



PROFIT BEFORE CHILDREN

AVARICE AND 21ST CENTURY LEARNING

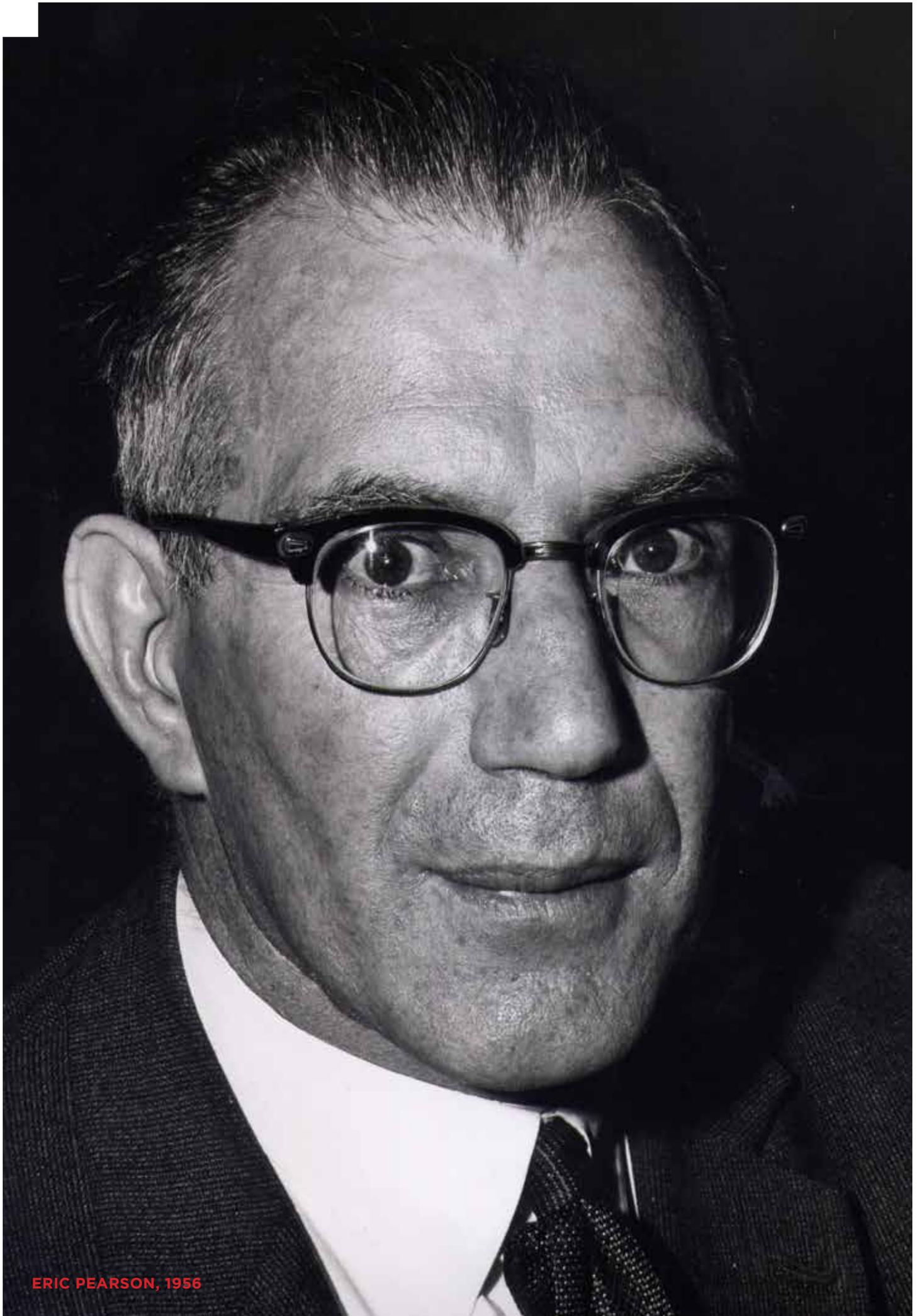
Carly Boreland

Eric Pearson
STUDY GRANT 2015

FOR THE NSW TEACHERS FEDERATION



NSW TEACHERS FEDERATI



ERIC PEARSON, 1956

THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE PEOPLE
WHO ASSISTED AND GUIDED ME ALONG THE WAY.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE NSWTF LIBRARY
AND THE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT.

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Eric Pearson

Eric Pearson was President of the NSW Teachers Federation from 1974 to 1975 and was also President of the Australian Teachers Federation. He had a distinguished teaching and lecturing career and was head of the Department of Education at Sydney Teachers College.

Mr Pearson commenced his teaching career in small country schools. When World War II broke out he saw active service in New Guinea and Borneo. After the war, he returned to teaching and undertook further study, gaining a PhD from the University of London. Eric Pearson died on June 8, 1977.

The Eric Pearson Study Grant, originally called the Eric Pearson Memorial Travel Grant, was established as a fitting tribute to his outstanding contribution as a scholar and unionist.

The first award was made in 1980 to Gus Plater, a teacher and activist from the Armidale Teachers Association, who investigated the social impact of microprocessor technology and its impact on schools and unions.

Recent areas of investigation have covered a range of contemporary issues affecting teachers and the role of the union. Examples include the study by Joan Lemaire (2009) into bullying, Kerry Barlow's (2007) comparison of professional learning in TAFE and Nicole Calnan's (2010) examination of the importance of professional learning in the work of teacher unions.

In 2013, Maurie Mulheron's study led to the report, *If We Forget History: The Thirty Year War Against Public Education*.

The investigations arising from the Eric Pearson Study Grant have contributed significantly to the work and ongoing development of the NSW Teachers Federation.

Carly Boreland, who was awarded the 2015 Eric Pearson Study Grant, is the Assistant Director of Federation's Centre for Professional Learning and Editor of *JPL*, the Journal of Professional Learning. At the time of being awarded and undertaking the study grant she was a history teacher and head teacher of history, languages and social sciences. She has represented government school teachers in matters of curriculum development, professional learning, accreditation and initial teacher education.

In *Profit Before Children: Avarice and 21st Century Learning*, Carly Boreland identifies curriculum, assessment and reporting as the targets of commercialisation of public education in Australia and outlines lessons that can be learned from the American experiments in public policy settings and pedagogy that could have unintended negative consequences for students and their teachers.

I congratulate Carly for her contribution, *Profit Before Children*.

John Dixon
General Secretary

We are led to believe that problems are given ready-made, and that they disappear in the response or the solutions... According to this infantile prejudice, the master sets the problem, our task is to solve it, and results are accredited true or false by a powerful authority.

Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1944, 44

The corporate agenda today is complete expansion into all aspects of education from teacher training and employment to administering schools, and all points of curriculum and assessment in between, and all for profit.

In Australia, global edu-business conglomerates such as Pearson are establishing deep roots in educational policy settings, meeting regularly with senior bureaucrats, commissioning articles by the Chair of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), John Hattie, and pushing forward their key personnel such as Michael Barber to join an Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) panel in discussions on assessment.

Such networks of influence linking profit-seeking entities with government education departments are seen starkly in the United States, where edu-business has taken hold of schools all over the country.

My research in North America investigated the relationships between education policy and for-profit interests and asked what Australia could do to find the right balance of sovereignty and accountability

in curriculum, assessment and reporting. Specifically, I studied how networks of corporations, foundations, legislatures, bureaucrats and influential individuals (gurus) tap into government revenue set aside for public education, creating a conflict of interest and consequences contrary to the interests of students.

This report focuses on profiteering in the development and sharing of curriculum and teaching resources, vocational skills, metric assessment using standardised digital tests and so-called personalised learning and blended learning environments. The research includes study of union initiatives in San Francisco, New York City and Washington DC and draws upon extensive news and media, academic literature and publicly available documents as well as interviews with key players in public education to reveal the impact of profiteering from public education funds.

This study follows the NSW Teachers Federation's long history of intellectualism and healthy scepticism of edu-business, particularly with Maurie Mulheron's Eric Pearson report, *If We Forget History: The Thirty Year War Against Public Education*

(2012), and *Our Way* (1993), where Denis Fitzgerald outlined the insidious roles of for-profit interests and ideological policy in education more than 20 years ago. Dianne Butland explored some symptoms of the corporate agenda in our schools in *Testing Times: Global Trends in Marketisation of Public Education Through Accountability Testing* (2008).

Global edu-business networks have their most devastating impacts in nations comprising the "global south": schools operated by companies such as Pearson in the Philippines, for example, charge children one dollar per day in entry fees.

In the "north" their impact is subtler, yet the edu-business industry has successfully developed an apparent consensus that education is in crisis and that business alone can provide solutions — that is, for a fee.

Their proposals typically lack evidence, are expensive and exclude teachers. Stephen Dinham, who in 2015 addressed Federation's Annual Conference on "long-wave" changes in Australian education as a result of global edu-business, describes (2015, 3) the following as part of the typical narrative of "crisis in education":

- public education is failing
- international testing is a true barometer of the decline of public schooling
- greater autonomy for public schools will lift results; greater accountability will lift public school results
- money is not the answer
- the teacher is the biggest influence on student achievement
- the curriculum is a captive of the Left and 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.

In his commentary on the validity of these global "hyper-narratives" about education, Ian Stronach (2010, 1) argues this consensus has come to "constitute the first global language of education and enables politicians the world over

to talk nonsense about educational outcomes while singing from the same hymn sheet". He describes the emergence of "hyper-narratives [that] make the same assumptions about the purpose of education. ... Their goal is not to improve the system that we have but to replace it with what they have created".

This report begins with two case studies highlighting the nature of profiteering in education: the first case study focuses on charter schools in the United States and the second on vocational education in Australia, where private providers are siphoning off millions of taxpayer dollars. Following this is an analysis of a few of the leading players in global edu-business, some of whom are reaching forcefully into Australia.

Next comes an examination of current trends in education policy driven by profit-makers, including changes in curriculum and assessment, the role of "good government" in this context, and the unintended negative consequences on student learning. The study also explores the fallout from the constant calls for "reform" prompted by edu-business.

The report concludes with a list of recommendations for teachers, unions and government who have a responsibility to act as guardians against the exploitative agendas of edu-business.

The edu-business industry has successfully developed an apparent consensus that education is in crisis and that business alone can provide solutions — that is, for a fee.

Analysis that there is not much relationship in Colorado between spending and achievement contradicts testimony and documentary evidence from dozens of well-respected educators in the State, defies logic, and is statistically flawed.

Judge Sheila A. Rappaport, Colorado 2011
(Berliner and Glass, 2014, 173)

CASE STUDY: THE RISE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

The United States government has spent more than \$3.3 billion on the Charter School Program since 1994, with very mixed results: "The Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) reports that 2500 charter schools have failed since 2000 ... during the last twenty years the charter school industry has received over three billion dollars in federal tax dollars." Los Angeles plans to spend half a billion dollars to ensure half the city's students are enrolled in charter schools (Singer, 2015). Profiteering is built into the way charter schools operate: in California, the Rocketship charter school network's sister company, Launchpad, owns the schools' buildings and rents them to Rocketship; their "official business plans include the goal that 'Launchpad will charge relatively high facilities fees' and that 'the profit margin will be used to finance new facilities'" (Bacon, 2014, 26).

Like many charters, Rocketship relies on a "blended learning" model of staffing and instruction, with high levels of online data collection and reduced staffing ratios. Bacon (2014, 25) explains that the co-

founder of Rocketship is John Danner, who is "on the board of a company that sells DreamBox Learning math education software ... Venture capitalists John Doerr and Reed Hastings are primary investors in DreamBox and big donors to Rocketship; Hastings sits on the national advisory board. In turn, Rocketship uses DreamBox in its learning lab". The charter school movement has syphoned billions of dollars from American public schools in this way.

Examples of fraud are widespread in the United States. Singer (2015) describes how in Michigan, 25 charter schools,

...awarded federal grants of between three and four million dollars in 2010-2011 never opened... In the last five years, over fifty charter schools in South Florida alone have been forced to close, mostly because of mismanagement. The companies that ran the closed schools owe large sums to local school districts for services not provided.

Where charters do open, they take from public schools: "Nashville, Tennessee ... ranks 54th out of 67 urban school systems in America in per-pupil funding.

Meanwhile charters are currently costing the district about \$75 million a year with projected increases to between \$150 and \$160 million" (Singer, 2015). There is often no oversight, equity or responsibility for students. In North Carolina, analysis of charters since 1999 found "charter schools in North Carolina are increasingly serving the interests of relatively able white students in racially imbalanced schools" (Singer, 2015).

