

Submission
No 13

**INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES
SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

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Submission to the NSW Curriculum Review: Taking a long-term holistic approach to education

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Contents

About the author	2
1 Executive summary.....	2
2 Background.....	2
3 Context	3
3.1 Societal challenges	3
3.2 Education sector-based challenges.....	3
4 Desired outcomes.....	4
5 The way forward ('for consideration').....	4
6 The rationale.....	7
7 Author contact details.....	8
8 Information sources	8

About the author

I am an executive consultant who has worked with not-for-profit organisations as well as private companies across a large range of sectors. These have included the not-for-profits , top 50 public companies and technology start-ups. On most occasions, I have been asked to help identify solutions for strategic problems that these organisations have struggled to solve. By bringing a fresh perspective and strong facilitation skills, I have worked with the leadership teams in these organisations to enable them to develop a new direction. In addition, I have provided them with the skills and processes to successfully implement and review progress on an ongoing basis. My reason for developing this submission is that I have become very concerned that we may not be developing the skills and attributes our children need to thrive in a future of rapid change.

1 Executive summary

After speaking informally with a range of people involved in education and support services in Australia, NZ, the USA and the Netherlands, it is apparent there are a wide range of perspectives on how children learn, and how education is best designed and delivered.

Further to this, my experience working has highlighted that children with diverse abilities, backgrounds, family situations and personalities participate in schools. Often, there will be a considerable mix of children with different attributes in a classroom requiring teachers and support personnel to have a well-rounded mix of skills, expertise and teaching options.

Based on my discussions and review of a selection of relevant information, I recommend that:

- i. The outcomes of the work of the NSW Curriculum Review Taskforce be continued by the establishment of a permanent Holistic Education Leadership Team. The role of this team is to develop a facilitated process for the regular review and modification of an integrated education system to ensure it remains relevant in a rapidly changing world. The members of this team will come from what I have titled Network Teams (refer to section 5). To enable this integrated education system to be successfully implemented, reviewed and modified on an ongoing basis, the leadership team will need to have considerable change management skills.
- ii. School principals will greatly benefit from training in change management and receiving assistance in facilitating ongoing change in the teaching and support processes.

2 Background

My expertise is in organisational review, change management and strategy development. I have worked extensively in a range of different sectors/professions to enable effective change, both within organisational structure and personnel practices. I have also facilitated organisations to design processes that enable regular review and evolution of practices.

My work history has brought about systemic change by bringing together a wide range of stakeholders and developing an open culture supported by rigorous processes. In most cases, my employment and consulting work was in areas I had never worked in before. This meant I did not come in with pre-conceived ideas and was able to openly facilitate change. This also meant I could ask 'silly questions' which unearthed ideas and concepts people within the industry/sector had never considered before. I also took a whole-of-organisation approach to ensure that strategies and actions were aligned to maximise the chance of success. I was also able to introduce concepts and systems which worked in other industries/sectors and that, 'with some modification', could work in different industries/sectors to solve problems and create opportunities.

More recently, my interest in the education sector started from the perspective of trying to ascertain the future needs for School Based and Community Based Mentoring as currently delivered by organisations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia. I soon realised that to achieve the desired outcomes for children of being able to productively and actively engage in the future world, one cannot look at youth mentoring in isolation. Rather, the whole education and support system needs to work in an integrated way.

3 Context

3.1 Societal challenges

- ◆ Youth unemployment and under employment in Australia are now higher than the average of comparable advanced economies in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.¹
- ◆ Australia's jobless rate among people aged 15-24 years has been hovering at around 12.5% - more than double the general rate. The jobless rate for 15-19 year olds is even higher at 18%.²
- ◆ The share of 20-24 year olds who have become disengaged from either study or work has increased.³
- ◆ Government data shows that one in three university students is dropping out without finishing their study within six years. It is also being recognised that many current jobs will disappear and new jobs requiring new skills will come in their place.⁴

3.2 Education sector-based challenges

- ◆ There are a range of different, sometimes conflicting, views and programs available for the educational development of our students, such as whether the curriculum should emphasise content knowledge, soft skills or interest-based learning.
- ◆ Often, stakeholders staunchly defend their perspective, leaving little room for openly engaging with people who have different views when, in most cases, a holistic approach is usually best practice.
- ◆ There is often a disconnect between how Early Childhood Centres, Primary Schools and Secondary Schools approach teaching which can further confuse students and parents.
- ◆ There are a range of approaches to teaching students from very different backgrounds and capabilities as well as various support tools and services such as counselling and mentoring, but these are often not coordinated or integrated.
- ◆ Curriculum reviews have historically been irregular, occurring when there is dissatisfaction with the outcomes or processes involved with teaching, rather than regular well-timed reviews that seek to continually improve.

