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The Worst of Both Worlds: How U.S. and U.K. Models are Influencing Australian Education

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Abstract: This commentary explores the so-called global 'crisis' in education and the corresponding pressures and moves to 'reform' education, and in particular, public education. The myths underpinning and driving these developments are examined. Supposed problems with (public) education and proposed solutions are explored. The solutions include government, institutional and corporate support for non-traditional forms of schooling such as government funded independent, for-profit schools, free schools, charter schools, cyber schools and academies. These are proliferating despite a lack of supporting evidence and in some cases in spite of non-supportive evidence. General deregulation of education at all levels and a belief in the power of market forces to improve teaching, schooling and student achievement drive these developments, in which Australia is following closely in the footsteps of models developed in U.S. and the UK. Cumulatively, these forces and developments are resulting in the discrediting and dismantling of public education. Rather than being addressed and rectified, disadvantage is being reinforced and inequity deepened, widened and entrenched, something that is ultimately bad for everyone in society.

Keywords: education reform; education policy; student achievement; school performance; alternative teacher education; privatization; public schools; Australia

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Lo Peor de Los Dos Mundos: Cómo Los Modelos Educativos de EE.UU. y el Reino Unido Están Influyendo en la Educación en Australia

Resumen: Este artículo explora la llamada "crisis" mundial en la educación y las presiones asociadas para "reformar" la educación, en particular, la educación pública. Se examinan los mitos que sustentan y que desencadenaron estos cambios. Supuestos problemas con la educación (pública) y las soluciones propuestas son explorados. Las soluciones incluyen apoyo institucional del gobierno y del sector corporativo para formas no tradicionales de escolarización como financiamiento público de escuelas con fines de lucro, escuelas libres, escuelas charter, escuelas y academias cibernéticas. Estas "soluciones" están proliferando a pesar de la falta de evidencias sobre su efectividad y en algunos casos, a pesar de la evidencia contraria. Desregulación general de la educación en todos los niveles y una creencia en el poder de las fuerzas del mercado para mejorar la enseñanza, la educación y el logro del estudiantil lideran estos desarrollos, en los que Australia está siguiendo muy de cerca los modelos de reforma de los EE.UU. y el Reino Unido. En conjunto, estas fuerzas y desarrollos se han traducido en el descrédito y el desmantelamiento de la educación pública. En lugar de abordar y rectificar las desventajas educativas se refuerza y profundiza la desigualdad, que se incrementa y arraigada, algo que en última instancia es malo para todos en la sociedad.

Palabras clave: reforma educativa; política educativa; logros de los estudiantes; rendimiento escolar; educación alternativa de maestros; privatización; escuelas públicas; Australia

O Pior de Dois Mundos: Como Modelos Educacionais Norte-Americanos e do Reino Unido Estão Influenciando a Educação na Austrália

Resumo: Este artigo explora a chamada "crise" global em educação e pressões orientadas para "reformar" a educação, em particular, a educação pública. Mitos que sustentam e condução destes desenvolvimentos são examinados. Pressupostos sobre problemas com a educação (pública) e as soluções propostas são exploradas. As soluções propostas incluem o apoio institucional do governo e do setor empresarial para formas não tradicionais de ensino como o financiamento público de escolas com fins lucrativos, escolas livres, escolas charter, escolas e academias cibernéticos. Essas "soluções" estão proliferando apesar da falta de evidências sobre sua eficácia e, em alguns casos, apesar da evidência contrária. Desregulamentação geral da educação em todos os níveis e uma crença no poder das forças de mercado para melhorar o ensino, a educação e o desempenho do aluno levar estes desenvolvimentos, em que a Austrália está a seguir de perto os modelos de reforma O EUA. e no Reino Unido. Juntas, essas forças e desenvolvimentos foram traduzidos em descrédito e o desmantelamento da educação pública. Em vez de abordar e de retificar desvantagens educativas se reforça e aprofunda a desigualdade, o que em última análise é ruim para todos na sociedade.

Palavras-chave: reforma educacional; política educacional; desempenho do aluno; desempenho escolar; formação alternativa de professores; privatização; escolas públicas; Austrália

Introduction

Almost 20 years ago David Berliner and Bruce Biddle (1995) published *The Manufactured Crisis - Myths, Fraud, and the Attack on America's Public Schools*. In this they cited the 'sweeping claims attacking the conduct and achievement of America's public schools - claims that were contradicted by evidence we knew about' (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, xi). These views emanated from the Reagan administration and the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* in 1983, but many would trace its roots back to the 1930s, under the guise of neo-liberalism.

