PD coordinators e-news

AEU
AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION

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In This Issue

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Spin offs!

Malcolm shows his true colours

"I suspect no federal government would retreat from funding and continuing to support the nongovernment school sector because there would be a concern that they would not get a fair go from state governments".

[Malcolm Turnbull, calling for a two tier system of schooling with the Federal Government funding only non-government schools - government schools would be funded by a state income tax. ANU research revealed Victorian public schools would be between 3 per cent and 7 per cent worse off under this plan, Sydney Morning Herald, 31/3/16]

The Gonski train derailed

"It's like building a train line that costs

Dear Colleague,

Welcome to the second edition of the 2016 PD Coordinators e-news. We welcome any suggestions about the content or format of the e-news.

If there is someone else at your school who should receive this e-news (and is an AEU member) please forward it on to them. They will be put on our Coordinators email network once we receive their email address.

> Past copies of the Coordinator e-news are available here.

News: Victorian

Concern over censoring of VCE texts

The Victorian Minister for Education, James Merlino, has ordered the VCAA to review its text selection process for VCE English, literature, drama and theatre studies.
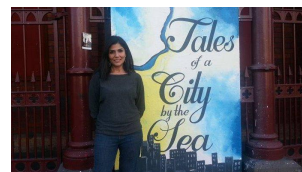
The Minister requested the VCAA "extend" its guidelines "to ensure that the views and sensitivities of cultural and religious groups are considered". The Minister's request came after protests by Jewish lobby groups against the inclusion in the VCE drama list of the play *Tales of a City by the Sea* by the Palestinian playwright Samah Sabawi.

The lobby groups claimed that the play promoted an anti-Israel agenda. A range of leading writers have objected to any attempt to exclude or censor texts (which may offend certain groups) rather than encourage students to think critically about them.

[Timna Jacks, *Screening of VCE literature sparks censorship claim*, The Age, 27/5/16].

Chinese Government Funding Public Schools

The Chinese Government is funding the teaching of Chinese in public primary and secondary schools in Victoria and New South Wales through a program called "Confucius Classrooms".

The program provides Chinese language and culture courses. Schools receive $10,000 to introduce the program, $10,000 per year for "books or cultural materials" and are supplied with "teaching assistants" who are hired and paid by Hanban in China.

$5 billion and takes six years to build, but you stop building it halfway through. Once you start digging a hole for the train tunnel, there won't be a train going through for years, and education is the same."

Reds under Eric's bed

"It wasn't about bullying, it was about some sexuality agenda in the Marxist cause, and frankly mums and dads didn't want that."

[From the wonderful world of Eric Abetz, Coalition Government power-broker in the Senate, revealing some innermost thoughts about the Safe Schools program. ABC Online, 20/3/16]

From Boys to Men (2)

"Is he a whinger, a complainer, self-absorbed, an exaggerator, loose with the truth, a passive doormat, displaying negative body language, an approval addict, a try hard, critical or a bad sport?"

[Melissa Anderson, Brighton Grammar School's "resilience coach", describing boys who have been bullied at the school. The school placed the coach's advice calling for victims to accept responsibility for being bullied on its website. Brighton GS also featured in the Term 1 edition of the e-news.]

Publications

Professional Voice

The next edition of *Professional Voice* should become available in July. It contains articles about a range of issues of current concern and debate. They include class

The program is administered through the Confucius Institute network with its headquarters in Beijing's agency known colloquially as Hanban, the Office of the Chinese Language Council.

In Victoria two separate Confucius Institutes - hosted at, but independent of, Melbourne University and La Trobe University - administer and coordinate the program across 12 public and private schools. In NSW the Confucius Institute in the Department of Education has responsibility for setting up the programs in four primary and nine secondary public schools.

Concerns have been raised about the propriety of a foreign government paying for the program in public schools and having its own input into its content. Qualified teachers are supposed to be present during lessons but it is not clear how many are fluent in Chinese.

[Kelsey Munro and Hannah Francis, S*chools paid $10,000 to teach Chinese*, The Age, 29/5/16]

Prep Testing for Learning Difficulties

All children beginning prep in a Victorian school will be tested for dyslexia and other learning difficulties under a new State Government program.