In an interview for this report, a union organiser described how a new charter school's information evening was held at an exclusive country club in a mostly white community distant from the mostly black community the school would serve. After Hurricane Katrina, almost every school in New Orleans converted to a charter school. The system is so decentralised that "no public agency is responsible for keeping track of all students" (Singer, 2015).

An organiser for the American public school teachers' union, the National Education Association (NEA), who is taking the lead in the NEA's campaign for accountability and transparency in charter schools, explained that after 20 years of the charter experiment the NEA

is just starting to see good progress in its campaign for accountability and transparency although basic reporting requirements such as how charter schools spend public funds have yet to be realised. The NEA's response to charter schools has been complex. It organises in some charter schools and its policy does not oppose charter schools.

The future of charter schools remains uncertain in the United States and Australia. Parents and communities are beginning to see problems on the ground and school districts such as San Francisco have rejected new charters such as Rocketship. At the same time, prominent 2016 presidential candidates such as Hillary Clinton (Democrat) and, until he withdrew, Jeb Bush (Republican) have close connections with charter school supporters while the current President, Barack Obama, created opportunities for massive charter expansions.

Last year (2015), the US federal government gave \$US157 million to charter schools and for 2016 it is projected to be as high as \$US278 million. At state level, legislators have

given themselves power to override school districts so that in California the San Francisco Superintendent and School District's rejection of the opening of more charter schools and commitment to focus on existing public schools has been overruled by the state.

In Australia, federal governments of most persuasions continue to support so-called Independent Public Schools without any evidence of their success, and organisations such as the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), argue "Australia should establish charter schools. In fact, [the CIS] report goes one step further in proposing Australia adopt for-profit charter schools" (Ashenden, 2015).

Whilst to date Australia has remained largely protected from the sort of private sector influence and profiteering of the charter school experience in the US, the recent deregulation of this country's vocational education sector has witnessed rampant profiteering and significant cost for students and the federal budget and provides a good indication of the exploitation that could occur in the Australian public school system.

TERMS FREQUENTLY USED IN THIS REPORT

- The landmark 1983 report, ***A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform***, declared that, in the US, "we have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament". This contentious Reagan-era policy document suggested that America's schools had failed and weakened the nation. It opened the door to education "gurus" to declare there was a "crisis" in education, blaming teachers and established curriculum and for private companies to offer goods and services to arrest the alleged decline.
- ***No Child Left Behind*** is the pro-testing, pro-federal interventionist education act sponsored by former US president George W. Bush in 2001 and repealed by Barack Obama in 2015 after much criticism.
- ***Race to The Top*** is President Barack Obama's multi-billion-dollar program of competitive grants to states and districts for educational reforms and innovation that has, like No Child Left Behind, spurred the growth of charter schools, student testing and proposals for student achievement-based teacher remuneration.
- ***StudentsFirst*** is an extremely powerful education organisation in the US that lobbies hard for changes to teachers' tenure, student results-linked teacher assessment, "reformed" teaching methods, greater parental say in schools and education, and a shift to charter schools. It is accused of working against teacher unions and of funding political candidates who espouse its policies.
- The ***Teach for America*** program puts university graduates into low SES schools as teachers with minimal training.
- The ***Global Education Reform Movement*** (GERM) is a term coined by Finnish education analyst Pasi Sahlberg to describe a reform "epidemic that spreads and infects education systems" globally.

Why do we think that venture capitalists, filmmakers and tech moguls know how to run schools and make better education decisions than teachers?

(Spren and Stark, 2014, 158)

CASE STUDY: PRIVATISED VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The jury is in on deregulating TAFE. It was a bad idea – \$4 billion worth of expensive bad idea. Writing in *The Age* in late 2015, reporter Michael Bachelard revealed how badly the Australian taxpayer has been burned:

The competition tsars and economists are pushing at an open governmental door when they argue more “human services” should be delivered by the private sector... Australia’s private vocational education system is now almost twice as expensive as Labor’s home insulation scheme, and that prompted a royal commission ... Those growing rich on government funding are the operators of private colleges and the brokers (salesmen operating door to door or from hothouse call centres) who sign up the poor, the uneducated, the mentally disabled and those living in Aboriginal communities for useless online diplomas at a cost of \$20,000 each. For reference, that’s twice what a year studying medicine at Melbourne University costs.

In 2012, commented Bachelard, the language of choice, innovation and the private sector introduced,

...HECS-style loans to vocational education for the first time, calling it VET Fee-Help, and extending Commonwealth funding to diploma courses... The “lifetime limit” for VET Fee-Help loans was almost \$100,000... A few years later, thousands of people are saddled with debts, colleges and brokers are making off with the cash, and the government still pretends the money will be repaid... We will not know the final sums until next year, but it seems like a figure of \$4 billion wasted this year alone might be a very conservative estimate.

There can be no guarantee that any further deregulation of Australian universities or schools will be any less wasteful, any less unfair or less exploitative of the neediest, most vulnerable young Australians.



Clockwise from top left: President George W. Bush signs No Child Left Behind into law in 2002; President Barack Obama’s 2009 Race to the Top legislation; Carly Boreland interviewing Bob Tate and Mike Kaspar of the National Education Association (NEA) in 2015; Protest posters on the throttling of TAFE to subsidise privatised vocational education



When the federal government starts doing things like requiring all states to test all kids, there's going to be gold in them hills. The people we've elected have created a landscape that's allowed Pearson to prosper.

Jonathan Zimmerman, education historian, New York University (Simon, 2015)

MAJOR PLAYERS IN EDU-BUSINESS

PEARSON

In 2012, "E-learning was a \$91 billion market" (Reingold, 2015). Pearson is not the only player, but it is big, very big, and operating in Australia. Pearson has become emblematic of the negative impacts of privatising education.

Pearson began as a family owned construction company in the 1850s. They expanded to merchant banking, television, newspapers and book publishing during the Twentieth Century and entered educational testing in 2000. Today, Pearson owns Penguin and Heineman and 42 per cent of Pearson's sales are in school products. Pearson employs around 40,000 people in 70 countries [Murphy, 2015].

Tampio (2015) found "Pearson earns over \$8 billion in annual global sales". It delivered "9 million high-stakes tests to [the] US in 2014, including PARCC [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers] assessments" and was paid \$US32 million to administer

teacher certification tests in New York. New York also gave Pearson a further "\$32 million five-year contract to produce New York standardised tests" (Collins, 2012). In the United Kingdom, Pearson owns Edexcel, "the largest UK exam body by the volume of its sales, with a turnover of £317m in the 14 months to February 2011" (Mansell, 2012).

Pearson is involved in scandals. Like everything with Pearson, the problems are big and expensive. Reingold (2015) reported that in 2011, New York State Attorney General, Eric Schneiderman, launched an investigation into the Pearson Foundation's sponsorship of expensive trips for education leaders to Rio de Janeiro, Singapore and Helsinki at a time when negotiations were being held on whether to award Pearson contracts to develop materials for the Common Core Curriculum Standards. Pearson settled in 2013, paying a fine of \$US7.7 million. The Pearson Foundation was closed shortly afterwards.

Simon (2015) reported "tens of millions in taxpayer dollars and cuts to student tuition from deals arranged without

competitive bids in states from Florida to Texas". In Alabama, the Pearson contract is under investigation by the FBI. From 2012, Pearson provided digital curriculum, teacher training and technology support in the Huntsville City School District for,

...\$135 million over three years plus \$60 million per year to continue using curriculum after 2016. The contract was cancelled in 2014 and few teachers were found to be using the lessons... Casey Wardynski (superintendent) signed a \$22 million contract in 2012 — a spokesperson for the district, Keith Ward, said the "district did not seek other bids because officials believed Pearson to be the only vendor that could bundle all the services". In 2013, Wardynski led a webinar for Pearson on leadership in the digital age and was referred to on their website as a member of their "team of experts". He arranged tours of up to 700 educators through the Huntsville schools showcasing online textbooks and has won awards for embracing technology [Simon, 2015].

Simon also found that "Public officials often commit to buying from Pearson because it's familiar, even when there's little proof its products and services are effective." Their contracts also "set forth specific performance targets but don't penalise the company when it fails to meet these standards". For instance,

In Virginia in 2010, consulting services were contracted to turn around a struggling school [\$US375,000 over three years plus \$66,770 in Pearson products]. Reading improved significantly, but Maths declined to a point where the school should have been closed under state rules and not be accredited — another plan was made to keep the school open.

In 2015, Woolf reported that "Pearson, the world's largest maker of textbooks and academic materials, has admitted 'monitoring' the social media use of students using its tests" and that it defended its actions by saying that "from our standpoint, we're only looking after our clients' intellectual property"; parents

and students have tended not to see the same distinction. Pearson insults students' intelligence by producing bizarre questions in high-stakes tests. Collins (2012), writing for *The New York Times*, described how,

New York eighth graders took a standardised English test that included a story called "The Hare and the Pineapple"... The forest animals suspect that since the pineapple can't move, it must have some clever scheme to ensure victory, and they decide to root against the bunny. But when the race begins, the pineapple just sits there. The hare wins. Then the animals eat the pineapple. The end.

There were many complaints from the eighth graders, who had to answer questions like: "What would have happened if the animals had decided to cheer for the hare?" They were also supposed to decide whether the animals ate the pineapple because they were hungry, excited, annoyed or amused.

For Collins (2012),

This is the part of education reform nobody told you about. You heard about accountability, and choice, and innovation. But when No Child Left Behind [the pro-testing, pro-federal intervention education act sponsored by George W. Bush in 2001 and repealed in 2015] was passed 11 years ago, do you recall anybody mentioning that it would provide monster profits for the private business sector? An American

This is the part of education reform nobody told you about. An American child could go to a public school run by Pearson, studying from books produced by Pearson, while his or her progress is evaluated by Pearson standardised tests. The only public participant in the show would be the taxpayer.

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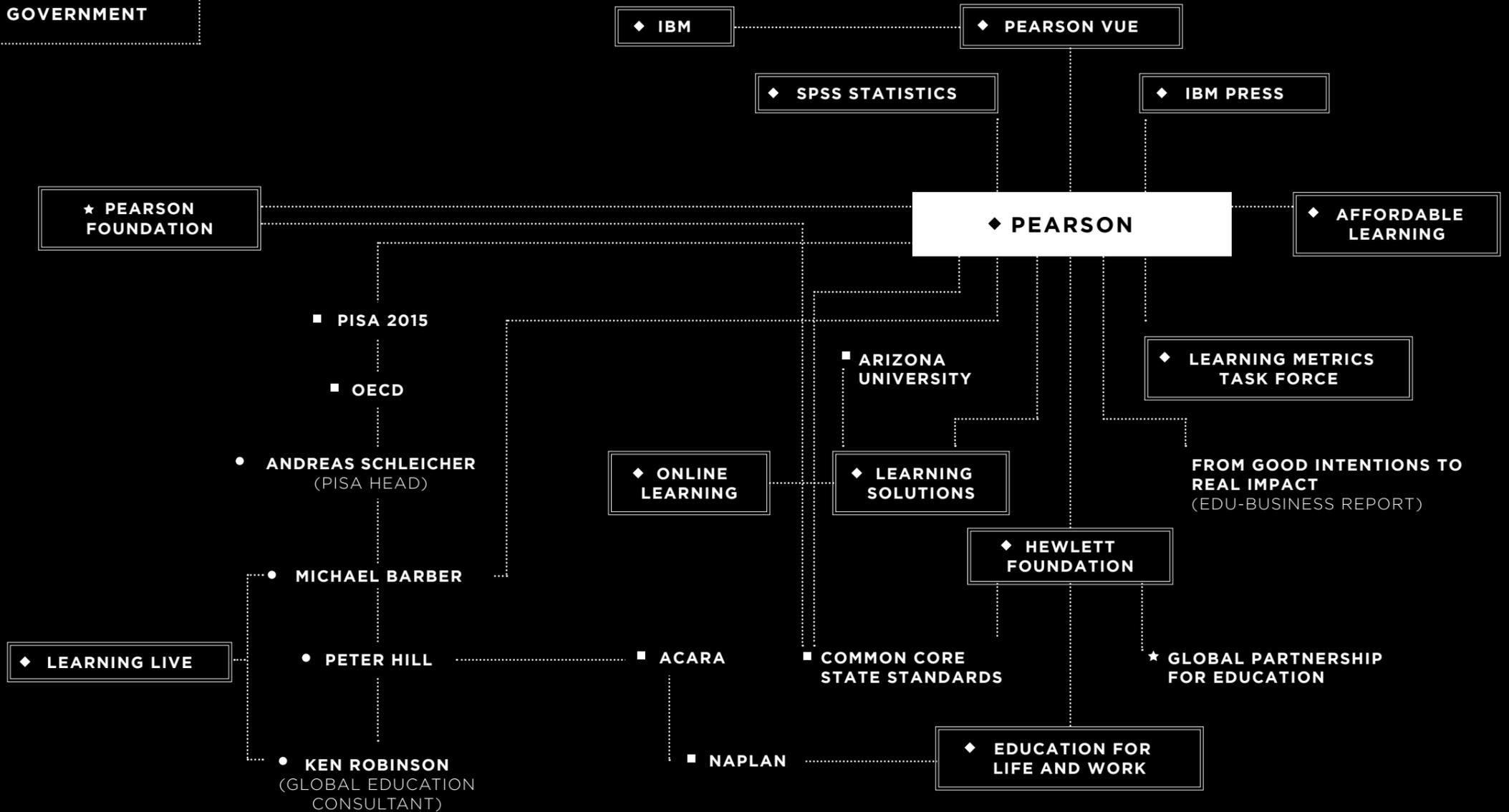
Pearson's highly successful appeal and strategy involves building close relationships with bureaucrats. This practice of getting to know bureaucrats personally through off-line lunches and so on occurs across the globe, including in Australia. "Politico's review found that public contracts and subsidies ... have flowed to Pearson even when the company can't show its products and services are producing academic gains" (Simon, 2015). Pearson thrives in a climate of educational crisis where "public officials have seized it as a lifeline" (Simon, 2015). The company's offerings include:

...software [that] grades student essays, tracks student behaviour and diagnoses — and treats — [Attention Deficit Disorder]. The company administers teacher licensing exams and coaches teachers once they're in the classroom. It advises principals. It operates a network of three dozen online public schools. It co-owns the for-profit company that now administers the GED (General Education Development) test ... The company is even marketing an educational product that lets college professors track how long their students spend reading Pearson textbooks each night [Simon, 2015].

In the UK, Mansell (2012) reported that Pearson expanded into school improvement with a free trial in six schools using a computer-based curriculum across 11 subjects. "The Pearson school model has been led by Anders Hultin, a Swedish educationist who invited controversy in 2009 when, in a previous post at the private education chain Gems, he told the UK newspaper, *The Guardian*, that ministers should allow state-funded schools to be run for profit" (Mansell, 2012).

Pearson's charm has not been effective on parent groups, who are among these leading

- GURUS
- ◆ FOR-PROFIT
- ★ NOT-FOR-PROFIT
- GOVERNMENT



ADAPTED FROM "PEARSON'S NETWORK CULTIVATED"
BY HOGAN, SELLER AND LINGARD (2015)

The diagram represents direct and indirect working relationships.

opposition to the company. Junemann and Ball (2015) analysed Pearson's "attempt to 'reposition the company as a social purpose company' and explained that whilst Pearson's Responsibility webpage refers to "the global policy consensus we're trying to forge" it is really seeking to create new markets for its products. The Pearson policy consensus is built around the state's "supposed lack of capacity for innovation and risk and the lack of 'incentives' for reform" (Junemann and Ball, 28). Pearson is engaging in,

... a re-working of what school is, what it means to teach and learn, what it means to be educated in the 21st century... [It pushes the] role of technology as an enabler of scale through delivery cost savings, that is, by reducing the reliance on qualified teachers as the primary mode of instruction ... This has profound implications for the role of teachers. The commitments and functions of the teacher are increasingly narrowed to include only those deemed necessary for enhancing performance and outcomes [Junemann and Ball, 2015, 30].

The tide is turning somewhat against Pearson in both the US and Australia. Reingold (2015) reported that, "Conservatives despise the idea of foreigners shaping US education," saying, "We feel like Pearson is an alien enemy and they're propagandising our children." In New York, a senator introduced a bill to prohibit Pearson from accessing government contracts, and in New York City, 47 "school principals signed a letter of concern about Pearson's 'history of mistakes'" (Reingold, 2015). Pearson's New York test contract was not renewed but a larger \$US44 million contract was awarded to an American company, Questar Assessment.

In April, the Los Angeles Unified School District informed Pearson and its partner, Apple, that it was cancelling a contract for the rollout of iPads and learning software, saying it was "extremely dissatisfied" with their previous work. In 2015 Pearson also lost its 30-year-old testing monopoly in Texas (Reingold, 2015).

In Australia, too, there have been setbacks for Pearson. Its \$US41.6 million contract for National Assessment of Progress in Literacy And Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments has not been renewed and newspapers have started running articles about its use of data and possible conflicts of interest. A *Sydney Morning Herald* story suggested the Pearson NAPLAN contracts "potentially amounted to state-sponsored market research" ("Teachers accuse global education giant of profiting out of conflict of interest" by Eryk Bagshaw, *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 7, 2015), leading Pearson's Australia managing director, David Barnett, into an incautious personal attack on Australian academic Professor Robert Lingard.

SIR MICHAEL BARBER

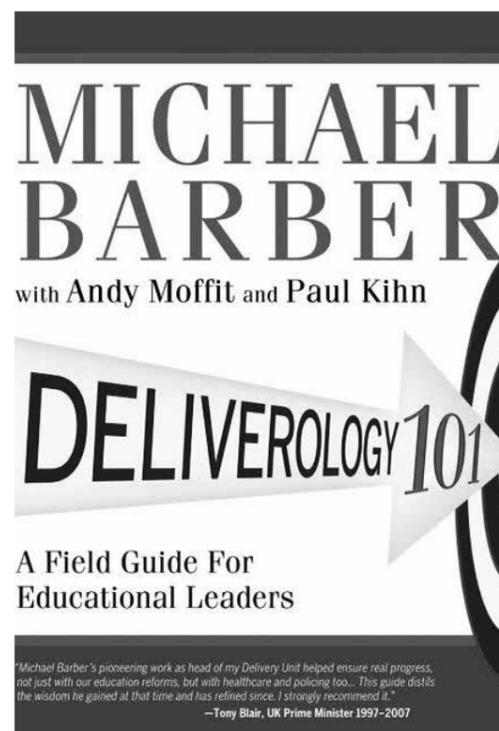
Michael Barber works for Pearson. Before that, he worked for the British government and McKinsey, the giant global management consulting firm. Barber, a very big fish in the GERM pool (Global Education Reform Movement), invents his own language, as the title of his book, *Deliverology 101: A Field Guide for Educational Leaders*, shows. Barber says in the book that he is all about the "science of getting things done". He "brands objectors as defenders of the status quo" and "describes Race to the Top as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform public education in America" (Tampio, 2015). Hogan, Sellar and Lingard (2015, 2) identify Barber as one of the "new hybrid career structures of policy actors who span public, private and philanthropic domains and are linked to neoliberal policy settings". They describe how for Pearson executives,

...the importance of Barber's networks ...was made clear: to be honest a lot of these people are Michael's acquaintances from the decades of work he's been doing in education. That was our first port of call. We just went through Michael's address book and said, 'let's reach out to these people' [Hogan, Sellar and Lingard, 3].

Barber lends credibility to Pearson's activities. "Barber, as a former bureaucrat,



Clockwise from left: A sample of Pearson's mighty textbook publishing output; UK and US teacher unionists protest outside Pearson's AGM in London; a protest poster; Sir Michael Barber's buzzphrase book, *Deliverology 101*



can help communicate the relevance and currency of Pearson's activities to government officials and this likely serves to provide the perceived legitimacy and authority of using Pearson for government contracts and services" (Hogan, Sellar and Lingard, 2015, 7).

Barber publishes widely and co-authors works with notable names in the regions in which Pearson seeks to make a foothold. In Australia, he has recruited AITSL Chair John Hattie and former Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority CEO Dr Peter Hill to write for Pearson. In his article with Hill, "Towards a Renaissance In Assessment", published on Pearson's Open Ideas webpage, Barber argues that teaching today is a "largely under-qualified and trained, heavily unionised, bureaucratically controlled 'semi-profession'" (Stewart, 2014). He offers "digital systems that 'track learning and teaching at the individual student and lesson level every day' ... integrated continuous computer monitoring of pupil progress with teaching, making education more 'personalised'" (Stewart, 2014). The cost of implementing such an experimental "renaissance" is never detailed.

In 2013, an article written by Barber and Rizvi, "The Incomplete Guide to Delivering Learning Outcomes", proposed to report on measurable improvements to children's lives by 2018 via an audit process. They take some cues from the pharmaceutical industry:

Often in medicine there are high rates of readmission and recurrence and some doctors are incentivised by procedures

Barber has recruited AITSL Chair John Hattie and former ACARA CEO Dr Peter Hill to write for Pearson. Barber and Hill have written that teaching today is a largely under-qualified 'semi-profession'.

performed rather than outcomes achieved. We want to hold ourselves to a standard based not on the potential of our product, but on the ultimate outcome for the learner [Hogan, Sellar and Lingard, 2015, 8].

TONY MACKAY

The self-proclaimed "key players" in Australian education have typically been teachers at some time, although they have rarely taught in the 21st century. They move between lucrative roles as consultants, chairs, facilitators and occasional bureaucrats. They are deeply connected with international players in GERM and profit personally from travel and incentives, high salaries and influence whilst lending credibility to the initiatives, products and services they promote on behalf of their sponsors. Even significant public figures such as former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, are eager to be a player in the edu-business industry. The Bretton Woods Project reported that in June 2015,

...at UK development think-tank the Overseas Development Institute, GPE's [the Global Partnership for Education] board chair and former Australian prime minister Julia Gillard regretted that the education community hadn't "engaged with the private sector in a meaningful way", and spoke of the lessons that could be learnt from the health sector's engagement, including "how they involve the business community in the global supply chains" *Bretton Woods Observer*, July 2015.

Ms Gillard is not alone in wanting to play with those who profit from public education. Former AITSL chair and former ACARA deputy chair Tony Mackay now makes his living from the global supply chains of education policy and e-learning. Mackay's network is outlined in the map on pages 18 and 19 and connects quickly with programs such as Teach for Australia. Like Barber, Mackay writes his ideology down. In his book *Redesigning Education: Shaping Learning Systems Around the Globe*, written for the Global Education Leaders Program (GELP) and

sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Promethean, Innovation Unit (headed by Tony Mackay) and the Ellen Koshland Family Fund, he believes that "personalised learning of students and teachers fuelled by technology can dramatically accelerate learning in this century" (Mackay, 2013, 10).

Fully 53 of the 171 pages of *Redesigning Education* (or 30 per cent for those who prefer quantitative analysis) are full-page photographs or diagrams. Where the text manages to break up the pictures, the contents page lists chapters such as "Unstoppable Forces of Change", "Towards a Learning Ecosystem", "Movers and Shapers" and "Reforming Systems Leadership for the 21st Century".

The book makes bold, neoliberal predictions about the future, proposes an "Education 3.0" and proclaims the public education system dead:

The corpse is not aware it is dead (2013, 156) ... learning will be provided by business, philanthropists, social entrepreneurs, communities and faith groups, families and most radical of all – learners themselves [2013, 8].

Education 3.0:

- is achieved through a holistic transformation because the system is complex and interdependent
- is characterised by a transfer of power and ownership from teachers to learners in new models of learning, or 21st century pedagogies
- is accelerated by collaborative learning technologies (2013, 26).

For Mackay, the challenges are not poverty, lack of government regulation or funding or corporate profiteering. In the chapter "Towards a Learning Ecosystem",

...the debate around Education 3.0 includes who gets to play in the game ... and those who do not yet play but want and need to... [F]or too long, education has been a "secret garden", with closed groups determining process and content, and access to quality education limited to the few.

ACER sells online standardised assessment packages, starting at \$2000 annually, and has lucrative contracts with PISA.

More recently, Mackay popped up as a facilitator at an Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) panel on assessment tools. Panellists included Geoff Masters (head of ACER), Michael Barber and Dr Michele Bruniges, then NSW Secretary of Education and now Secretary of the federal government's Department of Education and Training. ACER is a self-funded organisation that now sells online standardised assessment packages to schools, starting at \$2000 annually, and provides consultants for an additional fee. They also have lucrative contracts with PISA.

STEVEN SCHWARTZ

Steven Schwartz, who has never been a school teacher and was born in New York, nevertheless heads the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

Schwartz has been on the Board of Teach for Australia and is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies. Teach for Australia employs teachers with limited teacher training in Victoria and Western Australia and the Centre for Independent Studies supports for-profit charter schools in Australia, amongst other rightwing agendas. Schwartz has been a Vice-Chancellor at three universities, including Macquarie University.