If anything, the attacks on America's public schools have intensified and these have been mirrored on the other side of the Atlantic. In Australia there is a tendency to be influenced by and

copy the U.S. and U.K. in many fields and education is no exception. Despite attempts to provide counter-argument, what appears to be a widespread movement to denigrate and dismantle public education is gaining momentum.

Recently Berliner, Glass, and Associates (2014) produced a successor to the Berliner and Biddle (1995) publication entitled *50 Myths and Lies that Threaten America's Public Schools – The Real Crisis in Education*. In the interim between the two works the influence of student testing has grown significantly and a plethora of vested interests have moved into the education space for ideological and financial reasons. Over three decades later the myths identified by Berliner, Biddle and subsequent writers have assumed the status of 'facts' in the eyes of many (Sahlberg, 2014), with additional myths/facts' added to the mix in a continuous, cumulative fashion, thereby adding to the strength and acceptance of the movement which, as will be seen, is thus self-fulfilling.

With these developments, educational research and other evidence has been distorted, discounted or disregarded in favor of deregulation, privatization, corporatization and quick fix solutions to the supposed problems of teaching and the 'crisis' in schooling. Educators have been either silent or silenced in discourses about education (Dinham, 2013a).

What Are the Supposed Problems with Education and the Proposed Solutions?

The myths, 'facts' or beliefs underpinning the 'crisis' in education in the US, the UK, Australia and elsewhere are many but are typified in the following (after AACTE, 2012; Benn, 2012; Berliner et al., 2014; Brill, 2011; Christodoulou, 2014; Dinham, 2013a; Hopkins, 2013; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2013; Ravitch, 2010, 2013):

- Public education is failing
- International testing is a true barometer of the decline in public schooling
- Private schools are better than public schools
- Government funded independent for-profit schools are better than private schools
- Greater autonomy for public schools will lift results [yet]
- Greater accountability will lift public school results
- Money is not the answer - increased spending on public education has not resulted in improvement in student achievement
- The teacher is the biggest influence on student achievement
- Merit pay/payment by results is the solution to improving teacher quality
- Removing tenure and dismissing poor teachers will lead to greater student achievement
- Schools should be resourced on the basis of results
- The curriculum is a captive of the 'left'
- Schools are not producing the skills and capabilities required by industry
- 21st century skills are not being taught in 21st century schools
- Technology changes everything
- Teacher education is ineffective and the value of a teaching credential is questionable
- The effects of poverty are too difficult to overcome
- Educational research offers no solutions
- Non-educators should lead public schools
- Choice, competition, privatisation and the free market are the answers to almost any question about education.

Each of the above have been found to be either unconfirmed or disproved by research evidence (see references above) but that has not stopped people, vested interests and organisations

from advocating for them. In fact, quite the opposite seems to have occurred, with responses to such measures contributing to further falls in public confidence, leading to pressure for more extreme change.

Together these myths and beliefs have found expression in a number of powerful, related phenomena in Australian education centred upon mechanisms for alternative school establishment and funding, teacher quality, school governance and leadership, and school accountability.

What Are Some of the Big Ideas and Developments in Australian Education?

Government Funded, Independent, For-Profit Schools

In 2014 the Australian Federal Minister for Education Christopher Pyne announced a $70 million 'Independent Public Schools Initiative' which plans to see more than 1,500 additional public schools become autonomous over the coming three years. The Australian Government Department of Education website states (2014, np), "The evidence shows, and overseas experience highlights, that increasing school autonomy can help lift student outcomes and better meet the needs of local communities."

In announcing the scheme Minister Pyne cited the experience in Western Australia (WA) whereby around a third of all public schools are designated 'Independent Public Schools' (IPS) under a plan launched in 2010. Pyne lauded the achievement of the WA IPS initiative in lifting student achievement but this assertion was not supported by an evaluation of the scheme commissioned by the WA Department of Education (Centre for Program Evaluation [CEP], 2013), "In this early phase of the IPS development there is little evidence of changes to student outcomes such as enrolment or student achievement (CEP, 2013, p. 8)."