Teachers will use the online Early Years Screening Tool to assess each child's literacy abilities, including reading, writing, speaking and listening.

An online tool is already used by state schools to test prep students' English skills, but upgrades to the tool will now allow teachers to identify students who have specific learning difficulties - including those related to speech and articulation, auditory processing and handwriting difficulties.

It follows concerns that too many children - particularly those with dyslexia or "the invisible disability" - have been slipping through the cracks.

The Australian Council for Educational Research developed the changes, which will help teachers recognise handwriting difficulties and issues related to speech, articulation and auditory processing.

It is estimated that between 10 to 16 per cent of Australian students have a learning disability, which includes dyspraxia, dyscalculia and dyslexia, a common neurological disorder that affects the ability to read.

The revamped program, which fulfils a Labor election promise, will begin in government and non-government schools next year.

Learning difficulties can be treated. For those affecting reading and spelling, this might involve a phonics-based program (linking letters to speech sounds), letting children use technology such as voice-to-text software, and using forms of assessment that don't involve writing.

ACER chief executive Professor Geoff Masters said the changes would help teachers target their teaching more effectively by providing them with more evidence to identify potential learning difficulties.

"We know that students start school with very different levels of literacy knowledge and understanding," he said.

[Henrietta Cook, Every prep child to be screened for dyslexia under new program, The Age, 2/4/16]

Tech Schools are Back

The Victorian Government has committed $125 million to create 10

size, the impact of digital labour on teachers and the Safe Schools controversy.

Professional Voice is mailed out to all members of the AEU Coordinator networks.

TLN Journal

The latest TLN Journal is now out in schools.
The theme of this edition is "education for sustainability".
The seven articles cover a broad range of possibilities related to the concept of sustainability

"high-tech centres of learning" (to be nostalgically called "tech schools") across the state. $100 million of the funding is for capital works and $25.37 million for operating funding up until the end of the 2018/2019 financial year.

The centres will be set up in Ballarat, Banyule, Bendigo, Casey, Geelong, Gippsland, Monash, Whittlesea, Wyndham and Yarra Ranges. They are scheduled to open in 2017 and 2018.

Tech Schools will be managed and operated by a partnership of local schools, local government, TAFE, university and industry partners. Tech School students will still be enrolled in their local secondary school but will attend classes at a Tech School campus that is shared with the many other schools in their region.

The partnership will collectively manage the school and determine the particular specialities and subjects each Tech School will offer. Where possible, the schools will be co-located on TAFE or university campuses, to introduce students to the tertiary education environment and smooth their pathways into post-secondary education and training.

Tech Schools will have a strong emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths). There will be discovery and taster programs and "master classes" for Years 7-10 using leading-edge technology and teaching programs based on inquiry learning.

At Years 11 and 12 Tech Schools will provide vocational education and training (VET) courses. They will complement the region's existing VET provision with a focus on preventing duplication and addressing any gaps. Tech Schools will also provide enrichment and extension courses, and offer access to higher education through master classes.

Schools that are part of the local partnership group can send their students along to participate in the full range of programs and facilities. Once established, each Tech School will have a director and support staff.

Victoria defies Feds on Safe Schools

The Victorian Government has reaffirmed its support for the original Safe Schools program. This comes after resources were taken down from the program's national website following the Turnbull Government's "review" which deemed them to be inappropriate for students.

On 15 May the Victorian Government launched its own Safe Schools website containing the original material which had been removed from the federal government's amended version.

Schools across the country are able to access the Victorian site and were encouraged to do so by the Premier, Daniel Andrews, who commented:

"The Safe Schools program works. It saves lives in school communities right across our state and I get my advice on policy from the experts, not from bigots, not from people who really ought to be ashamed of themselves in terms of their views and their tampering with a program that actually works".

The State Government has indicated that it will spend $1 million of its own money on the Victorian Safe Schools program. Unlike other states which adhere to the Federal Government changes, Victoria will not receive Commonwealth funds (about $300,000).

The Victorian Minister for Education, James Merlino, said young same-sex attracted people were six times more likely to attempt

suicide and the program "saves lives".

"We know that 75 per cent of same-sex attracted young people are bullied and the vast majority of that occurs in our schools and that's why we need a universal anti-bullying program in our schools," he said.