In his fields, Schwartz attracts controversy. In a 2012 ABC Radio profile, he was described as a "change agent" who almost always creates "ructions with staff". At Macquarie University, academics complained publicly that university land was used for private buildings costing up to \$100 million whilst lecture theatres were overcrowded (Aedy, 2012). In a 2005 *Sydney Morning Herald* story, "Wall Street Comes to Campus", Schwartz was described as "bringing his world of winners

and losers, excellence and reward, league tables and rankings to university life in Sydney". The story told how Schwartz is obsessed with league tables and how his "style may be better suited to Wall Street". It also reported that Schwartz has become "associated with the trend of treating universities as the last bastion of socialism and turning them into University Inc". In just three years as Vice-Chancellor of Brunel University, London, "he got rid of 60 staff, mostly teaching academics".

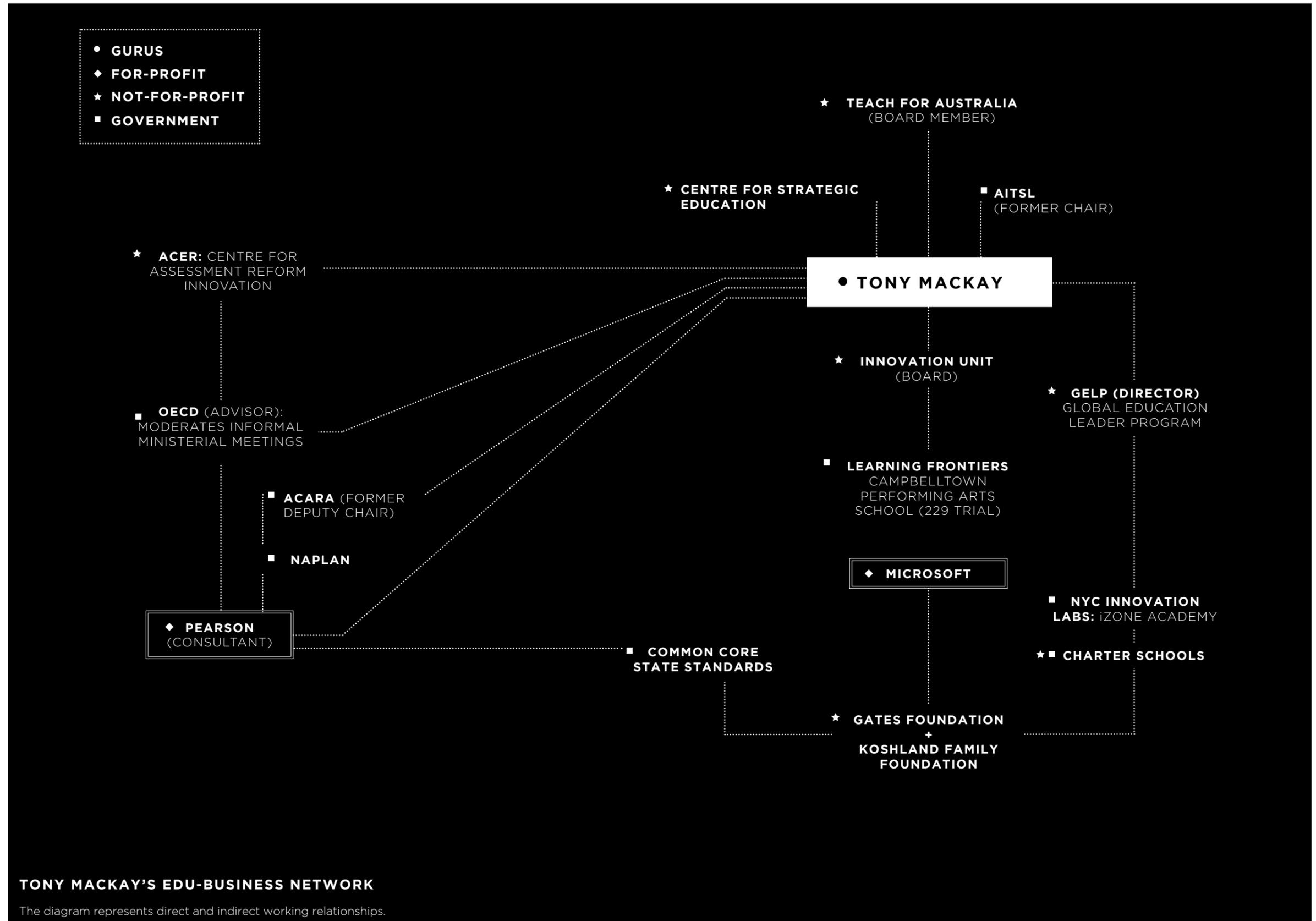
BILL AND MELINDA GATES, ELI AND EDYTHE BROAD, THE WALTONS

Private philanthropies in the US spend almost \$4 billion annually on education (Spren and Stark, 2014, 158). More than \$500m comes from the Gates and Walton Foundations; the Walton Family Foundation spent \$588m on charter schools alone between 1998 and 2014. In America, privatisation of public education is not just about politicians and corporations. The big players in the edu-business network that syphons millions of dollars away from public school students are family foundations.

Without their contribution, public education in America would be very different. Very large, non-unionised charter chains such as KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) rely on a "network that 'partners' with the Walton (Walmart) Family Foundation, the Broad Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates (Microsoft) Foundation, and the Dell (computers) Foundation" (Singer, 2015).

Nelson's (2015) analysis of the motivations of the reform movement argues that whilst Pearson alone takes more than \$1 billion from the American system "they are the beneficiaries of reform, not the architects". He describes an,

"odd coalition of forces: very wealthy corporations and individuals who embrace a free market ideology; Tea Party zealots who don't want anyone to tell them what to do; and politicians whose pockets are lined with cash from plutocrats who make them feel important". Whilst they claim to promote



TONY MACKAY'S EDU-BUSINESS NETWORK

The diagram represents direct and indirect working relationships.

the interests of underprivileged children their social agenda is generally in conflict with measurements that would improve life chances for children: "They oppose minimum wage legislation, environmental regulation, corporate reform [and] progressive taxation" [Nelson, 2015].

Public education is the universal health care we've never seen, and education reform is the persistent effort to repeal it. It deeply frustrates conservative ideologues that public education took hold in the 18th and 19th century before they had a chance to filibuster the various legislative initiatives that created educational justice for all Americans [Nelson, 2015].

Funding is messy in the US. The Gates Foundation funds everything. Ravitch (2013, 123-124) explains:

The Gates Foundation funds unions and anti-unions, subsidising almost every major US thinktank. It is the largest foundation in the US and possibly the world. [It] partnered with Pearson to develop online curriculum for the Common Core Standard and underwrote database to collect confidential student data with Wireless Generation (NewsCorp) possibly to be used to market new products to schools and students.

In America, teacher unions support political candidates for election and accept donations from companies and foundations. In interviews for this report, the NEA explained that in charter schools it is seeing the emergence of competing groups claiming to represent the interests of teachers, one such group being E4E (Educators for Excellence). The NEA says the number of employees in each branch of such groups is vastly beyond what could be generated by the registered membership base, suggesting they could be funded by foundations or other anti-union organisations. In the US, it is entirely possible that the same groups that fund anti-union policy and initiatives also fund unions. One union employee described the approach as

throwing paint at a wall and waiting to see what sticks.

The foundations can afford to wait. They have endless funds and clear social agendas for how the money can be spent. When they decide to speak, folk listen. As examples, in California, "Blended Learning" is promoted by John Fisher, who started the \$25 million Silicon Schools Fund. Fisher is the son of Gap founders Don and Doris Fisher, among the world's wealthiest clothing manufacturers and scions of San Francisco's elite" (Bacon, 2014, 25). "[The] Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation support the Los Angeles plan to have half its students in charter schools. The foundation has ties to the Clintons" (Singer, 2015).

PROSPECTING IN THE EDUCATION GOLDFIELDS

In 2016, the K-12 education market is projected to be \$788.7 billion. "Much of that money is spent in the public sector" (Fang, 2014). For-profit interests have become increasingly effective at extracting large sums of public money and inserting themselves into governmental and educational decision-making processes. They benefit from standardised approaches to education policy and have developed monopolies in key aspects of schooling, including assessment, curriculum resources and reporting of student learning. Organisations not traditionally involved in education are now also entering the emerging "markets" with reports that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) met with Google to discuss their vision for the future of education.

Simply, education is the next frontier for investors:

In 2013, twenty-eight of the richest Americans worth at least \$1.3 billion each primarily built their fortunes through hedge fund market speculation. John Paulson is the fourth wealthiest hedge fund operator, 36th richest American, and 78th richest person in the world. Not all hedge fund managers are super-

rich. Some are just very very rich. Daniel Loeb of Third Point was worth \$2.3 billion in 2014 and ranked only 277 on the Forbes list of wealthiest Americans, but this may be because Loeb spends so much time as a director of an anti-teacher union group, Students First [Singer, 2015].

Investors and bureaucrats alike see money in the Common Core State Standards:

[At] a conference of private equity investors in Manhattan ... a consultant predicted that if Common Core tests turned out to be as rigorous as advertised "a huge number of schools will suddenly look really bad, their students testing way behind in reading and maths. They'll want help quick. And private for-profit vendors selling lesson plans, educational software and student assessments will be right there to provide it [Ravitch, 2013, 181].

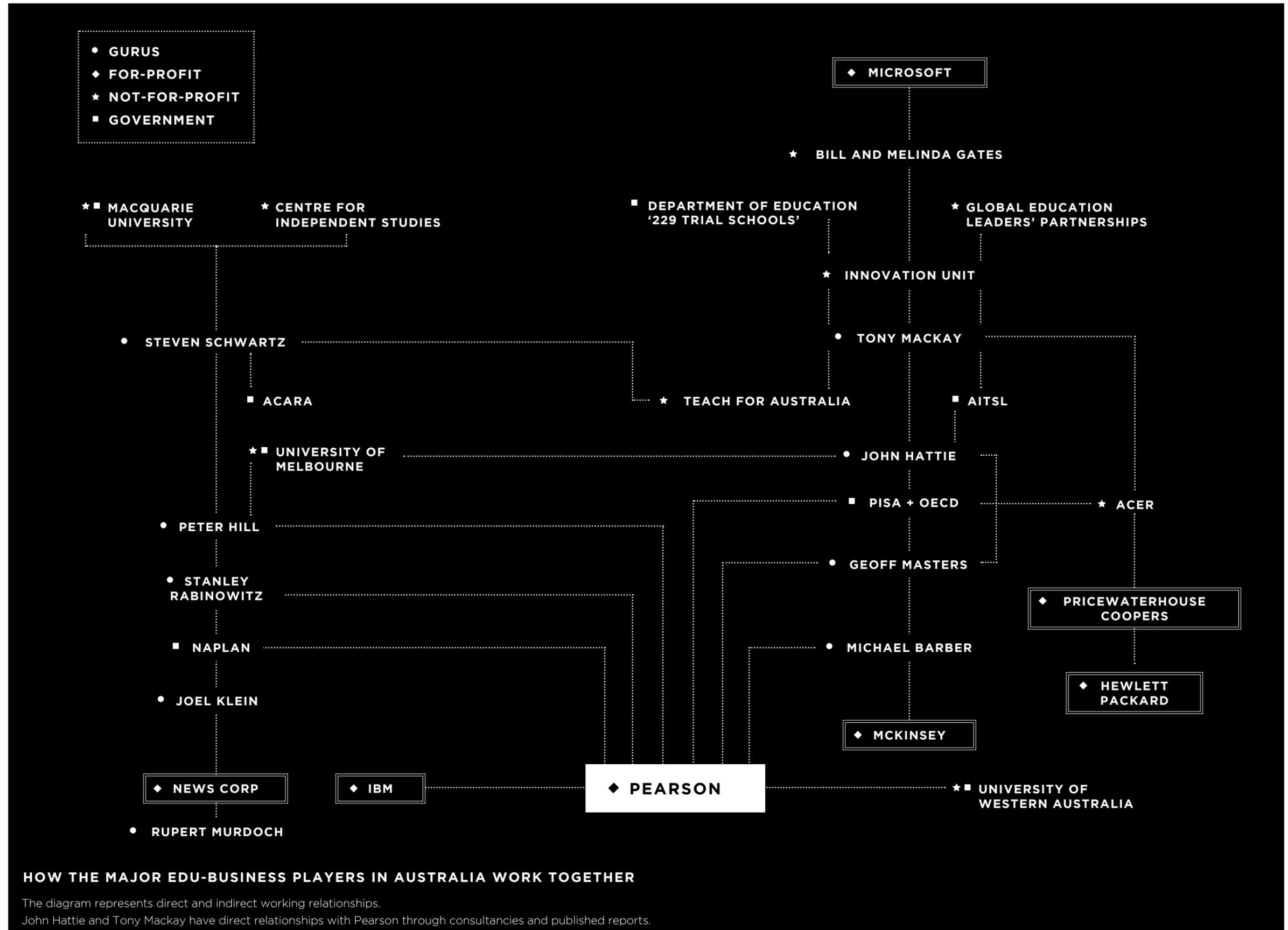
James Shelton, the Deputy Secretary of Education said "the Common Core standards will allow education companies to produce products that 'can scale across many markets', overcoming the 'fragmented procurement market' that has plagued investors" [Fang, 2014].