> However the evaluation did find evidence that:
> Expectedly, there are challenges and some dissenting voices particularly around issues such as:
> - increased workload, mainly in the transition to becoming IPS; and
> - the creation of a set of schools that have advantages over other schools. (CEP, 2013, p. 6)

The issue of greater autonomy for public schools will be examined later, but the move to independent government funded schools in Australia is part of a larger movement involving 'charter schools' in the USA and 'free schools', 'academies' and 'chains' in the UK. This movement includes the notion of for-profit schools, many of which also receive government funding and various financial concessions and support.

At present non-government primary and secondary schools in Australia are eligible to receive public funding, providing they maintain their non-profit status. However this may well change with the entry of global for-profit school corporations such as Fairview Global (based in Malaysia) and Gems Education (based in Dubai), both of which are on record as stating they are planning to enter the mainstream Australian education market (Han, 2013). Whilst there are currently legislative restrictions on the operation of for-profit schools in Australia there is clearly pressure to go in that direction, particularly since such schools are operating in the U.S. and UK.

What then is the research evidence for these types of schools, given claims they lift student achievement? Diane Ravitch (2014) has provided an overview of charter schools in the U.S. and has concluded:

> The charter movement began with high hopes in the early 1990s. Charter schools were supposed to enrol[l] the neediest students. But in the era of NCLB, it was dangerous to enrol[l] the students who had a hard time sitting still, those with

> disabilities, and those who couldn't speak or read English. They might pull down the school's test scores. Few charters want the students for whom charters were first invented.
>
> Charters were supposed to be laboratories for bold innovations, but the most successful charters follow a formula of no "excuses": strict discipline, eyes on the teacher, walk in a straight line, no deviation from rigid rules and routines. Some of the most successful charters seem determined to reinvent the schoolhouse of a century ago. (p. 178)

Ravitch (2014) goes further:

> The charter movement has become a vehicle for privatization of large swaths of public education, ending democratic control of the public schools and transferring them to private management. The charters seek to compete, not to collaborate, with public schools. …
>
> The developments of the past two decades have brought about massive changes in the governance of public education, especially in urban districts. Some children have gained; most have not. And the public schools, an essential element in our democracy for many generations, have suffered damage that may be irreparable. (p. 178)

Berliner et al. (2014) note:

> The growth and expansion of charter schools over the past two decades have given them a mythical status in the education arena, without much data to support the hype. The rhetoric of success fuels the myth, but reality is much more sobering. Myth spreaders conflate parental agency and school choice, concealing research that that traditional public schools typically outperform charter schools; play down the impact of charter school failures; and promote the diversion of resources from traditional public schools that educate most of the kids in this country. …
>
> [Stanford University found in 2009] more than 80% of charter schools are either no better or worse than traditional public schools at securing math and reading gains for their students. (pp. 23-24)

A 'free' school is a not-for-profit, government funded independent school. These were established in England under the 2010 Academies Act[1] with a similar remit to charter schools in the U.S. (and elsewhere) and free schools in Sweden (for-profit, operating since 1991). Existing state schools can also become academies (introduced in 2002) with similar freedoms under the Act. Free schools have been set up under the control of parents, teachers, businesses and charities.

Under the 2010 Academies Act free schools can set their own pay and conditions for staff, have greater control over their budget, have freedom from following the National Curriculum, can change the length of terms and schools days and are free from local authority control. They have also been able to circumvent the planning regulations applying to regular schools and thus have been established in old factories, hospitals and office buildings.

As with charter schools, the perceived advantages include greater autonomy and scope for innovation with resultant higher student attainment. Again, as with charter schools, there have been concerns expressed over the application process to establish a school, cost, effectiveness in terms of student achievement, the effects on and diversion of funds from state schools, lack of local accountability, implications for teachers (including de-unionization and non-recognition of industrial awards and conditions), and discriminatory admission practices around 'social selection', whereby

[1] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/32/contents

government funded independent schools exclude lower SES students and make selection decisions on the basis of what parents can offer the school, something that works against ethnic and social diversity and results in a form of segregation. The latter makes it more difficult to compare the achievements of such schools with 'regular' state schools that usually cannot screen or select students (see Hatcher, 2011, p. 486).