"This has never been an issue about the Safe Schools coalition, this has always been about the views of the extreme elements within the Liberal Party."

The Victorian Government has announced that all secondary schools will become part of the Safe Schools network by 2018.

Latest Developments

Despite the program having received funding and support under the Baillieu-Napthine governments, the Victorian Opposition has announced that it will scrap the program if it wins the 2018 state election.

Roz Ward, the Safe Schools Coalition Manager for Victoria, has been reinstated to her position by La Trobe University. The university suspended Ms Ward without pay over a Facebook post about the Australian flag. It reversed this decision after indications that its actions were "unlawful".

Page-Tearing Censorship

In April, St Francis Xavier College in Berwick censored a <u>health workbook</u>, ordering students to destroy a page referring to premarital sex and homosexuality.

The controversy unfolded on the last day of term one when year 9 students were called into the hall and told they could not leave until they had thrown a page of the textbook in the bin. A number of students refused to rip out the requested page and tore out another page instead.

The workbook included a photo of two men hugging and smiling, and listed different sexual preferences including heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality and asexuality.

It also asked students when they thought it was appropriate to start having sex.

The content was created by publisher MacMillan as part of its service which lets teachers make customised workbooks. It included links to a mental health website which provided information about "losing your V plates".

Principal Vincent Feeney said students were asked to remove the page because it referred to issues that would be better handled in religious education classes.

News: National

FEDERAL ELECTION

The following represents the school education election commitments and policies of the major political parties at the time of publication.

Turnbull Government Policy for Schools and Teachers

The Turnbull Government launched its schools policy (*Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes*) just two days prior to the 2016 Federal Budget.

Funding

The policy included an additional $1.2 billion for schools over the three years 2018-2020. The increase was based on what it referred to as "an education specific" indexation rate of 3.56%. This still fell far short of the $4.5 billion required for the final two years of Gonski, and the indexation rate of 4.7%. It is also in stark contrast to the $1.1 billion that Victoria alone would receive in years 5 and 6 of the Gonski agreement.

This grudging increase is an indication of the pressure the Turnbull Government had been under from the AEU's Gonski campaign. Until May of this year the Federal Government position, outlined in the Hockey 2014 Budget, was that all future school funding increases would be limited to the CPI, around 2.5% or less.

Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes sets out a series of future school funding principles of which the first two are:

- The funding model must be "affordable" and must not "commit future governments to unaffordable arrangements" (reference to Gonski funding)

- The funding model must provide money for every student and support parental choice (reference to private schools)

The document does not explain why needs-based funding for education is "unaffordable" while funding for many other government priorities, such as lowering the tax of companies and high-income individuals, is "affordable".

New Requirements for Schools and Teachers

The policy document sets out a set of conditions it wants to place on its new funding model because, it contends, "it matters more how resources are spent rather than how much is spent".

In other words it has abandoned the Gonski needs-based funding quantum (and a commitment to the main recipients of this; students in government schools) and wants to impose a new set of requirements on schools and teachers before they can receive anything from its new funding model.

The proposed funding conditions include:

- State IR agreements need to link pay progression to nationally agreed Australian Professional Standards and high performing teachers should be recognised and rewarded with increased pay.

- All new principals should be certified through a new national certification process before their appointment. They will become a "Certified Practicing Principal" through the evaluation of a portfolio of evidence.

- Teachers to be required to use "explicit literacy and numeracy instruction in schools".

- Children to be assessed in reading, "phonics" and numeracy during Year 1.

- All schools will be required to provide parents with a literacy and numeracy report every year.

- Within five years students will be required to attain a minimum standard of literacy and numeracy to complete Year 12 and must successfully complete an English or humanities subject and a maths or science subject to gain an ATAR score.

- States will be encouraged to free up their Permission-to-Teach requirements to allow fluent languages speakers to be employed in schools without a teacher qualification.

- States to be encouraged to "incentivise high-performing teachers to work in disadvantaged schools".

Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes - May 2016

Labor's Election Commitments

Labor has made a commitment to fully fund (at the rate of 4.7%) the last two years of the Gonski funding agreements and to reverse the $30 billion reduction to school funding over the next decade revealed by the Coalition in its 2014 budget.