¹ RBA Bulletin – June 2018, Labour Market Outcomes for Younger People

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Norton, A., Cherastidham, I., and Mackey, W. (2018). Dropping out: the benefits and costs of trying university. Grattan Institute

4 Desired outcomes

The research reviewed to inform this submission indicates that, to succeed in a future of rapid change, it is necessary for the education system from kindergarten to year 12 to produce a set of key outcomes for students:

- ◆ Want to learn new things on an ongoing basis (i.e. have a natural curiosity for lifelong learning)
- ◆ Are able to learn new things
- ◆ Understand their strengths and what they can achieve in the context of the whole system.
- ◆ Have the willingness and ability to collaborate with others
- ◆ Lead a healthy lifestyle, and have sound emotional and social skills
- ◆ Have problem-solving attitudes and skills, including the emotional ability to fail and try again
- ◆ Have critical and creative thinking skills
- ◆ Understand the systemic nature of everything they do.

This will require the implementation of a range of policies, processes and mechanisms, at the state level, school leadership level and teachers/support workers level to enable these student outcomes to be achieved:

- ◆ Developing critical thinking & deep learning
- ◆ Developing an academic understanding of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Mathematics), and demonstrating the relevance of these when considering the child's own interests and strengths
- ◆ Developing self-awareness, emotional Intelligence and social skills
- ◆ Developing a sense of community and collaboration skills
- ◆ Developing the ability to contextualise to enable the student to work out how to move forward
- ◆ Ensuring social and physical health and wellbeing
- ◆ Creating opportunities for students to collaborate with external organisations and workplaces
- ◆ Encouraging students to take an interest in the STEAM subjects they do not see as important (as these may not match their interests) by ensuring each subject is put in the context of where it fits in the greater system and how these subjects influence one another. This can be aided by providing the students with problem solving team projects which span the subjects. Projects such as these also support the development of collaboration and teamwork skills which must be utilised to enable them to develop a team conclusion.

5 The way forward ('for consideration')

- i. To continue to optimise the value of this Curriculum Review, I encourage the taskforce to not err from taking a broad perspective, as the effectiveness of the curriculum delivery is dependent on:
 - ◆ The pedagogies used
 - ◆ The mental, social, emotional and physical wellbeing of the students
 - ◆ Teacher education, ongoing professional development and support services
 - ◆ Leadership skills of principals
 - ◆ The involvement of the school community, including parents.

ii. To ensure the value of this Review continues well into the future, I suggest the Taskforce recommends that a permanent Holistic Education Leadership Team be established. Its role will be to:

- ◆ Develop a facilitated process for the strategy development, regular measurement and review of an integrated education system to ensure it remains relevant in a rapidly changing world
- ◆ Develop the strategy and implementation plans to enable a holistic approach to be taken in the delivery of the education process
- ◆ Develop a process on how non-teaching stakeholders such as Ed Tech innovators, parents, mentors, Child TV, movie and game developers, and employers can be involved in and informed about the ongoing change process
- ◆ Ensure the team has access to up-to-date research on education outcomes together with expertise on the various subsets of the holistic education and support model. This may be done by the Leadership Team establishing a number of Network Teams with specific expertise in these subsets. The Leadership Team and the Network Teams should convene on a regular basis for an open and honest critique of the program’s outcomes, and to ensure the structure and processes of the holistic model are agile and continue to be relevant in a rapidly changing world. One option for the structure is presented below - Figure 1 provides an overview of the structure of the Holistic Education Leadership Team and Network Teams and Figure 2 provides greater detail about the responsibilities of the Network Teams.

