatigue](#)”. The on and off again [national curriculum](#); [Teach for Australia](#); [performance based pay for teachers](#); [NAPLAN](#) testing; the [MySchool website](#) (that names and shames those schools who have been left to teach students no one else wants); [student vouchers](#); [streaming of students into gifted programs](#), [high achieving or other specialised schools](#); the division of school courses into [academic and practical](#); only serve to distract teachers from what they are employed to do: teach our children.

Significantly, the [overfunding](#) of private schools through the massive [transfer of public money](#) is at the very core of our problems.

In Victoria the successful and essential [Literacy and Numeracy coaching program](#) has been cut. The funding of the [Certificate of Applied Learning](#) is under threat. This will only impact the most underprivileged state schools and their students.

Why do Australian education ministers want to adopt practices that are shown by extensive research to only produce poor outcomes?

The failed policies of [No Child Left Behind](#) have been recanted even by their most [ardent proponents](#). These policies are still being touted by Australian advocates.

Each new government attempts to make its own political mark. It reverses the decisions of the previous one, changing curriculum and teaching. This only serves to only unsettle the system.

The Finns have used research to lead education policy over fifty years. Their governments have changed a system designed to support a small rural economy to become world leaders.

While Finland today spends a similar amount per student as [Australia](#), the percentage of Gross Domestic Product spent on all [education per head](#) in Australia has dropped from almost 5.5% in 1974 to 5.2% in 2010.

Over the same period Australian governments have transferred large amounts of public money to private schools. In the OECD 85% on average of the education budget goes to public education. In Australia it is less than 75% and falling.

More importantly the gap between Finland's lowest and top-performing students continues to narrow as [Australia's widens](#). In Finland the variation between school performances is among the lowest in the world. In Australia these variations can be traced directly to the [socio-economic status](#) of the parents.

Aim high

Recent [research](#) by the US based National Centre on Education and the Economy, analyses the strategies driving the education policy of Finland.

It found that these are in bleak contrast to the Australia's current agenda for education reform.

What we need are high expectations for all students. The resources to support students and teachers should be related to the school's needs. This can ensure that all students meet required standards.

Finland delivers the most funds and resources to students who are the most difficult to teach. These schools get the best teachers, and students get more time to enable them to catch up. This is exactly the opposite of what happens in Australia where education is based on the [sorting and selecting](#) of students.

In Australia we are still [debating](#) what [teacher quality](#) means. In Finland they focus on producing the highest quality teachers possible. [Quality teachers](#) are able to connect with students, engage, inspire, and communicate easily with them, and get inside their heads and figure out what they don't understand and find a way to help them understand it.

Teacher quality requires three things

A high level of [general intelligence](#). The understanding of subject knowledge. And a demonstrated high ability for [engaging students](#).

Three things also affect the quality of teachers. The status of teaching relative to the status of other occupations. The pay relative to other possible choices. And their conditions of work.

The Finns recruit only the highest achievers into teaching. We recruit very few teachers who are themselves educated to high levels.

Here in Australia entry requirements for the various faculties of education range from a high school year 12 rank [ATAR](#) of 65 to 85.

At the lower end these teachers could be only functionally literate and numerate!

The Finns require all teachers to have a master's degree, which Australia is slowly moving to implement. Candidates who already have a master's degree must get another master's degree in teaching. There are no ***alternative routes*** to entering the teaching force in Finland, no quick fix Teach for Australia equivalent.

Finnish teachers also receive extensive post graduate training. Here in Australia the available time for [professional development of teachers](#) has only diminished. It now often occurs during holiday breaks! All in the name of productivity offsets.

Finland rejects the belief that education is only for society's elites. Here in Australia we continue to promote a segregated [sorting and selecting of children](#). Only some students (the select few) expect intellectually demanding curricula.

Paradoxically our system funnels public money toward the easiest students to teach (those in private schools who are already achieving well above average results). This only removes the resources from those hardest to educate who need it most.

[National testing](#) does not exist in Finland. While schools and their teachers assess students regularly, this is not used for accountability purposes. Nor is it used as the basis of teachers' compensation or streaming students as is we do in Australia.

In Finland public money is for public schools. Over the past 40 years Australia has moved responsibility for education from the public to the private sector.

This only further advantages society's elites. The result in Australia is that families with economic power use education to advantage their children.