The policy is expected to cost an extra $4.5 billion over 2018 and 2019, with the total package estimated to cost $37.3 billion over the decade.

Labor will also provide $320 million in additional funding for students with disability for three years from 2017 while working with the states on a new disability loading.

Its other announcements about schools and teachers include:

- Every student in Australia will have the opportunity to learn coding and computational thinking in school and a National Coding in Schools centre will be established where business and industry can connect with teachers.

- A STEM teacher training fund will be set up to support 25,000 primary and secondary school teachers over five years to undertake professional development in STEM disciplines. It will also provide 25,000 Teach STEM scholarships over five years, to address the shortage of qualified teachers. Recipients will get $5,000 when they commence a teaching degree and $10,000 when they complete their first year of teaching.

- A Labor government will commit $9.6 million over eight years to provide 400 teacher training scholarships to increase the number of Indigenous teachers in the classroom. Scholarships will be valued at $5,000 per year of full time study and will be available for up to four years of continuous study.

100 scholarships will be offered each school year from 2017.

Schooling Commitments from The Greens

The Greens are committed to fully funding years 5 and 6 of the Gonski agreements.

They will fund an extra $1.1 billion for disability in schools in 2016-17, indexed at 4.7% across the forward estimates, giving an extra $4.8 billion over four years.

The aim of this policy is to close the gap between the number of students in Australia with a disability identified by the 2015 Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (467,842) and the number being funded (190,887 in 2013).

The Greens have committed $678.9m over four years to increasing STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) uptake in schools and universities.

These initiatives will include STEM professional development for primary school teachers, incentives for high school graduates to study STEM courses at university, incentives for university STEM graduates to enter the teaching profession, support for a national rollout of the Club Kidpreneur Foundation program to primary schools and start-up curriculum development for schools and universities.

News: International

Teachers want Smaller Class Sizes

A survey of 4,300 UK teachers placed smaller class sizes a long way ahead of any other option when asked to prioritise how any extra resources to improve learning should be allocated.
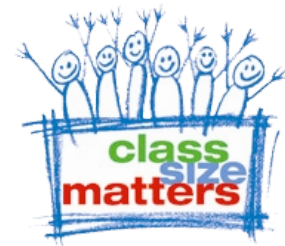
The Times Educational Supplement survey results were:

56.4%	Smaller class sizes
10.9%	Better teacher pay
8.4%	More teaching time
4%	Better school leadership

The findings prompted a debate about the gap between the views of teachers and oft-quoted research used by governments and departments of education to contend that smaller class sizes do not lead to significant learning gains for students.

Professor Peter Blatchford from the University College London Institute of Education refers to the disparity between the professional (teachers) view and that of policy related commentary as the Class Size Conundrum. He believes that the main reason for the disparity is that teachers have a wider set of outcomes in mind than simply scores on attainment tests.

Blatchford, a leading researcher into the effect of class size on student outcomes, and the head of the international Class Size and Effective Teaching Network, has found that smaller classes do make a difference, particularly for young students and low achieving older students and those with special educational needs.

He believes that further research needs to be carried out to identify the most effective pedagogical strategies to be used with students in smaller classes.

[adapted from: Kaye Wiggins, Teachers prefer smaller class sizes to pay rises, TES, 6/5/2016]

Peter Blatchford has written an article about research into class size for the next edition of *Professional Voice*.

Professional Development Coordination

Theories of Teacher Learning and Change

James Spillane identified three underlying theories of teacher learning and change:

1. behaviorist
2. situated
3. cognitive

In his US research study Spillane found that 85 percent of the leaders he interviewed held views that reflected a *behaviorist* perspective; they sought to motivate teachers primarily through external rewards. For them, staff development consisted of transmitting information (from experts) to teachers, who had to be properly motivated

and monitored to ensure adoption of new programs. Teacher coaches became central office confederates relaying information and ensuring compliance.

A handful of leaders held views that reflected a *situated* perspective. They sought to motivate teacher learning through creating a collegial school culture. They tapped early adopters of new strategies to proselytize others in hopes of creating a tipping point in which all teachers felt socially persuaded to adopt a new strategy.