Figure 1: Overview of Holistic Education Leadership Team and Network Team structure

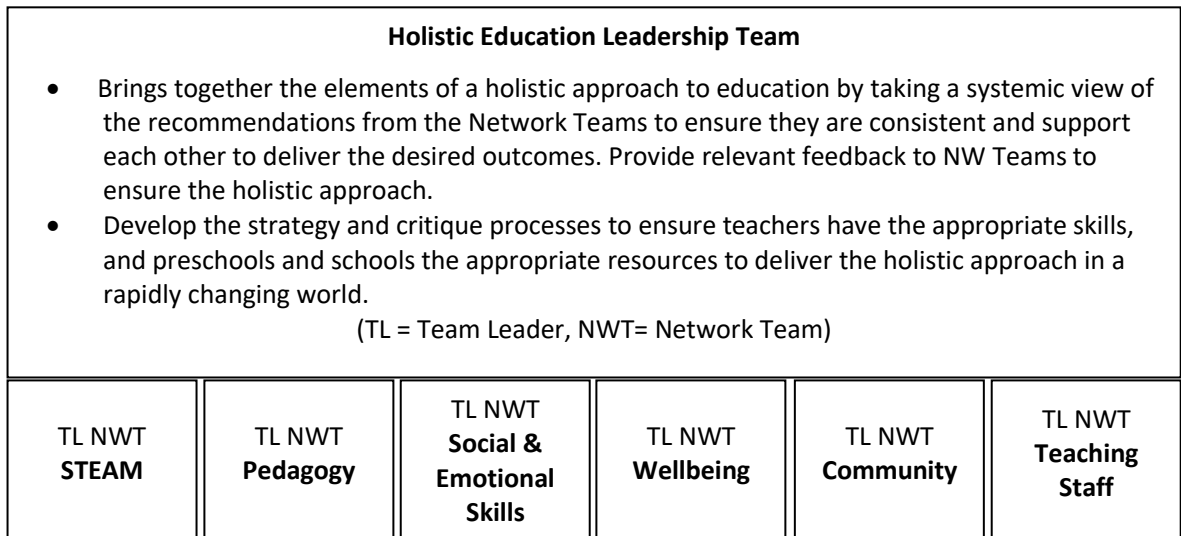


Figure 2: Responsibilities of the Network Teams

<p>Network Team: STEAM</p> <p>Ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum (K-12) remains up-to-date in view of student performance data • Students understand how these subjects interrelate and fit into the world around them • Relevant parts of the curriculum link with the latest IT software capabilities
<p>Network Team: Pedagogy</p> <p>Determine the best way to develop critical thinking and deep learning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging students - understand that they don't know what they don't know • Increasing relevance, encouraging discussion and debate about, and providing opportunities for critical reflection of academic material • Ensuring learning outcomes include problem-solving, creativity, thinking in different ways • Using digital and AI (Artificial Intelligence) resources effectively, recognising that social media and internet sources can also limit one's perspective • Use the learning in problem solving exercises in conjunction with other students
<p>Network Team: Social & Emotional Skills</p> <p>Determine the best way to develop emotional intelligence and social skills including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face social skills as well as digital social skills • Awareness of the impact of bullying and harassing in both face-to-face and online settings • Emotional development • Effective relationships and team skills. • (The involvement of parents, mentors, counsellors and psychologists to be considered).
<p>Network Team: Wellbeing</p> <p>Determine the best way to develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased student awareness of influences on physical, mental and emotional health, considering cultural differences. (Both parents and teachers to be involved.) • Better management of student trauma and stress related triggers, and the behavioural consequences • Greater student awareness of how to manage digital exposure • Tenacity and resilience in students • Effective involvement of parents, mentors, counsellors and psychologists when required
<p>Network Team: Community</p> <p>Determine the key community and collaboration focussed attributes to develop, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy and compassion; building effective teams; understanding the social, environmental, political, technological and economic impacts of our actions; and taking responsibility for one's actions. <p>Determine the best way these attributes could be developed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving parents; creating opportunities for students to collaborate with external organisations and workplaces to broaden their perspective, thereby linking theoretical concepts with practical applications; and providing career mentoring.
<p>Network Team: Teaching Staff</p> <p>Determine how to develop the skills of and supports for teachers so they are effective and inspirational educators through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attaining teacher qualifications and ongoing professional development • Teaching staff selection processes that identify passion, tenacity, engagement skills and academic skills • Providing support such as mentoring and counselling as well as innovative teaching tools • Developing appropriate and efficient administration systems to enable teachers to spend the maximum time on teaching and avoid burnout

- iii. To enable effective implementation of the review recommendations, I suggest the Taskforce recommends that preschool and school principals be trained in change management and the ability to develop a dynamic strategic planning process with appropriate involvement from staff. Principals should also be given assistance in facilitating ongoing change in the teaching and support process.