Must we wait for our politicians to understand what is necessary and required? Our children are being failed by an education that drives those parents who can afford it from the public system.

High quality staff, equitable funding and coherent systems are the key to a highly successful public education system.

The government [has finally delivered its policy response](#) to the Gonski report, including sweeping changes to how schools are funded and new benchmarks that aim to see Australian schools ranked in the world's top five by 2025.

[In a speech to the National Press Club](#), Prime Minister Julia Gillard said there would be extra funding for schools (without nominating a dollar figure). But she said this extra money would not be available until somewhere between 2014 and 2020.

Previously she promised funding increases across the sector, [even for independent schools](#).

In her speech, she spoke of three “truths” – that Australia needed to look to our neighbours and aim higher for every child in every school; that Australia must improve the education of our poorer children; and the key to all of this is to lift teacher quality.

But underlying these truths is a more complicated reality that should have been part of the government’s message.

First truth

First the prime minister stated that Australia has been left out of the top five world ranked schooling systems, but “four of the top five ... are in our region.” But here Gillard is not giving us the full picture which would show why catching up with East Asia is a questionable goal.

What she didn’t say is that in the four schooling systems in Asia, as well as the Finnish school system, the vast majority of children attend well-funded and well-resourced public schools where their teachers are highly esteemed.

She also omits to tell us that in the four systems in our region that seem to be doing so well, not everything is as it seems. Their lauded results rely on parents [paying](#) for [extra tutoring](#), with over 80% of 15 year-old students in Korea and Japan and about 70% of students in Shanghai and Singapore attending private tutoring lessons in mathematics. In Japan, families spent \$12 billion in 2010 on private tutoring.

Children in these countries are also made to [cram](#) for exams through rote learning while others are removed from school if they are not performing to standard.

Attributing high performance of East Asian school systems solely to better teacher training, mentoring and remuneration is simplistic and misunderstands [what teachers do](#).

OECD analysis of the [PISA results](#) show that students who attend after school classes in Hong Kong, Korea and Taipei achieve higher results with the improvement being equivalent to six to 12 months of learning. These benefits largely accrue to socio-economically advantaged students who participate more frequently in these classes.

Giving additional funding to the already privileged private schools, as has been suggested by the government, will **not** alter this.

Second truth

Gillard states that “by year three, 89% of children from the poorest quarter of Australian homes are reading below average.”

The parents of these children expect that they’re “being taught to read and write while they’re at school. And they’re not.”

If teachers are not teaching children to read and write then what does the Prime Minister think that they are doing out there? The issue is that the children from disadvantaged backgrounds are not learning as well or as fast as their more advantaged peers of the middle class.

This is not the fault of their teachers but as so much [research](#) shows is a direct result of socio-economic disadvantage compounded over time to create educational inequity of outcomes and performance.

With 80% of disadvantaged children attending government schools around the country, it is therefore no surprise that these teachers are struggling to overcome generational poverty and disadvantage.

When these children enter school at prep level they are already behind. And they will never catch up unless extra funding is given to support them.

Third truth

In Australia, the first to be [blamed](#) is the classroom teacher. Ms Gillard has done this again today.

The PM stated today that she wants “teachers ... to be of the highest calibre”. She promised higher standards for teachers, with at least a term’s classroom experience for student teachers before graduation from university.

Preparing teachers takes at least four years. Current qualification requirements already see student teachers in schools for more than 15 weeks, this is more than the one term she calls for.

But how does the PM expect to raise teacher education entrance requirements and school-based time in professional experience to happen by 2020, especially without additional funding to the faculties of education who are doing that preparation?

Teachers in our public schools are educated in the same faculties of education as their private school counterparts, and research shows high performing graduates from these institutions equally take up positions in private and public schools.

As the PM acknowledges “the average child from the same battling family is three years behind classmates from the most well-off quarter of Australian homes”. Giving more funds to private schools is certainly **not** going to help these kids in any way.

Claims made about learning, like that by Mr Pyne³ recently, also have underlying assumptions that learning is linear, when international peer reviewed research (such as those based in a constructivist or socio-cultural paradigms from an educational perspective and brain science from a scientific perspective which has recently been rejected by Mr Pyne) clearly supports that it is a highly individualistic enterprise and very rarely linear. So Jensen’s arguments about gains made per year, while sound from an economic point view, do not represent the reality of student learning.