Only one leader in Spillane's study held views aligned with a *cognitive* perspective, seeing people as natural-born inquirers motivated by a need for self-actualization. This leader focused on teachers as individual learners; she observed them to understand their prior knowledge and beliefs, and then tailored their learning to support their individual growth.

In practice, the lines between these perspectives are usually more dotted than solid. Effecting change in teaching practices appears to require balancing all three motivators-for example, using external experts to spark change (a behaviorist impulse); encouraging schoolwide professionalism (a situated response); and giving teachers freedom to *adapt* (rather than *adopt)* practices to their own students (a cognitive motivator)- while relying on standard protocols for observing and coaching (akin to a situated approach).

The pressure of top-down accountability perpetuates a paradigm that seems to prompt leaders to align staff development with a behaviorist approach alone.

In the end, how leaders think about change seems to be more than an abstract, academic matter: It influences not only what elements of professional development they employ, but also how they tune and align those elements with other approaches so that, together, they strike the right chord.

[From Bryan Goodwin, *Does Teacher Collaboration Promote Teacher Growth?* Educational Leadership, Vol.73 No 4]

Research Digest

Does Money Matter in Education?

There has been a great deal of noise from the Federal Government and its allies in the News Ltd media, particularly The Australian, that there is no correlation between spending on schooling and improved student outcomes. They use this as a justification to reject the findings and recommendations of the Gonski review into school funding.

Despite the robust research base of the Gonski review, the proponents of this contention always claim that their position is backed by "research". Generally, the research is either not cited or limited to one or two studies which only partially support their argument.

A comprehensive review of this issue - *Revisiting the Age-Old Question: Does Money Matter in Education? (second edition)* - by Rutgers University Professor Bruce Baker was published in January of this year. Baker concludes that "on average, aggregate measures of per-pupil spending are positively associated with improved or higher student outcomes."

He states that the size of this effect is larger in some studies than in others, and in some cases additional funding matters more for some students than for others. He also states that there are other factors which may moderate the influence of funding on student outcomes, such as how the money is spent - in other words the money must be spent wisely to yield benefits.

Taking account of all of these factors: "on balance, in direct tests of the relationship between financial resources and student outcomes, money matters".

Baker looked at a second research question in his study: Do schooling resources that cost money not matter?

He concluded that: "Schooling resources that cost money, including smaller class sizes, additional supports, early childhood programs and more competitive teacher compensation (permitting schools and districts to recruit and retain a higher-quality teacher workforce), are positively associated with student outcomes."

Again he found that, in some cases, those effects are larger than in others, and there is also variation by student population and other contextual variables. "On the whole, however, the things that cost money benefit students, and there is scarce evidence that there are more cost-effective alternatives."

The third issue researched by Baker was whether sustained improvements to the level and distribution of funding across local public school districts can lead to improvements in the level and distribution of student outcomes.

He concluded that: "While money alone may not be the answer, more equitable and adequate allocation of financial inputs to schooling provides a necessary underlying condition for improving the equity and adequacy of outcomes." In other words, a more equitable distribution of school funding (such as the Gonski needs-based funding model) can improve student outcomes.

The AEU has recently published *Getting Results:* Gonski funding in Australian schools. It consists of information from schools around Australia about how Gonski funds are making a difference to student learning programs in their schools.

Digital Labour in Schools

A recent study of "digital labour" in two public secondary schools in Victoria by Professor Neil Selwyn from Monash University found that digital technologies are implicated in some of the worst aspects of teachers' work, but also support some of its most meaningful aspects.

Changes to the nature and forms of control over teachers' work (eg the emphasis on accountability, target setting, performance indicators etc) have coincided with a sustained integration of digital technologies into schools. The study looked at the interaction of these developments and their impact on each other.

It found that technology worked with existing trends to decrease the autonomy and capacity of teachers to self-regulate their work.

The study scopes the various forms of digital labour teachers use including: office-software, smart phones, email, online PD, social media and, most important of all, school-wide systems such as "Compass".

Compass was involved in most aspects of teachers' work across the two schools. It was integrated with a number of behind the scenes administrative platforms including the timetable, payroll and personnel records, workload management spreadsheets, various online monitoring and surveillance systems, communication between parents and the school and mass messaging to specific classes, year groups and the whole school.