Change management is a structured approach for ensuring that changes are well thought out and developed as well as thoroughly and smoothly implemented, so that lasting benefits are achieved. Successful change management requires:

- ◆ **Leadership:** To ensure the process and resources are available to develop an open and engaged culture as well as sound planning and critique processes.
- ◆ **Involvement:** Involving the right people in the development of the strategy and the design, implementation and critique of the required changes.
- ◆ **Buy-in:** Gaining buy-in for the changes from those involved and affected, directly or indirectly by ensuring they have the right information, training and assistance.
- ◆ **Impact Assessment:** Assessing and addressing how the changes will affect people.
- ◆ **Communication:** Letting everyone affected by the change know when and how they will be affected and providing feedback processes.

6 The rationale

- i. **Everything we do in the future will most likely impact on the greater whole and our students will need to understand the systemic nature of the world**

With modern systems, our world is becoming more integrated. Whenever we change something or develop something new, there is likely to be an impact on the greater system. To that end, our students need to understand about aspects of STEAM, otherwise they will suffer from the 'I don't know what I don't know' syndrome when designing new products, processes and systems, potentially leading to significant negative consequences.

- ii. **Students have different start points that need to be catered to**

Students have different underlying learning abilities and attitudes as well as varying contexts from which they come. This will affect their learning and skill development. Typical contexts from which they may come include:

- ◆ Supportive family, no trauma or stress, well-adjusted and ready to learn
- ◆ Supportive family, have suffered minor trauma or stress, may react negatively to certain triggers which may affect attitude to learning and interaction with others
- ◆ Non-supportive family, have suffered major trauma or stress, highly likely to react negatively to other children and adults which may make it difficult to learn and create a fear of new things due to bad experiences.

The ability of the school to facilitate the education of students from such varied circumstances within the classroom environment will also have a considerable impact.

There are different approaches to teaching students from all kinds of backgrounds as well as the availability of various support tools and services such as counselling and mentoring. The challenge is to coordinate and link the teaching methods, and the support services and tools to individually accommodate students coming from different start points and with different personalities in such a way that they support each other to enable the students to achieve the desired outcomes.

7 Author contact details

8 Information sources

Information sources utilised in strengthening understanding of the situation facing the primary and secondary school sectors and some of the resources available.

- ◆ Berry Street Educational Model In today’s changing and complex world, many primary and secondary school students encounter daily challenges that can impact their success at school. These can range from ongoing stress and a lack of family support to a specific traumatic event. Despite best efforts and intentions, schools often require specialised strategies to address student needs for healing, growth, and achievement.
<https://www.childhoodinstitute.org.au/focus-areas/berry-street-education-model>
- ◆ New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) 2018 N PDL Global Report
- ◆ Through Growth to Achievement, Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools March 2018 Gonski 2
- ◆ Evaluation of Complex Whole-School Interventions: Methodological and Practical Considerations A Report for the Education Endowment Foundation October 2017
- ◆ Preparing for the best and worst of times, A report prepared for the NSW Department of Education on the key implications for school education of artificial intelligence and other emerging transformations, By Sydney University
- ◆ The Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework 5, The Department for Child Protection Western Australia
- ◆ Schaal voor Emotionele Ontwikkeling-V(erkort) Filip Morisse–Emilie Vandeputte –Celine Lefere–Edda Janssens (Netherlands)
- ◆ Learning By Design, Dr Julia Atkin
- ◆ Labour Market Outcomes for Younger People, RBA Bulletin – June 2018,
- ◆ Dropping out: the benefits and costs of trying university, Grattan Institute Norton, A., Cherastidtham, I., and Mackey, W. (2018).