In responding to the aspirational statement that if “we invest in the right reforms to support quality teaching, 15 year old Victorian’s could bridge the gap within a decade”, we need to ask is that all we aspire to do and what are the “right reforms”.

³ <http://www.pyneonline.com.au/media/speeches-media/sydney-institute-address-achieving-teacher-quality-the-coalitions-approach>

Useful in answering what might be the right reforms is to look at other jurisdictional responses, but with the view that for many systems that have similar characteristics to our own (for example the UK and USA), we are outperforming them. What is of use is looking at the reforms implemented by countries such as Canada and to some extent New Zealand, who share similarities with our own context, and increasingly some European contexts (e.g. Germany) as they become increasingly multi-cultural. Preliminary research reported by Laura Perry and Andrew McConney from Murdoch University based on their ARC grant exploring cross-national comparison of school SES and student outcomes indicates that SES is not the predictor of achievement in Canada that it is in Australia.

Such comparison begins to shed light on what might be unique about the Australian context and hence which reforms may have better traction than others.

How do we measure teacher quality?

As indicated by Grattan Institute's Dr Ben Jensen, performance measures need to be qualitative and developmental in nature, rather than managerial and compliance based.

In fact there is some evidence to suggest that focusing on compliance issues may result in teachers who pay attention to students outcomes data for personal rewards and resist the learning opportunities that teaching in hard to staff and rural and remote regions may provide.

It also means that our educational leaders (Principals) need to be committed to implementing a system of professional learning including coaching and mentoring, rather than tolerating non-performance.

Regular school based reviews with the opportunity for targeted professional learning, where there is a focus on building collective accountability and self assessment and monitoring, are all part of a performance system in a knowledge institution.

Teaching is a collaborative effort and a performance system based on individual rewards tears apart the need for collaboration. Performance systems that do something about introducing flexibility in career structures, including raising the status of teaching; rewards professional growth; provides multiple career paths and insists on paying attention to the education and nurturing of new professionals as they engage in their initial education and beginning career are some examples of the approaches that are needed.

As with students, each teacher has their own talents - to compare and rate teachers is fraught with difficulty.

Fullan (2011)⁴ argues forcefully, and based on large-scale quantitative research, that no successful education reform has ever been driven by what he calls the 'wrong drivers' – namely accountability; leadership rewards; fragmented strategies and technological solutions.

⁴ Fullan, M., (2011) Choosing the wrong drivers for whole system reform, Centre for Strategic Education Seminar Series 204. CSE, East Melbourne.

<http://www.michaelfullan.ca/home> articles?SeminarPaper204.pdf

He stresses that teacher appraisal does not work unless teachers themselves are motivated to learn from this. He concludes from successful systems that teacher ownership, plus trust and respect for teachers is paramount. His message is overwhelmingly to invest in social capital which focuses on collaborative system-wide improvement, not human capital, which seeks to reward individuals.

Improvement of the day-to-day work of teachers could also be achieved as reported by Alexander (2009) if we resist the temptation to continually create policy that interrupts teachers' ability to do good work. The intensification of teacher's work and its contribution to teacher stress and burnout is highlighted for example by Gardner and Williamson, 2004 and Williamson and Myhill, 2008.

It is often reported that:

fewer than 30% of principals feel new teachers are well prepared to communicate with parents, manage classroom activities well, and provide effective support and feedback to students" are reported in isolation.

In research by Corrigan and Loughran (2008) and Zyngier (2010) graduate teachers reported that appointed mentors (experienced teachers in schools) did not engage in pedagogical conversations with them, they did not feel well supported by the school in entering the profession and that the demands made upon them were narrowly defined to be enculturated into the school rather than to develop their own intellectual, technical and emotional skills for the teaching profession.

As Fullan, Hargreaves and others continually highlight, teaching cannot be reduced to technical competencies and we should not demand it to be only this.

Once again the blame is being shifted downwards – shifting responsibility to those who can have little or no impact on the lives of students and families in their care.

Australia performs very well by international standards; however, there are some disturbing trends that have appeared over the a number of years, not least of which is the fact that Australia is flat-lining to an extent, with its achievement rates at the top end being outperformed by a number of countries in the last few years. At the same time, disturbingly, we are seeing the long tail of inequity that continues to prevail in the context of Australian education outcomes for our students.