Compass was used to audit, measure and quantify the effectiveness and success of teacher work and to administer surveys and polls to students in attempts to ascertain their experiences of teaching. The higher visibility of online work prompted many teachers to carefully consider how they were presented.

The study found that across both schools "technology constituted a means for some teachers to be seen to be (not) performing well and/or (not) working efficiently".

IT staffing at the two schools had been subcontracted to private companies. Teachers' online activity was passively monitored by contractor employees through software such as "Mail Radar" and "Forefront Threat Management"

Selwyn noted that the most prevalent theme throughout his interviews with teachers was the intensification of teacher work through technology use. The blurred work lines between school and home, which have traditionally characterised teacher work, had been further extended by the use of technology. The "always-on" nature of mobile phones, email and other online communications "is undoubtedly extending the times and places of teachers' work".

While interviewees described digital technology as making their work more manageable, most of them also saw it as allowing them to complete greater amounts of work, making work "smarter but not necessarily shorter".

It also had the effect of converting some elements of work into "casual digital labour" - mundane online tasks that do not "feel, look or smell like labour at all".

[From Neil Selwyn, *'Always on': teachers' work in the digital age.* There will be an article by Neil Selwyn on the digital labour of teachers in the next edition of *Professional Voice*]

Statistics

Disparities between Secondary Schools

Variance between school performance in PISA

	2000 Reading	2003 Maths	2009 Reading	2012 Maths
Australia	20%	22%	26%	28%
Finland	8%	5%	9%	8%

The disparity in performance between schools in Australia in PISA testing of 15-year-olds has been increasing. There have been increasing differences between the performance of low and high socioeconomic status schools. An increasing percentage of the variance in students' levels of performance in PISA is associated with the school they attend.

In contrast, between-school variance in Finland is relatively low. Since the 1970s Finland has implemented a comprehensive and fully publicly funded school system that enrols all children regardless of their socioeconomic background or personal abilities and characteristics. The few private schools that exist are given a government grant comparable to that for state schools and are prohibited from charging tuition fees or making selective admissions.

[Source: G. Masters (2016), *Five Challenges in Australian School Education*, ACER]

Education Students with ATARs above 70

Percentage of Year 12 offers to students with ATARs above 70

	2013	2014	2015
Education	49%	45%	42%
Science	84%	83%	80%
Engineering	86%	86%	84%

[Source: G. Masters (2016), *Five Challenges in Australian School Education*, ACER]

Reports

Revitalising Public Education

In Building our nation through public education Alan Reid, Emeritus Professor from the University of South Australia, analyses the state of education in Australia and the reasons why we have a high quality but low equity school system.

He argues that policy settings over the past 40 years have diminished the strength of public education and resulted in a large achievement gap between rich and poor; and that gap is widening.

This has happened because funding policies began to neglect the concept of need and foreground the principle of entitlement. This entitlement principle resulted in increasing amounts of public money being directed to private schools, with a consequent expansion of that sector at the expense of public education.

Because of this, the public education system is becoming residualised to the extent that it now carries over 80% of all students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. The policy of choice and competition has created a climate where it is asserted that public schools must become more like private schools if they are to survive and flourish in an education market.

Reid argues that the Gonski Review provided a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make radical changes to funding schools. However, while he sees a fairer system of funding as a necessary condition for strengthening public education, it is not sufficient to reverse the drift to private schools.

There also needs to be a move away from the current trend of making public schools more private and instead (re)emphasising their publicness. This means giving new life to the concept of the common good with public education being understood as a community resource to which everyone has rights of access.

Rather than public schools being expected to be more private, private schools should be required to be more public in their actions and make-up.

Five Challenges for School Education

In Five Challenges in Australian School Education Geoff Masters, the CEO of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), sets out a plan to improve the quality and equity of schooling in Australia.

Masters outlines five areas for improvement:

- The reading and mathematical literacy levels of Australian 15 year olds have declined significantly since at least the turn of the century.
- There are growing disparities between Australia's schools and these disparities are increasingly associated with socio-economic background
- Large numbers of Australian students are falling behind year-level expectations and are not meeting minimum standards.
- On starting school, one in five Australian children is developmentally vulnerable and at risk of being locked into a trajectory of long-term low achievement.
- Teaching is becoming a less attractive career option for more able school leavers.