Private equity firms have a clear understanding of the legislative and social barriers to exploiting the public education sector. "Eric Hippeau of Lerer Hippeau Ventures claims that despite "unions, public school bureaucracies, and parents ... [the] education market is ripe for disruption" (Fang, 2014). Fang also reported that at conferences organised by Michael Moe, a former director at Merrill Lynch, there was,

... [t]alk of organising a bipartisan campaign to persuade 2016 presidential candidates to sign onto a statement of principles endorsing charters and other education innovations. The pledge also called for the federal government to create new tax incentives for spending on education companies akin to a health savings account.



Clockwise from top left: Insurance giant SunAmerica's former chief Eli Broad also funds anti-public school education reform; educational analyst, Professor Diane Ravitch; Bill and Melinda Gates whose Gates Foundation sponsors education reform



Like a lobster in a slow-boiling pot — our thinking about education has gradually been altered. Our commonsense beliefs about the purposes of education have shifted from education as a common good and great equaliser to education as a personal investment with individual returns based on competitive measures.

Spreen and Stark, 2014, 154

21ST CENTURY PEDAGOGY

Confidential material provided for this report reveals the 34-nation OECD released a proposal for a summit for education ministers on the future of educational technology with the largest providers despite acknowledging “very little research was available to support the use of education technology”. In Australia, Donovan (2015) used data from the OECD and its education survey arm, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) to illustrate the failure of technology to improve literacy for Australia’s children:

Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway have the greatest integration of information technology in schools but the OECD has concluded integration does not appear to be improving literacy and numeracy...The OECD study found that 94 per cent of Australian students were using computers at school, second only to Norway, and Australia topped the table when it came to the number of computers to students — virtually one for one. “Our students spend on average an hour a day on the internet at school, yet the results of international

tests show that this is not really impacting on students’ results,” [said Trevor Cobbold, Convenor of Save Our Schools]. ... By analysing international test results for 15-year-olds, the OECD found Australians perform significantly above the average in digital reading, and in particular, have strong web-browsing skills, are better able to plan and execute a search, evaluate the usefulness of information, and assess the credibility of sources online.

It will come as little news to teachers that introducing new technology in lessons will improve students’ capacity to use that technology. Whilst the marginal digital literacy gains detailed above might be somewhat positive it is essential that proponents of such technologies be held to account against the claims they originally made, such as that technology would improve the literacy and numeracy of the nation’s youngsters.

Even in the 20th century, the link between intent and impact was not always causal. Nor are progressive trends in pedagogy necessarily linear. Looking at 20 years of American reform and “following up

his own research of the 1970s, Galton found that teacher-centred pedagogy, characterised by interactions of a very low cognitive level, managerial in their intent, had, increased dramatically between 1976 and 1996. Pupils had few opportunities to question or explore ideas” (Berliner, 2011, 295). Moving 20 years ahead, Selwyn (2015) provides a scathing assessment of the exaggerated potential of technology in 21st century schools and universities:

It is common to hear talk of the digital “disruption” of education, “flipping” the traditional classroom setup, and technology as a “game changer”... Doubts are even raised over the need to actually “know” or be “taught” anything... These are powerful means of advancing the interests and agendas of some social groups over the interests of others ...

Anyone not drinking the Ed-Tech Kool-Aid might do well to distance themselves from much of the language that pervades digital education... The past 100 years show that education has been largely un-transformed and undisrupted by successive waves of technological innovation. Empirical research has remained resolutely equivocal about the “learning” that can actually be said to result from the use of digital technologies... Why not acknowledge that online spaces designed to elicit forms of student contribution are not “hangouts”, “cafés” or “hubs” but places for “required response” or “mandatory comment”?

CURRICULUM AND THE COMMON CORE

Teaching materials have long been produced by for-profit and other organisations and it is not proposed that discerning purchases cease. Nevertheless, the influence of publishers and the curriculum-narrowing effects of standardised assessment, products and services are problematic, as is the 2015 decline in US mathematics and reading results for the first time in decades. Publishers, profiteering, and declining

results are all part of the story of the Common Core State Standards, which some estimates suggest will cost states \$US1 billion to implement (Ravitch, 2013).

A balanced curriculum?

Berliner (2011, 287) argues American curriculum has changed since the introduction of high-stakes testing with individual and social implications for students. He found “the high-stakes nature of English and mathematics tests means schools drastically increase weekly time spent on those subjects”. In one study of a representative sample of 500 schools, schools reporting improvements increased English language instruction by an average of 47 per cent and mathematics by 37 per cent. In consequence, reductions in the time of other subjects were: social studies, 32 per cent; science, 33 per cent; physical education, 35 per cent; art and music, 35 per cent; recess was cut by 28 per cent. One impact of narrowing the curriculum is that it “reduces many students’ chance of being thought talented in school and enjoyable activities engaged in by teachers and students” (Berliner, 2011, 287).

Creating the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

In an analysis of the creation of the CCSS, Karp (2013-2014, 12) outlines the role of the external players and the resultant policy and credibility black holes:

If you’re proposing a dramatic increase in outcomes and performance to reach social and academic goals that have never been reached before, and your primary investments are standards and tests that serve mostly to document how far you are from reaching those goals, you either don’t have a very good plan or you’re planning something else.

For Karp, “a central problem with the Common Core is the complete absence of any similar credible plan to provide — or even to determine — the resources necessary to make every student ‘college and career-ready’ as defined by CCSS”

The process for development of the CCSS and the extent to which it excluded the voice of teachers is instructive.

(2013-2014, 12). Karp acknowledges that “a lot of the Common Core’s appeal is based on claims that the standards are focused on critical learning skills, student-centred learning and collaboration ... and who doesn’t want all students to have good preparation for life after high school?” (2013-2014, 13). Still, the promise and the agenda need to be assessed for how likely they are to actually be effective for students in the long term. The process for the development of the CCSS and the extent to which it excluded the voice of teachers is instructive:

The Gates Foundation provided more than \$160 million in funding, without which Common Core would not exist... Of the 25 individuals in the work groups charged with drafting the standards, six were associated with the test makers from the College Board, five with the test publishers at Act and four with Achieve [a private consulting firm]. Zero teachers were in the work groups... almost all of the feedback groups were college professors and only one classroom teacher was involved... there were 135 people on the review panels for the Common Core. Not a single one of them was a K-3 classroom teacher or early childhood professional [Karp, 2013-2014, 14].

Tampio (2015) also highlighted the absence of K-3 teachers from the CCSS process, and two leading children’s education groups, Defending the Early Years and Alliance for Childhood, sponsored a report, “Reading Instruction in Kindergarten: Much To Lose and Little to Gain” (authors: Nancy Carlsson-Paige, GERALYN Bywater McLaughlin, Joan Wolfsheimer Almon) that argued the standard “read emergent texts with purpose and understanding should be withdrawn” as there was “no scholarly basis for setting this bar for kindergarteners”

and that “expecting children to read too early can have adverse consequences”.

The story of the CCSS continues to unfold and should be watched closely by Australia before opening further policy and profit opportunities to non-government organisations.

The Common Core has become a US presidential election issue, with Republicans raising concerns about states’ rights and sovereignty risks of exposing American education to foreign companies.

The Arts

Teachers and others interested in the civic capacity of communities are concerned about the consequences of an over-emphasis on “the basics”. Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor said No Child Left Behind had “squeezed out civics education... We can’t forget the primary purpose of public schools in America has always been to help produce citizens who have the knowledge and the skills and the values to sustain our republic as a nation, our democratic form of government” (Berliner, 2011, 290). For Finn and Ravitch,

...liberal arts make us wise, thoughtful, and appropriately humble... history and literature also impart in their students healthy skepticism and doubt, the ability to question and, to ask both “why?” and “why not?” and perhaps, most important, readiness to challenge authority, push back against conventional wisdom, and make one’s own way despite pressure to conform ... [Berliner, 2011, 292].

Berliner argues that “a reduction in curricular for learning the arts, therefore, restricts our students’ ways of thinking, limiting creativity... the arts are taught primarily to the wealthy and middle class, but not to the poor”.

Berliner argues that “a reduction in curricular for learning the arts, therefore, restricts our students’ ways of thinking, limiting creativity... the arts are taught primarily to the wealthy and middle class, but not to the poor” (2011, 291). The experimentation around high-stakes testing and introduction of untested curriculum reforms that predominate in low socio-economic status communities that lack the social capital to resist changes effectively are explored later.

History and Social Studies

Deep pedagogical and ideological flaws have also been revealed in more traditional modes of instructional material, such as textbooks. Singer’s (2015) analysis of the Pearson Social Studies package reveals the company’s biased, simplistic, factually-inaccurate and highly-integrated business approach to content delivery and assessment:

For a class of 25 fifth-graders, the entire Pearson MyStory package with all the extras would cost a school district \$3,7525.48, but this bill is just for Social Studies... According to the unit, the United States has a “free market economy”... Pearson may not like it but the United States actually has a “mixed economy” where government regulates and subsidises business. In fact, government is Pearson’s largest customer.

...One of the most curious Pearson statements appears at the end of every chapter in the teacher guide. Pearson recommends that in case there is “not enough time for Social Studies” because of pressure to prepare students for the high-stakes Common Core English tests, teachers can use material from the package “during your reading block” ...

Pages 218-219 focus on the “Gettysburg National Battlefield: Fighting for a Cause”. “Eleven-year-old Trent” who is a “history buff” wonders about the segment’s big question, “Why do you think both sides in the battle fought so fiercely?” As he reads the Gettysburg Address, Trent discovers the answer. “All of our freedom. I’d say that is

something worth fighting for!” ... To add to the fiction and confusion, on page 306, students are told “both sides” in the Civil War “were fighting for freedom but disagreed about what freedom meant” and that the enslavement of Africans in the south was really about “differences in geography”.

Singer concludes, “I guess Pearson and I just disagree about what freedom means,” and that, “teaching history the Pearson way means teaching the Common Core way, without any meaningful content. The text, no matter how inaccurate or misleading, rules.”

English

In an analysis of a video demonstrating effective reading instruction using and featuring CCSS chief author David Coleman, teacher-author Daniel E. Ferguson (2013-2014) explains that “close reading as it appears in the Common Core requires readers to emphasise ‘what lies within the four corners of the text’ and de-emphasise their own perspective, background, and biases in order to uncover the author’s meaning in the text”. In an attempt at a close reading of the Coleman video, Ferguson asks,

How can I forget that he was the founding member of StudentsFirst with Michelle Rhee? How can I forget him saying “people don’t really give a shit what you feel or what you think” in regard to student personal narrative writing? How can I dismiss the fact that Coleman had a former career as a business consultant but he has never been a teacher [2013-2014, 20]?

The video uses Martin Luther King Jr’s *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*, and Coleman argues that “text-dependent questions hold everyone accountable to what’s within the four corners of the text”. Ferguson, however, counters that “they also make for better standardised test questions” and that,

... to force a discussion of King’s letter to remain “text-dependent” may make it easier to test, but it also forces out its entire social and historical context...

One difficulty is that where external interest are allowed to be integrated into curriculum, assessment and reporting, the agenda behind what they produce is neither transparent, nor trusted by teachers or parents.

[I]magine not addressing how fifty years later, some schools are no less segregated now than they were then... the story beyond the four corners of Coleman’s video is one of a man whose agenda is served by teachers following a curriculum that requires students to read in a way assessable through standardised tests he oversees and profits from [2013-2014, 20].