It is probably premature to draw conclusions regarding student attainment in free schools in England – although two of 174 free schools have been closed because of failure to reach acceptable standards - but Bohlmark and Lindahl (2008) found in respect of the more than 1,000 free schools in Sweden:

> […] we do not find any impact on medium or long-term educational outcomes such as high school GPA, university attainment or years of schooling. We conclude that the first-order short-term effect is too small to yield lasting positive effects. (p. 1)

In considering the likely effects of free schools on student attainment, Hatcher (2011) comments:

> The evidence from the models on which government policy draws – Labour's academies, U.S. charter schools and Swedish free schools – is conflicting, but in my view the balance of evidence points to their being in general no more successful in terms of performance than comparable mainstream schools. (p. 500)

However the lack of supporting evidence for independent government funded schools, including for-profit schools and chains of schools, has not dampened enthusiasm for the concept in the US, England or Australia. Concerns raised by numerous evaluations and reviews have been swept aside or ignored. Expect to see more of this initiative in Australia.

Greater School Autonomy

The theory that greater school autonomy will lead to greater flexibility, innovation and therefore student attainment is pervasive and intuitively appealing. However, establishing correlation and causation is not so easy. School autonomy has become something of an article of faith.

The Department for Education (2013) in the U.K. states:

> There is evidence that giving heads [principals] and teachers greater freedom over their curriculum, budget and staff can help improve the quality of the education they provide and reduce the attainment gap. We also believe giving parents, teachers and charities the ability to open schools in response to the needs of the local community will help to raise standards. (np)

The 'evidence', however, is not referenced. Similarly the Australian Government Department of Education (2014) has stated:

> Both internationally and in Australia, evidence emphasizes the advantages of school autonomy as part of a comprehensive strategy for school improvement.
>
> In Australia, schools in all states and territories have been moving towards more autonomous and independent models to improve education outcomes.
>
> The Australian Government also recognizes that giving schools and school leaders greater autonomy can help improve student results. Great schools have leaders and teachers who have the independence to make the decisions and develop the courses that best meets the needs of their students. (np)

David Hopkins (2013) reviewed the evidence for school autonomy and found:

> The myth of autonomy is currently centrestage given the increasing prevalence of 'right of centre' governments to embrace the trend towards devolution of school management. The rhetoric is that if we let schools be free – release them from

> bureaucratic control and encourage independence, self-governance and making one's own decisions – then they will flourish. This is an attractive and populist image. However we know from the evidence of PISA … that there is no correlation between decentralization and achievement. (p. 29)

Thus, if correlation between school autonomy and student achievement can't be established, causation would seem to be out of the question. Hopkins (2013) cites the findings of the McKinsey report (*Capturing the Leadership Premium*, 2010):

> […] differences in what leaders do are not directly related to the level of autonomy they are given. Internationally, there is no relationship between the degree of autonomy enjoyed by a school principal and their relative focus on administrative or instructional leadership. (p. 30)

A key aspect is 'autonomy over what'. Public schools that have greater autonomy – which usually means greater responsibility for certain functions – often have more accountability in other areas, accompanied by less funding and systemic support. Karl Weick (1976) described schools as loosely coupled organisations, yet with certain aspects being tightly coupled. While some aspects of school operation might have become 'looser' under the guise of autonomy (use of resources, hiring and utilization of staff, raising funds), others have become more tightly coupled (accountability for student achievement, curricula, teacher standards, teacher appraisal, external testing, school reporting).

Another aspect lies with school leaders' preparedness and willingness to adopt more responsibility and greater autonomy. Some school leaders and their communities may well be enthusiastic about greater autonomy, others less so and some should probably have less and not more autonomy. In other words, there is likely to be a spectrum of capability and motivation for greater school autonomy. Ironically, some schools will need greater support to become more autonomous (Dinham, 2007, 2008).

What is needed above all however, is clear research evidence that the initiative works, and under what conditions, rather than blind enthusiasm for the concept. This is explored below under the area of deregulation.

Deregulating Education – The Free Market Is the Answer

A powerful idea running through the discussion to this point is the notion that education needs to be deregulated, privatised and exposed to market forces in order to flourish. It is a deep-seated belief that such measures are essential to improve teacher, school and student performance but more than that there is an ideological aspect to the argument grounded in neo-liberalism. What is perhaps ignored or overlooked in the Australian context is the fact that Australia already has one of the most privatized education systems in the world with a much higher level of attendance at non-government schools than in comparable nations. The so-called drift to non-government schools has been facilitated by governments over the past few decades.