The report sets out a range of strategies to address these "challenges". It calls for changes to the curriculum to

emphasise the application of deep understandings of key disciplinary concepts and principles to real world problems.

There needs to be a greater focus on: cross-disciplinary learning, the ability to think critically and creatively, the ability to communicate and solve problems in teams, less learning in isolation and competition in the senior school.

Reducing disparities between schools requires government policy changes such as not creating different kinds of schools, limiting school fees and prohibiting selective admissions. Masters quotes OECD research which links improvements in national literacy and numeracy levels with the more equitable distribution of resources across schools.

Students at any year level have wide variations in achievement levels and learning readiness. The report argues for a move away from judging and grading all students, regardless of their starting point, in terms of year-level expectations. The emphasis should be on needs-based learning leading to progress and growth rather than inadequate performance in meeting a standard.

When students begin school the focus should be on establishing where they are in their long term learning and development and providing individualised support and learning opportunities to promote progress. This means a move away from a concern about "deficits" - gaps between children's entry levels and schools' expectations.

The continuing fall in ATAR scores for people entering teacher education courses needs to be reversed. The status of teaching needs to be raised by controlling entry into the profession to ensure that supply more or less meets demand. Multi-step entry processes involving academic results, literacy/numeracy assessments and interviews covering motivation, aptitude, communication skills, emotional intelligence etc. should be used.

An important consideration in OECD research about high performing countries is that starting salaries and the salaries of experienced teachers "are in line with other professional salaries in the country concerned".

Resources

Evaluating Research

Teachers and principals are being increasingly encouraged to adopt policies and practices based on research. The problem is that the term "research" covers a very broad quality spectrum of studies and reviews of studies. The tendency of governments, departments, vested interests and various advocates is too often to find pieces of "research" to back up the policies they want to implement. They then refer to those policies as evidence-based.

There is also a propensity to treat contentious areas of research as though the studies all point one way. Class size research is a good example of this. There are various well-regarded and reliable studies which demonstrate reduced class sizes are one of the most effective interventions to improve student outcomes.

Two brief policy papers from the National Education Policy Center in the USA provide some guidelines for reading research studies.

5 Simple Steps to Reading Policy Research

1. Filter: Look for research that has been peer reviewed by other experts in the field.
2. Focus on Research Reviews: Any single study can be flawed. That is why it is better to familiarize yourself with a new topic by reading a research review.
3. Seek Statistical Significance: Statistical significance is typically assessed with a *p* value. If p < .05, the outcome is often called "statistically significant" because there is less than a 5 per cent chance of seeing results at least that magnitude if the hypothesis being tested is untrue.
4. Size Matters: A study finds that a new intervention increases test scores. But by how much? Effect sizes can help you answer important questions about the magnitude of an impact.
5. Ask about applicability: The most well-designed research in the world may not be useful in a policy context if the subject or situation studied was different from your own in a way that could impact the outcome.

Reading Qualitative Research

Qualitative policy research refers to a broad collection of research methods which are primarily based on observations and interviews (rather than numerical outcomes used in quantitative research). Elements to look for in qualitative research:

1. Was the study conducted with rigour?
2. Are the study's data sources appropriate for its conclusions? For example, for an interview-based study, were appropriate interviewees selected who could adequately inform the analysis?
3. Was the study placed within the larger body of research? That is, the study should include a complete

literature review, rather than implying that the new study somehow supersedes past research.

4. Did the study display signs of quality such as independent peer-review, source integrity, and absence of obvious bias?
5. Are the methods clearly explained? Do they have enough subjects to justify their conclusions? Does there appear to be a bias in the data collection format?

Link can be found here.

Professional development at the AEU

AEU training, conferences and events

The AEU runs a large number of conferences, industrial and professional training sessions and member forums. A full list of these activities, dates/times and venues can be found on our website. You are able to book your activity online.

The AEU also runs online webinars and member forums throughout the year.

These events are free to AEU members but you must register to attend. All events can be found in the AEU Events Calendar.

If there are topics you would like us to cover that would also be relevant to other members, please let us know.