Greene (2015) explored the inseparable link between the CCSS and standardised assessment. He explains that in the Reading Literature Strand for Grades 11-12 “focus is always and only on the text”. For example, RL11-12.3 “ask/s students to analyse the impact of author’s choices but not the intent or context of them”. Greene argues,

... a CCSS-style study of *The Sun Also Rises* would not include the impact of the Great War on Hemingway’s generation, Hemingway’s own background, the rise of postmodernism, or the emerging literary techniques of the period... Why would we strip all this literature of its richness, depth, and complexity, the very human qualities that make it worth reading in the first place?

Green answers, “because measuring students’ grasp of such ideas would be hard. Because the only serious answers to the only important questions would have to be in the form of essays instead of bubbles.” Perhaps cynically, although it is early days for the Common Core assessment, Greene concludes the CCSS “is not a tool to be used by teachers; it’s a tool to be used on them”. One difficulty is that where external interest are allowed to

be integrated into curriculum, assessment and reporting, the agenda behind what they produce is neither transparent, nor trusted by teachers or parents.

Mathematics

In 2015, in the US, a decline in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results for mathematics was the first drop since 1990 when the tests were first mandated for national use. NAEP is a unique style of standardised test, administered to a sample of fourth and eighth grade American students every two years, the results are not reported to individual students or schools. The NAEP tests has critics but is largely accepted as a low-stakes approach to external assessment. One response to the declining national scores has been to argue for changes to the national tests to better align with the new Common Core standards, initially proposed as a way to improve national results. Whitehurst (2015), providing an analysis of the decline for the Brookings Institution, wrote,

The story is arguably worse than suggested by the three-point decline from 2013 ... because of the slow but persistent upticks in the trend line in prior years... Thus the 2015 results are roughly five NAEP scale points lower than would have reasonably been expected. A five-point decline in NAEP would mean that eighth graders in 2015 were roughly six months of school behind eighth graders in 2013. The same calculations using the more conservative actual decline of three points leads to an estimated loss of roughly four months of school... Differences among states in the 2015 versus 2013 NAEP results in mathematics are associated with differences among states in whether students participated in a full-blown Common Core assessment... The correlation between Common Core assessment participation and changes in NAEP is —.35.

For critics of the neoliberal reform agenda, “NAEP is a truth teller” without a test prep industry or high-stakes consequences (Burris, 2015). Burris, who is a teacher, explains that,

... [In 2015], the ever-so-slight narrowing of gaps between white and black students is due to drops in the scores of white students — hardly a civil rights victory... it is difficult to see any real growth across the board since 2011, considering that the rationale for the Common Core State Standards initiative was low NAEP proficiency rates, it would appear that the solution of tough standards and tough tests is not the great path forward after all.

Burris also points to a seven-point drop in SAT scores from 2014 to 2015 and explains that “although NAEP and the SAT were not designed to align to the Common Core, they measure what the Common Core Standards were supposed to improve — the literacy and numeracy of our nation’s students”.

In an interview for this report prior to the release of the 2015 NAEP results, a teacher in San Francisco (where the CCSS tests officially occurred for the first time in 2014) explained his concern about reducing the level of difficulty of the eighth grade mathematics standards. Much of the published criticism was that the profit motives were to have large cohorts fail and be in need of special intervention that could be purchased from Pearson. The teacher, however, explained that the effect of moving more difficult mathematical concepts such as algebra to the ninth grade would be to narrow the achievement gap by limiting the most able students rather than improving the teaching of the curriculum for less able students. His view was that whilst some teachers might extend students beyond the CCSS, the high-stakes nature of the assessments suggested priorities would lie elsewhere.

In interviews for this report, many teachers in the US described their positive experiences with the new Common Core standards and described their ability to use the standards flexibly as they saw fit. These teachers had, however, typically not yet experienced the assessment component. When teachers with experience of the English and mathematics examinations spoke to me, they described instances

of significant errors with the tests and concerns about the new curriculums proposed for science and history.

Analysis of the Common Core suggests vast differences in implementation and experiences for teachers as well as the politics of states’ rights and struggles with community backlash. Whilst many well-intentioned and highly competent teachers have found much to like, and some welcomed guidance from the new standards, the process and foundations of the standards’ design and implementation were inherently flawed in ways that even teachers with the very best intentions and capacity might not be able to overcome.

Curriculum in Australia

With the exception of NAPLAN, curriculum and resourcing in NSW have thus far resisted much of the impact of standardised literacy and numeracy testing. Nevertheless, pressure is exerted in other ways, resulting in an overemphasis and often amateurish or tokenistic approach to school-based professional development activities focused on improving areas that are externally tested. It might be some time before the longer-term costs of such narrow focuses and educational agendas can be fully understood. In looking for alternative approaches to improving real student learning outcomes,

... Resnick and others argue that a thinking curriculum requires regular practice, of significant duration, in such areas of cognition best described as conceptual learning, reasoning, explaining and problem-solving. But all these cognitive activities have to be embedded in specific, challenging subject matter... these skills develop in the course of reasoning about specific information and bodies of knowledge [Berliner, 2011, 298].

STANDARDISED AND METRIC ASSESSMENT

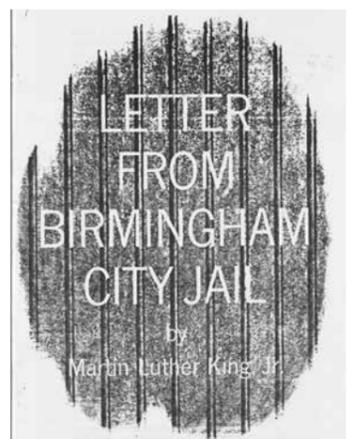
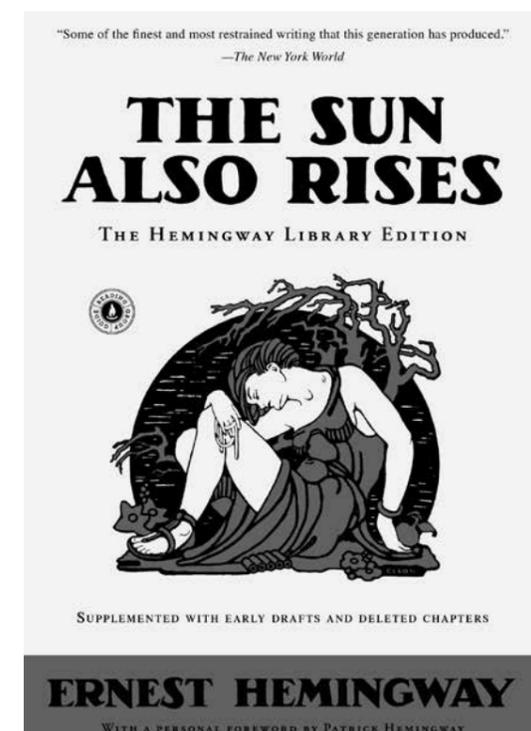
In Australia today, high-level policy makers are concerned about the clout and influence of Pearson. In interviews for this report, it was explained that

Pearson was prepared to employ all of the psychometricians in Australia in order to control Australian testing and analytical capabilities. In the interest of further expansion, Pearson also proposed “public private partnerships” to create university places supported by publicly-funded internships and cadetships. At the University of Western Australia, the Pearson Psychometric Laboratory is based in the Faculty of Education.

The growing emphasis on standardised and so-called “metric” approaches to assessment is evident in Australian policy-making such as online NAPLAN and computer marking of student writing as well as in the increasing focus in NSW, through BOSTES, on how universities are preparing pre-service teachers to analyse large data sets such as NAPLAN. In the US, there is evidence that governments have exposed themselves to unacceptable levels of risk wherever they have over-emphasised external assessment, particularly where it has created opportunities for profiteering.

Fortune magazine’s investigation into the US testing industry found that “the business of assessing students through high school has grown 57 per cent in just the past three years, to \$2.5 billion according to the Software and Information Industry Association” (Reingold, 2015). Reingold reported “high-stakes testing... is now the largest segment within educational technology... Pearson remains one of the only players with the size and scope to handle large testing or curriculum contracts [and] contracts 60 per cent of the North American testing market.”

The stakes in the US are so high that “local education agencies are spending more than \$20 billion a year on materials such as test preparatory programs and services such as education consultant workshops and preparatory student tutoring and remediation. This is in addition to assessment contracts such as Texas’ \$462 million contract with Pearson over five years” (Spren and Stark, 2014, 160). Draxler (2014), a former UNESCO education specialist warns that,



Clockwise from top left: Education International poster on the creep of privatisation into global public school systems; the US Common Core study of Martin Luther King’s epistle is literal and simplistic — critics say applying such study to other texts such as *The Sun Also Rises* would ignore the contextual foundation that informs good study

... among the primary beneficiaries of large-scale standardised data collection and testing are the institutions (whether not-for-profit such as the World Bank, OECD or Brookings or for-profit such as Pearson, McGraw Hill and ETS) that develop and administer the instruments and collection techniques. They are also the principal advocates and lobbyists for more and bigger data collection and testing programs.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the US experience for the proponents of massive expansion of educational uses for standardised testing is that there is little evidence of significant academic gain. “Fallon, Pearson’s CEO, claims of the rise of big data and measurement, ‘This idea of the shift from sort of inputs to outcomes, I think, is one that is now becoming all-pervasive in pretty much every area of public policy’. So why should education be any different?” [Reingold, 2015].

Perhaps the most obvious response is, “because it doesn’t work”. Kevin Lang of Boston University Economics reported,

None of the studies we have looked at found large effects of learning anything approaching the rhetoric of being at the top of the international scale. The most successful effects of NCLB [No Child Left Behind] moved student performance by eight-hundredths of a standard deviation, or from the 50th to the 53rd percentile [Ravitch, 2013, 269].

Similarly, Karp found,

The CCSS tests being developed by two federally-funded multistate consortia, at a cost of about \$350 million, are designed to assess the skills and abilities needed to be successful in a four-year college degree. But there is no actual evidence connecting scores on any

Where edu-business and bureaucracy have aligned, there is evidence of significant negative impact.

of these new experimental tests with future college success... [2013-2014, 14]

Dan Ariely, a Behavioural Economist of Duke University concluded, “we went ahead, implementing this incredibly expensive and elaborate strategy or changing the education system without creating enough ways to test whether what we are doing is useful or not” (Ravitch, 2013).

Where edu-business and bureaucracy have aligned, there is evidence of significant negative impact. As outlined earlier, it is not necessarily clear that exceedingly high standards and large cohorts of “failure” are a problem for for-profit and other organisations. In New York in 2013, some 70 per cent of students were deemed as requiring “academic intervention” (Karp, 2013-2014). Of course Pearson provided, for a fee, the intervention materials.

For Spreen and Stark, “one way to ascertain the actual motivation behind the widespread use of testing is to watch what happens in the real world when a lot of students do well on standardised tests. Are the schools and teachers credited and congratulated? Hardly. The response ... is instead to make the test harder” (2014, 164).

For Karp, profiteering defines the CCSS. He writes that in the same 2013 series of tests in New York “parents complained about Pearson’s use of promotional material and corporate logos” and adds,

Joanne Weiss, head of the Race to the Top grant program said, “the development of Common Core standards and shared assessments radically alters the market for innovation in curriculum development, professional development, and formative assessment... education entrepreneurs will enjoy national markets”... The costs of the associated tests, which have multiple pieces throughout the year and must be given on computers... will be enormous [2013-2014, 14-16].

Of the 2013 New York tests, Karp reported that “the pressure of the test was such that administrators requested guidelines

for handling tests students had vomited on” (2013-2014, 15).

There have also been significant mistakes in the papers, to the detriment of students:

Robert Schaeffer from Fair Test cites 13 significant errors including preventing 5,300 students from qualifying for gifted and talented programs in NY City and 4,000 Virginian students with learning difficulties were given pass marks where they had not achieved them [Reingold, 2015].

Costs come in pressure, mistakes, disappointment, lost opportunities and also harm the learning process. Ravitch reported that “20 per cent of time in some districts and states is spent on preparation for state tests... 15 tests need to be passed in Texas to achieve a diploma and [there is] evidence of pass scores being manipulated in New York” (2013, 13). Not only does the nature of testing tend to limit students’ learning in disciplines other than English and mathematics, with all of the associated social and developmental consequences outlined above, but Berliner explains that institutional “responses to high-stakes environments can easily retard the development of achievement in later grades as a function of restrictions on learning in earlier grades” (2011, 287).

There are obvious reasons for the failed promises of large data sets as useful tools for student learning:

...the tests are not scientific instruments, like a thermometer. They are social constructions whose questions and answers are written by fallible human beings... Farley claims, “I would say standardised testing is akin to a scientific experiment in which everything is a variable. Everything” [Ravitch, 2013, 264].