Another big idea driving deregulation is that of 'user pays'. In this sense education is increasingly being seen more as a commodity to be purchased and a cost to taxpayers and governments rather than as an investment in the personal, social and economic prosperity of the nation. However public schools can't operate as businesses when they have to take everyone and operate in all geographic and SES areas. Ravitch (2014) expands upon this:

> Public schools must accept all children. They cannot pick and choose among them. They cannot reject those who are homeless and those who don't speak English. They cannot "counsel out" those with low test scores or those with profound disabilities. They must find a place for students with behavioral problems. They are responsible

> for educating them all. Obviously, schools with selective admissions policies and schools with lotteries [for places], whether they are public or private or charter, will have higher test scores and fewer discipline problems. It is easy to get high test scores when the students are ready, willing, and able to learn.
>
> When corporate executives look at the public schools, they cannot understand why they move slowly; they want them to produce rapid and dramatic changes. They demand results, not explanations. They want scores to rise overnight. They believe in transformative change and disruptive innovation (pp. 301-2).

If schools were to operate as businesses they would be expected and required to adopt the twin commercial strategies of cutting costs and/or increasing revenue. This might be possible in manufacturing products for sale but is less appropriate for schools. The highest costs in schools are associated with labor. To reduce these will require fewer staff and/or lower salaries. Larger class sizes and fewer, lesser-qualified teachers are an obvious means of achieving this. To increase revenue would require competition for more students and/or higher tuition fees.

The example of cyber-charter or virtual schools in the U.S. is the most extreme manifestation of this approach:

> A cyber-charter or virtual schools does not have school buildings. It delivers instruction to students at home via computers. The parents of the children are their "learning coaches". These schools may draw students from across an entire state or even across state lines (Ravitch, 2014, p. 167).

In 2012 there were almost 200,000 K-12 students enrolled full-time in 311 virtual or cyber schools in the USA, most of which are classed as charter schools. Two thirds of these students were enrolled in for-profit virtual schools (National Education Policy Center (NEPC), 2013, pp. 4-5). Overall, the student achievement results for such schools are dismal, according to the NEPC (2013):

> Comparisons across these measures [Adequate Yearly Progress benchmarks - AYP] suggested virtual schools are not performing as well as brick-and-mortar schools…
>
> In the 2010-2011 school year, there was a 28-percentage point difference between full-time virtual schools meeting AYP and traditional brick-and-mortar district and charter schools that did: 23.6% compared with 52%, respectively. (p. 10)

Using state school performance ratings, in 2011-12, 28.1% of full-time virtual schools were deemed 'academically acceptable' whilst 71.9% were found to be 'academically unacceptable' (NEPC, 2013: 11). Using graduation rates as a metric, in 2011-12, 79.4% of all U.S. schools achieved expected on time graduation benchmarks compared with only 37.6% for virtual schools (NEPC, 2013, p. 12). The NEPC report concluded (2013):

> Although technology offers exciting possibilities, the consistently negative performance of full-time virtual schools makes it imperative to know more about these schools. The advocates of full-time virtual schools are several years ahead of policymakers and researchers, and new opportunities are being defined and developed largely by for-profit entities accountable to stockholders rather than to any public constituency. Given this picture, continued rapid expansion seems unwise. (p. 12)

Ravitch (2014) comments:

> Our goal is a society, which we have never achieved, is to provide an education of equal quality to every child so that each of them has an equal chance to succeed in the world.
>
> The business model of choice and competition, testing and accountability, moves U.S. even further away from that goal; as communities dissolve, students and

> families sort themselves into schools to reflect differences in race, ethnicity, and class. As communities and schools become more segregated they become more, not less inequitable. (p. 304)

Growing inequity in society generally and in schooling is of great significance, a matter returned to later in this paper.

Moving Teacher Education to Schools, New Entrants to Teacher Education

The movement of teacher education from universities to schools, with commensurate use of 'alternative' providers, goes back to the mid-1980s in the U.S. and the early 1990s in the U.K. It is a trend that is beginning to gather pace in Australia.