Peer reviewed research and international reports demonstrate that there is a growing achievement gap between our students in Australia.

For the first time in our education history we have a national accreditation scheme for universities and, through that accreditation scheme, universities will have to demonstrate that their programs—and ultimately their qualifications—will lead to graduates who meet a minimum set of standards called the Graduate Standards.

Resourcing for teacher quality?

Quality teaching and learning requires recognising and building on significant developments in recent years aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in Australia, rather than ignoring them in favour of simplistic 'expensive and quick fix solutions' like Teach Next and Teach for Australia which the evidence from both the USA

and England shows have failed there to raise student outcomes and in fact have led to declines in student learning..

Dr Jensen⁵ from the Grattan Institute has found that *no system has discovered a way to address inequality with inadequate resources -- in order to do this we require he states "detailed understanding of the complexities of effective teaching and learning.*

Additional resources for schools is not only for the purpose of the programs you implement but also for the ongoing professional development and professional learning of teachers in order to ensure that we have best practice in our classrooms.

Grattan Institute research on East Asian education top performers confirms what we know: teachers must be given time to participate in sophisticated professional learning opportunities for teachers where teachers are given the time and space in schools, in their work setting, in order to engage in that collegial dialogue and development with their peers.

What is the impact of SES

The repeated claims by Dr Donnelly that parents contribute between 5-10% and that socio-economic background and it is "not that important, what is important is the culture of the school, school discipline, classroom management, teacher and curriculum quality, student ability and student motivation ... its really about what the school can do" are totally fallacious and based on misunderstanding and wilful misinterpretation of the research. Donnelly quotes 2001 a report by ACER researcher Gary Marks that:

"socioeconomic background, "accounts for less than 10 per cent of the variation in both tertiary entrance score and university participation" .

Dr Donnelly has unfairly and selectively quoted from Marks' which in its entirety found that:

- "The three major dimensions of socioeconomic background – parental education, wealth and occupational status – are all correlated with ENTER scores.
- Students whose parents are professionals and, to a lesser extent, managers exhibit higher ENTER scores.
- After taking into account students' levels of literacy and numeracy [which are of course impacted by the above 2 factors!], the influence of socioeconomic background is considerably weaker.
- Dr Marks argues in a 2012 publication that *"School-SES effects are strong because they are proxies for school-prior achievement."*

Well that is stating the obvious!

- Donnelly also has recently selectively [mis] quoted from European research by Schütz, West, & Wöbmann⁶ to estimate whether student achievement depends more or less on SES in school systems.

⁵ http://grattan.edu.au/static/files/assets/b8e7dc66/057_report_education_investing_teachers.pdf

⁶ Gabriela Schütz, Martin R. West, Ludger Wöbmann (2007) School Accountability, Autonomy, Choice, and the Equity of Student Achievement International Evidence from PISA 2003 DOI 10.1787/246374511832

Longitudinal peer reviewed research, which was taken into consideration by the Gonski Panel through its own commissioned research shows that the greatest variable in student performance is the **socio-economic status** of their parents.

In conclusions what we can expect unfortunately from this legislation is more competition through bogus school choice – where schools compete against each other, principals compete against each other, teachers compete against each other.

As the Prime Minister stated in her speech introducing the Bill, “we test the reading, writing and mathematics of our children and publish the results of those tests”.

And if achievement as measured by these standardised test scores do not rise, then teachers and principals’ jobs will be on the line.

The Nous Group research for the Gonski Review Panel states that:

The issue is manifestly not just about rich and poor schools, rich and poor populations or about academic selectivity. It is also about whose losses are whose gains, about who ‘gives up’ what? As Teese (2007) explains, the poorest schools: give up trained teachers through high turnover, they give up their best pupils through drift to other schools, they give up more advantageous staffing through the formal equity of class size reductions that have benefited mainstream schools disproportionately to need.

Nous Group also suggests ‘actively encouraging high-performing schools to take in cohorts of under-performing students’, It also says:

while controversial, we do need to question the extent to which public funds should continue to subsidise those already well-resourced selective schools that are not providing ‘value-add’ in terms of student performance. In our view there ought to be some pressure on schools to take on more under-performing students and demonstrate their quality through student performance over and above what would have been expected from past performance. This may mean restructuring some or all of the public subsidies so that they are retrospective and ‘reward-based’. (Nous Group, 2011, p. 9)