Similarly, Draxler (2014) points to the need to “recognise that metrics and testing are ideologically charged”. They are informed by the false “assumption that everything can be commodified and that streamlining, harmonisation, and lowered transaction costs (including in personal interactions) represent progress”. Draxler

warns that such an approach “favours the acquisition of measurable skills as the main objective of learning”.

In an attempt to understand the appeal of such approaches in the persistent absence of evidence of their success, Spreen and Stark describe a “‘new audit culture’ of people who are committed to the ideology and techniques of accountability, measurement, and ‘big data’ through new forms of managerialism” (2014, 55). In this culture “business rhetoric of supporting ‘innovation’ to ‘turn around’ schools based on ‘evidence’ and ‘data-based’ decision-making by better-run ‘education management organisation’, ... resonate with the new ideological umbrella of a professional and managerially-orientated middle class” (2014, 155). Draxler (2014), explains that this approach to education policy has become an international orthodoxy, noting the:

...UN Post-2015 High Level Panel’s call for a “data revolution” and for a new global partnership embracing the private sector being echoed by most of the classic development institutions. Global measurement of learning and of education systems is on the agendas of Brookings’ Learning Metrics Task Force, the OECD’s PISA for Development, the World Bank’s SABER and the Global Partnership for Education.

Things are, however, changing in the US. Simon (2015) reported that “Republicans and Democrats are considering scrapping the federal mandate that all states test all students in reading and math each year in grades 3 through 8 plus at least once in high school”. School system leaders are also leading a new agenda. “Peter Mustich, superintendent of Rye Neck School District said, ‘We are not the research and development arm of Pearson’” (Stern, 2014). Just days before the release of the 2015 NAEP results, “the Obama administration acknowledged that high-stakes testing had proliferated too far and urged states and school districts to cut down on the number of tests and make them

For school-based assessment, Ravitch suggests early and elementary school children not be given test score data.

more purposeful” (Rich, 2015). Also, just weeks before the NAEP results release, the controversial secretary of education, Arne Duncan, stepped down, replaced by an equally controversial figure from the New York City Schools District, John B. King Jr.

For those bureaucrats who are distant from students, there might well be some value in an occasional snapshot of students in their jurisdiction. Porter describes “quantification as a technology of distance” and explains that the “appeal of numbers is especially compelling to bureaucratic officials who lack the mandate of popular election” (Lingard, 2011, 33).

Ravitch (2013) suggests the US NAEP test provides an appropriate model, using samples and reporting on cohorts rather than individuals.

For school-based assessment, Ravitch suggests early and elementary school children not be given test score data and that high schools need a balanced curriculum with teacher developed assessment and limited reporting to students and parents of scores and grades. For Draxler (2014), the key is to analyse opportunity costs and celebrate individual differences:

Every action has an opportunity cost, and the bigger that action the bigger the opportunity cost. So big actions should be subject to analysis not only on their own merits or lack of them but on what they are costing in terms of lost alternatives... harmonising outputs to make them reliable and uniform at the lowest possible cost ... cannot be what is most desirable for schools or children. Education should celebrate and reward individual differences, creativity, and the discovering of the treasure within each learner.

GOOD GOVERNMENT

In the United States, the federal government has failed to protect its most vulnerable citizens. In Denver, “the *Denver Post* determined that 35 per cent of the federal funds allocated to that city in School Improvement Grants was spent on consultants, not for students or teachers or schools (Ravitch, 2013). Ravitch, a reformed reformer, acknowledged that “No Child Left Behind opened the door to entrepreneurial opportunities” (Ravitch 2013, 16) and explained that business offers “a seductive message because it offers hope that someone knows how to fix difficult problems” (2013, 29). However, it has not lived up to its own promises as “a recent Brookings Institute study of US corporate philanthropy and Private Public Partnerships made clear; the resources offered were ‘small change’ and efforts were self-interested, unco-ordinated, small in scale, and misdirected” (Klees, 2014, 143). For Klees, “privatisation is a strategy of triage — perhaps, at best, sometimes improving education for a few”. What is needed is “to re-establish the legitimacy of government... a large, vibrant public sector that puts limits on the market, that promotes and creates decent employment, that provides for the production of public good” (2014, 146). Klees is not alone. In May 2015, Education International reported,

...the United Nations Human Rights Council ... urged States to regulate and monitor private education providers as well as recognise the threat of commercialised education... recognising the potential “wide-ranging impact of the commercialisation of education on the enjoyment of the right to education”. In the resolution adopted by consensus of its 47 members, the HRC has, for the first time, responded to the growing phenomenon of privatisation and commercialisation of education... Angelo Gavrielatos, of Education International, explained, “The evidence is quite clear. The growing commercialisation and privatisation of education is undermining the right to quality education. Governments cannot be allowed to abrogate their obligation to provide

quality public education for every child.” According to Tanvir Muntasim of ActionAid International, “This is the third time within a year, following the May 2014 UNESCO Muscat Agreement and the May 2015 Incheon Declaration, where States have described education as a public good. It is a striking response to the actors that have been trying to reduce education to a private commodity rather than a universal right.”

REFORM

“Reform” has moved from its origins as a verb indicating restoration and a return to peace to more spurious uses, by some, as a noun and even a movement, taking on implied or imposed connotations of relentless progress. There is much to be improved in Australian and American school systems. In interviews for this report, it was rare to discuss the challenges of schooling without interviewees quickly moving to issues of schools funding. In the US, folk in San Francisco, New York and Washington DC were always quick to point out that America’s bizarre schools funding model worked on a combination of appropriating property taxes to fund schools and withdrew funding from schools achieving low standardised test scores. It was entrenching disadvantage, returning to old racial segregation and was in desperate need of reform. In Australia, securing the Gonski school funding model will be amongst the greatest education reforms, in its literal meaning, since the inception of the common school.

One myth of reform as defined by the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) can be described using Berliner and Glass’ analysis that “if a program works well in one school or district it, should be imposed and expected to work well elsewhere” (2014, 129). Whilst the challenge of expansion of initiatives has been understood since at least the 1970s, this understanding of the subtleties of local contexts has largely been ignored:

Project Follow Through in 1977 was a federal government look at 200,000 students and dozens of

programs over several years [that] found that “the effectiveness of each educational program investigated varied enormously from community to community and school to school”. In other words, effective results could not be depicted even from the same program because the local context had such a large influence on the results. [Berliner and Glass, 2014, 130]

For Berliner and Glass, the challenge of successful expansion of reform is that education is not “a simple machine where particular inputs led directly to predictable outputs” (2014, 129). The question for policy-makers is, what reform is required? At what cost? And what opportunities will be forgone? As outlined above, “21st century learning reforms” are typically proposed by external organisations that are networked into government by gurus such as Tony Mackay, Sir Michael Barber and Peter Hill, few of whom have taught in a school in the 21st century, and come with price tags for purchasing hardware, software, standardised testing, and consultancy fees, with teachers as the implementers of change rather than creators of improvement.

Fullan’s overview of the history of reform efforts notes the enduring failure of innovations to become system-wide changes, let alone improvements:

Elmore’s 1995 analysis of early progressive ideas concluded, “we can find many examples of how educational practice could look different but we can produce few, if any, examples of large numbers of teachers engaging in these practices in large-scale institutions designed to deliver education to most children” ... Despite these failures and indeed ignoring their lessons ... a large-scale national curriculum reform series of initiatives in the late 1950s and 1960s ... [that aimed] to get innovations out there, as if flooding the system with external ideas would bring about desired improvements, [saw] by the early 1970s there was mounting evidence that the yield was minuscule, confined to isolated examples [2007, 5].

In both America and Australia, there are signs that it is the most disadvantaged students who are so often the subjects of untested, so-called innovations.

In trying to understand why new ideas in education so often failed to live up to their promises, Fullan considered claims that schools lacked incentive to change. He concluded,

There was actually great pressure and incentives to be innovative, and this resulted in many schools adopting reforms that they did not have the capacity (individually or organisationally) to put into practice. Thus, innovations were adopted on the surface, with some of the language and structures becoming altered, but not the practice of teaching [2007, 5].

In both America and Australia, there are signs that it is the most disadvantaged students who are so often the subjects of untested, so-called innovations, with students living in wealthier and more desirable geographic locations less likely to be exposed to experimental “reforms” and more likely to be protected by both their parents and experienced educators. In his report, *A Tale of Two Districts*, Karp (2015) recounted the contrasting experiences of implementing the same reform agenda in two different school districts in New Jersey where reforms were supported by big names such as television star Oprah Winfrey, Microsoft’s Bill Gates, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, New Jersey Governor and former 2016 presidential candidate Chris Christie and NAPLAN’s Joel Klein. The “reformers” were linked to Teach for America, the program that puts university graduates into low SES schools as teachers with minimal training, and also to the Obama administration:

“Corporate education reform” is used here as shorthand for a set of proposals driving education policy at the state and federal level. These include:

- privatisation of school services
- elimination or weakening of tenure

and seniority rights

- increased test-based evaluation of students, teachers, and schools of education
- implementation of a new generation of computer-based exams tied to the Common Core standards.

Typically, low-income districts like Newark ... have been the entry point for these policies [such as One Newark] ... Folks in Newark heard Zuckerberg, who had never set foot in the city, announce from a TV studio in Chicago that he was donating \$100 million to support what Oprah described as a takeover of Newark Public Schools (NPS). High-powered education commissioner, Chris Cerf, said the takeover law has been used to turn some of the state’s largest districts into hothouses for corporate reform. Cerf was the former head of Edison Inc., once the nation’s largest private education management firms ... Cerf was a pioneer in opening up the \$700 billion/year K–12 education market to commercial penetration. He was deputy chancellor under New York City’s Joel Klein... [Cerf] chose Cami Anderson, a former Teach For America (TFA) executive who had also worked at New Leaders for New Schools, founded by Jon Schnur. Schnur later joined the Obama administration, where he was a primary architect of Race to the Top.

According to a complaint filed on behalf of Newark parents with the US Department of Education, One Newark will raise the number of neighborhood schools closed to 26. These closures disproportionately affect African American students, who make up about half the district but more than 70 per cent of those affected by the closures ... The new mayor, [Ras] Baraka wrote to Obama “to request presidential intervention in the disruptive and illegal educational reforms being implemented in the Newark Public School district.” ... The resistance remains strong, but the balance sheet is grim.

In Montclair... the town pushed back. Some parents formed a group called Montclair Cares About Schools (MCAS)

and posted an online petition asking the board to defer the quarterly tests. Five hundred parents signed in a few weeks. A similar petition initiated by students drew another 500 names. Another powerful response came from Montclair's teachers... [who] took turns highlighting the impact of too much testing and confusing mandates. One or two brave principals stood with them... A stunning turn of events underscored again how corporate reform plays out differently across inequalities of power, race, and class [Karp 2015].

There are lessons that can be learned from successful examples of reform. Looking back over 100 years of American public education, Tyack and Cuban consider what constitutes reform success and suggest being clear on whether the measure is longevity, remaining true to original form, or effect on student outcomes. They find that "over-promising has often led to disillusionment and to blaming the schools for not solving problems beyond their reach. More important, the utopian tradition of social reform through schooling has often diverted attention from more costly, politically controversial and difficult societal reform" (Tyack and Cuban, 1995, 3).

They also warn that "focusing only on change runs the danger of ignoring continuity in the basic practices of schools" and argue that "sometimes preserving good practices in the face of challenges is a major achievement" (1995, 4-5). When looking at what worked, they observe that what was not on the agenda for reform was often as important as what was debated and "although policy talk about reform has had a utopian ring, actual reforms have typically been gradual and incremental" (1995, 5). They recommended reforms that were legislated and easily monitored:

...reforms that were structural add-ons generally did not disturb the standard

Over-promising has often led to disillusionment and to blaming the schools.

operating procedures of schools, and this non-interference enhanced their chances of lasting. The add-on reforms that were adopted and lasted tended to be non-controversial to the lay people... they did not exceed the pedagogical speed limit by directly challenging the public's notion of what a "real school" ought to be doing. And in most communities educators sought to adopt change to local circumstances and values. ... Reforms proposed and implemented by school administrators and teachers themselves to make their work easier, or more efficient or to improve their professional status were likely to stick better than innovations pushed by outsiders ... [Tyack and Cuban, 1995, 57-58].