> These routes are "alternative" to traditional preparation in the sense that they generally have the teacher candidate serve in an "internship" as the teacher of record [i.e., they may be the only teacher in a room of students] … just as certified teachers in neighbouring classrooms are on their own …
>
> At the inception of alternative certification [in the US], there was clear consensus about how it should differ from traditional preparation: alternative certification would be a responsible way to get smart, content-proficient individuals — especially individuals with content knowledge in areas such as secondary math, science, and foreign languages — into the classroom with necessary training and coaching, but without requiring that they earn another degree or its equivalent. (Greenberg, Walsh, & McKee, 2014, p. 59)

Candidates in such programs typically earn a partial salary while gaining formal certification as a teacher. Alternative certification includes the now global 'Teach for All' program, which has a presence in Australia through 'Teach for Australia'. Teach For Australia has received significant political and financial support, although it is not present in all states and territories and numbers of 'associates' and graduates represent only a tiny proportion of the total teaching service.[2]

One in five teachers in the U.S. is now being trained in 'alternative certification programs' (including programs provided by for-profit companies in Texas, the only state to permit this). A review of teacher preparation in the U.S. for the National Council on Teacher Quality (Greenberg, et al., 2014) found:

> These independent [non-college] programs have very low admission standards, do not ensure that candidates are prepared to teach every subject to which they could be assigned, and provide insufficient support to candidates as they take on full-time teaching responsibilities. (p. 2)

Gilroy has provided an overview of this development in the UK. In January 1992 Kenneth Clarke, Secretary of State for Education in England and Wales, made an announcement that 'the vast majority of initial teacher education would, within nine months, begin to be located in schools and away from colleges, polytechnics and universities … The initial plan, made with no attempt to consult teacher educators, produced consternation and anger in the training institutions' (1992, p. 5). A series of reports in the mid-late 19th century had highlighted the need for enhanced teacher training and from 1888 universities began training teachers through newly established education departments. Courses gradually increased over time and by the 1960s training was extended from two to three years and then to four through BEd degrees. Gilroy (1992) notes:

> Within 150 years initial teacher education had gradually developed from a rejection of a school-based pupil-teacher apprenticeship scheme to one whereby students were inducted into the profession of teaching through a structured combination of

[2] Teach for All: http://www.teachforall.org/, Teach for Australia: http://www.teachforaustralia.org/

> training and education in both school classrooms and institutions of higher education. (p. 8)

This was now to be reversed. Space precludes a detailed examination of developments from that time, but entry to teaching in England today is now mainly through the following routes (National College for Teaching and Leadership & Department of Education, 2014):

- University-led training
- School Direct Training Programme
- School Direct (salaried)
- School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)(where the school is usually the accredited provider)
- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (for experienced teachers)

Increasingly, initial teacher education in England is moving to schools as 'Schools are taking more control of teacher training' (NCTL & DoE, 2014, np). The associated funding is thus being diverted away from universities. This puts pressure on faculties of education in that typically, income from coursework enrolments in education funds staffing, subsidizes research and supports general faculty infrastructure. Some faculties of education are closing or realigning their focus more towards educational policy rather than teacher training. This makes education research problematic. It may also worsen the so-called 'theory-practice' divide and make it more difficult to break the cycle of teachers teaching as they were taught. In response, some universities are also moving towards operating their own schools so that they can gain SCITT status.

This movement of teacher education away from universities and colleges is, like other phenomena outlined in this paper, being driven by some widely accepted yet contested beliefs. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, 2012) has summarized and attempted to refute a range of myths concerning teacher preparation:

1. Educator preparation in higher education is out of touch and hasn't changed in 50 years.
2. Educator preparation programs in higher education are locked in the ivory tower with little to no understanding of the needs of P-12 students.
3. Teachers have little to no knowledge about the content they are teaching.
4. Alternative providers prepare most minority teachers.
5. Teachers do not require preparation. Credentials and experience don't matter. Only content knowledge matters.
6. There are few entry or exit requirements for teacher candidates. Anyone can get in, and everyone gets out.
7. Teacher preparation programs in higher education operate with no accountability and actively oppose accountability efforts.
8. Higher education offers only one route to becoming a teacher. Alternative routes are found outside of higher education.
9. Value added scores of teacher preparation programs' graduates are the most appropriate and meaningful measure of preparation program effectiveness. Graduates of teacher preparation programs to not know how to effectively use technology or assessment data with P-12 students. (np)

One of the difficulties in making judgements about teacher education courses is that these vary considerably in terms of the calibre of those accepted and in demonstrated program effectiveness (see Greenberg et al., 2014). There are valid concerns about teacher education but there are also programs that seek to address and overcome these (see Alter & Coggshall, 2009; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; McLean-Davies et al., 2013).