AEU Professional Learning Centre

Professional Learning Centre: Leadership Opportunities

The DET's new Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) has at its core a shift in the way many people would see leadership. The FISO is calling on school leaders to focus on the growth and development of new leaders. It recognises that excellent leadership can play a role in improving student outcomes. Outstanding leadership creates an environment where both staff and students thrive.

The Professional Learning Centre provides a range of programs to support principals in their role of building the leadership capacity of others, and contributing to a high quality public education system.

Leading Teacher Applications

We have a number of one day workshops on application writing and interview skills for emerging leaders wanting to apply for Leading Teacher positions. Our next workshop for people who want to become a Leading Teacher is on Monday 5 July (in the school holidays to assist country people).

School based Application Workshops

We can also come to your school and run a workshop after school for staff on application writing and interview skills. The Application and Interview Writing workshop costs only $440 (including GST) and involves an hour and half presentation and then a half hour on questions. This workshop is available anywhere in Victoria.

Future Leaders Program

We have developed a program for developing future Leading Teachers in schools called "Future Leaders". The program involves 3 two hour sessions that can be done after school. They are designed to complement the work of the FISO and build leadership capacity in your school.   This program is ideal for a number of schools to come together as a 'community of practice' and complete the program as a capacity building exercise.

Micro Sessions

The Professional Learning Centre has sourced a range of high quality presenters who can provide micro-sessions for one hour or up to three hours for staff meetings, professional learning days or curriculum days. Below is a sample of the rich smorgasbord of offerings that a school can access starting from around $300 (plus GST).

- Creating a Climate of Change
- Designing Effective Strategic Plans and Annual Implementation Plans
- Embedding the Critical and Creative Thinking General Capability
- Metacognition and Self-Regulated Leaners
- Conversations that build Trust
- Growing Leadership within a School
- Tribal Leadership
- Situational Leadership

Other Potential Topics

- Developing teacher data literacy
- Embedding Formative Assessment Practices
- The main messages from John Hattie's meta-analyses and actions to take
- Developing quality formative rubrics
- Embedding STEM - meeting the needs of the Technologies Curriculum
- Effective curriculum planning and assessment

The content of these micro sessions can be accessed online at the PLC website or by contacting David Tyson on david.tyson@aeuvic.asn.au

Please look at our website for ideas and then contact David Tyson, Manager, Professional Learning Centre david.tyson@aeuvic.asn.au or call 9418 4939.

Professional development with TLN

Teacher Learning Network

Support for teaching learners with disability

As part of the government Special Needs Plan teachers will be required to build their capacity to teach learners with disability. The VIT website reads:

When you renew your registration by 30 September 2016, you will be asked to identify the PD you've engaged in to build your capacity to teach learners with disability. Activities selected by you to meet the requirement for PD about learners with disability should reference the standards descriptors 1.5, 1.6 and 4.1.

Many courses conducted by TLN meet these Standards including:

Course Title	Brief Description - these are all online courses and all aligned with 1.5, 1.6 and/or 4.1	Course Date
Autism in the classroom - teaching task skills	Students on the spectrum may experience difficulty when planning and preparing for, getting started and completing work tasks. These students will benefit from explicit teaching of how to approach work tasks. In this online program the presenter will provide practical ideas for teaching task skills.	Tuesday 2 August 7.00pm - 8.00pm
English as an Additional Language (EAL) - teaching ideas for all subject domains	During this online program a range of practical ideas for teaching across subject domains will be explored and made available to participants, all based on high quality research.	Tuesday 23 August 4.00pm - 5.00pm
Disability developed or diverse - using technology for differentiation	The workshop will cover the use of general ICT devices e.g. iPads and specific assistive technologies and how they can benefit all students from gifted through to those with a learning disability.	Tuesday 30 August 5.30pm - 6.30pm

These courses are all free for all staff in schools that are members of the TLN. They are also available as recorded on-demand programs after the initial presentation - accessible by your staff at any time.

At the TLN we have spent years building the capacity of teachers to present interesting, engaging and effective online programs and we now have reliable online software and skilled staff who can maximise your PD experience. It is worth investing your school resource in a membership with TLN. It is a one-stop-shop professional development service. See the full range of programs and resources at www.tln.org.au

Contact TLN at the AEU Building, 112 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford, 3067 or 9418 4992 or Michael Victory at mvictory@tln.org.au