Dinham's 2015 address to the Australian College of Educators, "Regulation or Deregulation", provides an example of a clearly defined and largely successful 15-year reform in the highly regulated and well-funded German education system. Here, the specific aim was to improve upon Germany's 2000 PISA results. Dinham observes:

There have been significant efforts in Germany at the federal and state levels since 2001 to address the issues of the growing diversity of the school population, disadvantage and the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools. ... Because of near universal public education in Germany, coupled with strong land control, it may have been easier to introduce reforms across systems and schools than might be the case in a more diverse and less "controlled" system such as Australia ... Germany, along with Mexico and Turkey, are the only countries to have improved in both PISA mathematics and equity since 2003, with these improvements largely the result of better performance amongst low-achieving and disadvantaged students, and with Germany's performance in mathematics, reading and science now above OECD averages [2015, 3-11].

The German example outlines some policy settings and processes that allowed

systemic change. Further issues and complexities surrounding the significance and future role of PISA and the OECD are explored below.

PISA AND THE OECD

Pearson has the 2018 PISA contract and will have input into what will be assessed and how it will be measured. Whilst the UN support of public schooling suggests the enduring positive potential for international collective action, the rise of PISA since 1997 and the transformation of the OECD since the end of the Cold War are more mixed. "The OECD was established in 1961 ... to provide a bulwark against communism and a showpiece for capitalism and liberal democracy. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War challenged this rationale for the organisation and forced a re-evaluation of its function" (Lingard and Sellar, 2013, 28).

In 2002 education became a separate and autonomous directorate. Two interrelated developments have contributed to this rise of education in the OECD — human capital theory and demand for comparative data.... The relationship between these two developments is clearly expressed in contemporary OECD skills policy. The OECD (2012) considers that "skills have become the global currency of 21st — century economies" [Lingard and Sellar, 2013, 29].

Lingard and Sellar note that "the OECD's Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs successfully lobbied to have financial literacy assessed as part of the 2012 PISA survey" (2013, 30). Computer literacy is also assessed by PISA. According to Lingard and Sellar, the influence of the OECD and external sources such as Pearson on PISA is significant because "national governments use the performance and policy settings of other systems to win legitimacy for their own vernacular reform agendas" (2013, 33). More importantly, "PISA performance was promoted as an end in itself, collapsing distinctions between test performance and the performance of the education

system it is designed to measure" (2013, 34).

Whilst it may be tempting to dismiss PISA as just another standardised test or to ask, as Berliner and Glass do, "beyond symbolic implications, how problematic is it that the United States does not hold the number one spot on this or that international competition of achievement?" (2014, 203). Others see potential for PISA to play a significant policy and equity role.

Sahlberg and Hargreaves acknowledge the limits of PISA, such as narrowing of learning to what is easily measured, opportunities for selling PISA-like instruments for practice, and technical flaws with test items, administration, samples and rankings (Strauss, 2015). They also see benefits, arguing that without PISA,

...a number of countries mistakenly believed their education systems are the best in the world and should set the direction for other nations. Were it not for the fact that these weaker-performing countries that include the United States and England have not been successful in PISA, the worldwide pressures for more market competition between schools, less university-based training for teachers, and more standardisation of the curriculum, would have had a far easier ride [Strauss, 2015].

Sahlberg and Hargreaves argue for continuity of the equity measure and celebrate the emerging PISA message that the "highest-performing education systems combine quality with equity". Whilst wary of trends to add "Asian countries and cities ... to the top of the PISA tower by questionable methods, even though they are generally weak on equity and backward in their approaches to special education" they praise how "PISA shows to the United States that its current course of education policies that rely on competition, standardisation, testing and privatisation of public education is a wrong way. Our goal should not be to take PISA down, but to get it or something like it upright again" (Strauss, 2015). It might be that teachers will need

to educate politicians, bureaucrats and the public further in these domains.

REASSERTING THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOLING

School is different. School attendance is rightly law, and education is a special case for a unique policy approach for government of children's learning that is separate from economic and labour market theory. There has been bipartisan consensus in Australia and the US that schools serve and solve national economic and, sometimes, geopolitical aims. In *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, David Tyack and Larry Cuban point to Lyndon Johnson's 1960s Cold War assertion that "the answer to all our national problems comes down to a single word: education" as capturing an historical truth that "Americans have thought it easier to instruct the young than to coerce the adult" (1995, 3).

Yet, even where education historically provided hope for the nation, Rizvi and Lingard explain the purpose remained wholly social. "Until the Thatcher and Reagan regimes of the 1980s, the Keynesian settlement in most liberal democracies had meant that education was a principal means for ensuring social justice, meritocracy and social cohesion" (2010, 185).

In previous Eric Pearson reports, *If We Forget History and Our Way*, Maurie Mulheron and Denis Fitzgerald respectively detailed the contemporary effects of the Right's neoliberal policies and agendas. Their works and many others point to the emergence of the well-documented 1983 report, *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, that declared that, in the US, "we have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament". This contentious Reagan-era policy document suggested that America's schools had failed and weakened the nation.

Post Cold War arms and space races, far from returning to the peaceful aims of schooling for social cohesion, Lingard and Sellar argue that "education has become a central element of economic

policy for most nations. This has led to an emphasis in education policy on human capital production across all sectors, with the quality and quantity of human capital seen as central for the global competitiveness of the national economy" (2013, 20). The effect, they suggest is that "this economisation has seen educators become less influential in the production and framing of education policy, which is often set a long way from their interests. In the process, educators have become the objects of policy" (2013, 21).

Brown is helpful in understanding the appeal and challenges of allowing contemporary economic trends:

The global knowledge economy conjured up a world of smart people doing smart things in smart ways ... through investments in brainpower, it was thought that nations could deliver prosperity, justice, and social cohesion, companies could develop world-class employees, and individuals could secure a better future for themselves and their families... this faith in the endless potential to create middle-class jobs for those who invested in education resembles a secular religion... within this scenario of a free market, knowledge-driven world, the economic crash was never supposed to happen... what is so fascinating is how pervasive such ideas have remained... Obama [claims] "because we know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow" [2011, 15-27].

Yet the economic outcomes have not matched the promises, and inequality in the US and Australia is growing. The fact that other nations are seeking an advantage in the knowledge wars is often forgotten in debates about widening access to higher education and upgrading the marketable skills of the workforce (Brown, 2011, 32). The workforce of the future stands in contrast with utopian high-tech promises, and Klees reminds us that "concerns around underemployment ... ignores the fact that full employment is not a goal of capitalism" (2014, 140). For Klees, "entrepreneurship is the result

of our failure to make good on the promise of decent work and substitutes hope and prayer for effective economic policy that create employment" (2014, 140). In an interview for this report, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) representatives from San Francisco told of the pressure and enthusiasm from external sources and bureaucrats for teachers to prepare their students for the booming tech-industries of the Silicon Valley but they questioned the extent of The Valley's alleged desire to employ local high school graduates.

The teachers could be onto something. Brown points to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' estimate that most Americans will continue to work in occupations "that require low levels of education and training ... with over one-third in low-skilled jobs by 2016" (2011, 123). Berliner and Glass's data indicates 63 per cent of job openings will not require a bachelor's degree. "The jobs of the future will be much the same as the jobs of today: low-paid, cashiers of big-box stores, retail sales, home health care workers, and servers at your local restaurant" (2014, 207). Berliner and Glass critique the use of schools for 21st century STEM vocational training and argue just "5 per cent of the US workforce is in STEM jobs and [that number] is only expected to rise to 6 per cent by 2020" (2014, 207). For them,

The framing of the issue as one of low skills in America's graduates shifts the burden from companies to the education system. If the problem is deemed to be one of inferior education, then schools, and not business, are given the responsibility to train workers [288].

They also argue "reforming and enlarging STEM potentially would benefit the owners of large corporations by lowering labour costs" (2014, 204). Evidence from the US suggests "there is currently unemployment and underemployment for those with STEM degrees... [And whilst] unemployment rates for STEM employees are lower than non-STEM graduates", increasing graduates will "decrease or eliminate the current comparative advantage of STEM workers" (2014, 205). Further, "of approximately \$3

billion the [US] federal government spends on STEM education each year, much of it has been used to advertise, market, and otherwise cajole students with financial incentives to study STEM" (Berliner and Glass, 2014, 204). This is a policy approach Australia is also taking and the extent to which it will produce more STEM workers, quality teachers or improve the economy is unknown.

Rose, writing about the UK, challenges romantic notions of the 21st century worker:

The new citizen is required to engage in a ceaseless work of training and retraining, skilling and reskilling, enhancement of credentials and preparation for a life of incessant job-seeking: life is to become a continuous economic capitalisation of the self... the best economic outcomes for a nation are now deemed to flow from the production of individuals pursuing their self-interest [Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, 184-5].

Perhaps policy settings should have goals beyond providing low-cost training to run down wages and narrow curriculum focus derived from the world imagined for us by business? Rather than focusing on educational inputs, economic policy might look to levers to provide appealing working conditions, permanency of employment rather than short-term contracts, working hours and locations conducive to family life, and so on. Klees argues that,

...abilities like literacy, numeracy, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking etc. can have a payoff in the job market but only in a context where such skills are valued. The more useful and important question is the demand-side one, regarding how can we create decent jobs that require valuable skills [2014, 141].

For industrial policy-makers, Brown suggests an "approach geared less towards the protection of jobs and more towards the protection of people" (2011, 157). For education policy he asserts "an education system dedicated to enhancing the quality of life ... as a freeing of individual capacity linked to social aims" (2011, 155).

Top: Noted educator Dr Pasi Sahlberg, who gave a lecture at Teachers Federation House in 2014, is against aspects of PISA's testing requirements but values its role in showing up the link between equity and achievement as well as the lack of quality results in protesting countries such as the US. Bottom: US President Ronald Reagan, whose promotion of *A Nation at Risk* fuelled the 'schools in crisis' furore, with Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, a fellow conservative, who nevertheless came out in criticism of Common Core standards, saying civics and important values have been lost.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The current approach to innovation and 21st century learning is wasting public education funds. What is required is a strong system that trials progressive ideas informed by a sound evidence base, includes teachers in decision-making and reports accurately on the success of trials and expenditure.

My research in the United States showed clearly that in the absence of a strong public education system, corporations and neoliberal agendas flourish. Australians need to be aware that in such environments continual untested experimentation can put student learning in jeopardy.

Neoliberal reforms in the US — as well as in Third World countries targeted by edu-business — have tended to unfairly target and take root in the most disadvantaged communities, and teachers, unions and government have a responsibility to act as guardians against such exploitative agendas.

Recommendations

1. Departments of education should be thought leaders in their jurisdictions' schooling and not be influenced by, nor reliant upon, gurus, businesses or other agencies for effective and equitable strategies.

2. Departments of education should establish, regulate and enforce consistent codes of conduct for edu-businesses. Such codes would deal with conflicts of interest, use of information about students, and ethical operation and activities of the business elsewhere around the globe.

3. Departments of education should clearly define conflicts of interest in education and be vigilant about the capacity for some organisations to become vertically integrated into the education system, from pre-service teacher education and credentialing to curriculum design, teaching resources, professional learning, assessment, identification of learning weaknesses and provision of intervention to address areas of apparent learning need. Such monopoly status must be avoided and be rendered unlawful.

4. Government contracts and procurement processes should be transparent, with proper tender

processes. Reporting for all public expenditure should enable accountability and include not only acquisition costs but also projected labour costs to be incurred by schools to implement and maintain initiatives. Evaluations of contracts and experimental initiatives should also be publicly available.

5. Corporations, organisations and individuals who sell services should be required to disclose their funding and employment networks so that schools and government can be informed about possible conflicts of interest or profit motives associated with the educational advice provided.

6. Departments of education and unions should defend PISA and its equity measurements. These organisations should insist that steps be taken to ensure that governments and the global education community regard PISA as a trustworthy instrument that is immune to commercial and ideological interests and to report on these indicators.

7. Departments of education should insist that approval of standardised testing be conditional upon the report of an equity rating for the school along with any other data. The reporting of equity, in addition to socio-economic status, should occur for mandatory testing and testing conducted by any other organisation purporting to measure student growth or to compare student results with other cohorts.

8. Departments of education should work with teacher unions to define a set of protocols and trial guidelines prior to the introduction of any new model or innovation. Such a model should include a pilot process, with an insistence on evidence of positive student gain, maintenance of broad curriculum and social justice programs before expansion. Evaluation of the trial should be released to the public before any program is expanded.

9. Teacher unions should regularly educate members and bureaucrats about edu-business networks and players. This could include concise information sheets, conversations and other forms of briefings.

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ISBN 978-1-875699-12-4

Authorised by John Dixon, General Secretary, NSW Teachers Federation 23-33 Mary Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010

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