In teacher preparation, as with other aspects of teaching and education more generally, research has demonstrated what is effective and what is not. The key challenge, however, lies in up-scaling (see Elmore, 1996) in order to make best practice common practice.

In Australia in 1992 - responding in part to developments in the U.K. – a Commonwealth policy document titled *Teacher Education: A discussion paper* was released. It painted a dismal picture of teacher educators and teacher education and stated that consideration should be given to 'transferring a lot of teacher education to schools' (Chadbourne, 1993, p. 1). In the interim there has been almost constant criticism of teacher education:

> Concerns about teacher competence have abounded for decades. In Australia, there has been, on average, one major state or national inquiry into teacher education every year for the past 30 years … No other program of professional preparation has been thought to warrant such scrutiny (Dinham, 2013a, pp. 91-92).

Each inquiry has come to much the same conclusions and made much the same recommendations, yet little has changed. At the time of writing, yet another review is taking place (Dinham, 2014c). However what is different now is that concrete moves are being made to site teacher education more in schools. The Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) has for example called for tenders to establish new 'Teaching Academies for Professional Practice … open for all schools and educational providers to establish five new pre-service teacher education site based centres in regional and metropolitan Victoria' (DEECD, 2014, np).

A key question in the movement of education to schools is the relative mix between university and school involvement. Balance is important. However this is not only about time – the quality and effectiveness of the teacher education experience is paramount. It remains to be seen the extent to which teacher education moves to schools, the forms that this will take and the impacts it will have, but momentum is growing.

As well as this development in Victoria, in the same state and elsewhere there have also been new entrants to teacher education, including public and private technical colleges and schools, working in some cases with interstate universities. This is part of a trend towards deregulation in higher education generally (James, 2014).

A Growing Presence for the Publishers and Big Business

A further international development impacting on Australia is the entry of 'big business' into education. There has always been a commercial aspect to education with providers of textbooks, resources and equipment but this is escalating almost exponentially. Publishers are now moving into large scale vertical integration whereby they have commercial involvement with curricula, teaching resources, teaching standards, teacher training, development and appraisal, and student assessment and testing; in effect gaining control of the entire education supply chain. Technology and ICT corporations are also increasingly active, both in tandem with the large publishers and as stand-alone bodies. This is not illegal and these firms are responding to opportunity, but the outcomes will be interesting and the impacts quite possibly profound. The publishers wield enormous influence with government, educational systems, large-scale testing programs such as PISA and within the educational market place generally.

Carmody (2012) has noted that the growing presence in education of the publishers under the following broad trends:

- The biggest publishers in the world today are education publishers
- Education publishers own lots of "little" publishers, too
- Education publishers don't just sell books; they deal in information

- Every education publisher has invested deeply in the broader education industry — especially its digital future. (np)

The largest publisher of all is Pearson. Pearson's business strategy is clear (Pearson, nd):

- Long-term organic investment in content
- Digital products and services businesses
- International expansion
- Efficiency (np)

Carmody noted (2012):

> Almost all big education publishers are involved in some way with educational testing and learning management platforms. Pearson partners with The College Board to administer the SAT and scores the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The company makes $1.7 billion each year in worldwide educational testing alone.
>
> Every education publisher knows that its biggest growth opportunities are digital products and services, expansion into global markets, and efficient investment in its content-based enterprises (like books and journalism). Each of them are working on end-to-end solutions: not just textbooks and testing, but software-based learning delivery platforms, much like what Apple unveiled Thursday with iTunes U. They invest in highly interactive platform-specific apps like Inkling, and basic, cross-platform e-textbook standards like CourseSmart. And they invest in Apple.
>
> Their giant size and reach throughout the education and media landscape gives these publishers advantages and disadvantage. One disadvantage: they move slowly. One big advantage: You cannot outflank them. (np)

The growing presence of for-profit publishers in education has been viewed with concern, particularly when they are working with the large and influential 'corporate reformers' such as the Gates Foundation on key initiatives such as the "Common Core State Standards" in the US, for which Pearson is developing online curricula for teaching the standards (Ravitch, 2014, p. 23).

One of the largest chains of the cyber-charter schools mentioned previously is Connections Academy. Connections are now owned by Pearson (Ravitch, 2014, p. 167).

Pearson and other leading educational publishers such as Reed Elsevier, Thomson Reuters, Kluwer and McGraw-Hill are already highly active and increasingly influential in the Australian education market, and this activity is growing.

Another aspect is universities working with corporate entities through online learning partnerships. An example is Swinburne University which is offering online teacher education (and other) courses in partnership with SEEK Learning.[3] Some faculties of education in Australia are now sponsored by publishers.

Conclusion

The broad and powerful global developments outlined above that Sahlberg (2014) has labelled the 'Global Education Reform Movement' (GERM), are finding support and traction in Australia.

Because of Australia's close links with England and the USA and their influence it is not surprising that the myths and beliefs underpinning these developments have been accepted almost without evidence or questioning in Australia.

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[3] See http://www.seeklearning.com.au/swinburne-online#filter=off

Central to these developments is the profound belief/'fact' that public education in its traditional forms has failed and is in crisis. However these developments are not merely a reaction to this 'manufactured crisis' (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), but are actively contributing to the further erosion of confidence in and the dismantling of public education in all three nations and beyond:

> Public education is in a crisis only so far as society is and only so far as this new narrative of crisis has destabilized it. The solutions proposed by the self-proclaimed reformers have not worked as promised. They have failed even by their own most highly valued measure, which is test scores. At the same time, the reformers' solutions have had a destructive impact on education as a whole. (Ravitch, 2014, p. 4)

The rhetoric of crisis needs to be challenged as must the glib exhortations to privatize, corporatize and deregulate education. As Ravitch has pointed out, we need to stop doing 'the wrong things', including the orchestrated almost hysterical attacks upon public education (Ravitch, 2014, pp. 8-9). We need to strengthen public schools and public education for the betterment of all and we need strong affirmation in support of public education. Education should not be about user pays or survival of the most advantaged.

The global measures being implemented in Australia are not addressing the real causes of the achievement gap. Most public schools are performing well (Lubienski & Lubienski, 2013) yet the drift to non-government schools and more recently to government funded independent schools is being actively encouraged. On the other hand there are many non-government schools that are not adding value at the level predicted by earlier student achievement, as the National Assessment Program – Literacy And Numeracy (NAPLAN) data clearly demonstrates.[4] One thing that is not being recognized is that these changes are potentially equally disruptive to 'traditional', not-for-profit, non-government schools and systems.

Australia is becoming a more unequal society and recent developments are exacerbating that inequality. Disadvantage is being entrenched and not overcome and there will be a price to pay in terms of personal, social and economic prosperity. As Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) have demonstrated, inequality in society is actually worse for everyone.

It is not a matter of giving more or less funding to any one sector but of ensuring that the funds are expended on factors or variables that are known to have the greatest impact on learning (see the 'Gonski' review of educational funding, Australian Government, 2011); factors such as teachers' professional learning with appropriate recognition and reward (Dinham, Ingvarson, & Kleinhenz, 2008), qualified staff both teaching and para-professional (Dinham & Scott, 2000), evidence-based practice, effective instructional leadership (Dinham, 2013b) and adequate school infrastructure.

If these developments continue, the inevitable outcomes will be greater inequity and continuing decline in educational performance, something that will provide the proponents for such change with further 'evidence' to support their position and for even more far-reaching change.

A tsunami comprises waves with very long wave lengths. Often these go unnoticed until it is too late to do anything about them. When they reach land great devastation can result. The 'long wave' changes to education outlined above need to be subjected to intense scrutiny before it is too late. If the profession remains silent and passive in the face of some of these developments it will have itself to blame, at least in part, for what might eventuate (Dinham, 2014a).

It might appear naive but surely it is up to the proponents of major change to provide supporting evidence prior to its widespread introduction. It should not be left to others to dispprove

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[4] http://www.nap.edu.au/information/faqs/naplan--results-reports-performance.html

or question these significant developments. In the medical sphere there are well-established protocols that need to be adhered to prior to the introduction of any new drug or treatment. No such protocols apply in education, an area in which lives are also at stake (Dinham, 2014b).

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