

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

Organisation: Name suppressed

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Partially
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Submission to the Review of NSW School Curriculum

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2604>

Please find below my submission under each of the areas. I am happy to discuss or provide background on any of these and can be contacted at:

I have also attached my bio to provide background on my expertise in this area.

1. The extent to which the Masters Curriculum Review addresses its terms of reference, including:
 - a. Curriculum content, flexibility and pedagogy

The release of this report, marketed as a “Back to Basics” was misleading and in fact a contradiction of the intent of the report and in fact reduced the enthusiasm for the findings of the report. In fact, the term “Back to Basics” contradicts a whirlwind internationally that these ‘basics’ are sufficient to prepare our students for their future (define future as tomorrow, through to the next century). The commonly used terms of literacy and numeracy are no longer sufficient for learners to be active citizens, or to be successful learners and contributors to society. For example. see <https://leadingthinking.com.au/forward-to-the-new-basics/>

“Back to Basics” does not reflect flexibility, a well-rounded curriculum and pedagogical practice that encompasses knowledge as well as skills and capabilities. The curriculum does not stand alone from the ecosystem of pedagogy, assessment, credentialing, regulatory requirements, and the structure of schooling. The history of this approach and the confusion around this is well detailed ([Barnes, 2020](#) and [Hogarth, 2019](#)).

As a term, ‘curriculum’ has a range of meanings across Australia. In NSW, prior to ACARA’s use of the term to refer to content and outcomes for a particular subject, ‘curriculum’ referred more generally to all the learning opportunities children might have. Some were explicit (e.g. subjects, sporting programs) while others were implicit (e.g. values implicit in pastoral care or discipline practices). In NSW, however, the term ‘syllabus’ refers to a subject document that details content and outcomes for students in a particular discipline or area of studies for particular stages of schooling. The user interface for teachers again does not reflect flexibility, once again a one size fits all. Newly qualified teachers have the same experience as experienced teachers, even though their needs are quite different. The case for curriculum change needs to be established; it cannot be assumed.

The bulk of existing curriculum in NSW, although overcrowded is well developed, professionally respected and of a very high quality. The need to reduce content in the curriculum is not merely about buying more teacher time. It is important to ensure that progression is reflected in greater attention to higher level capabilities in each subject (promoting high potential and a growth mindset); and that this is balanced with building skills and capabilities. Neither is more important, skills and capabilities are developed in relation to content – such as critical thinking, complex problem solving, intercultural understanding.

Any curriculum reduction will not achieve the intended outcome of deeper and personalised learning unless skills and capabilities are deemed as necessary, reflecting balance and effective measurement.

For the primary curriculum, the recommended classroom time for Science and Technology is only 6-10% of the total time available. The new digital technology content is even less. There is therefore very little incentive for Universities to spend the necessary time and money on the specialist resources required to teach the *Technology and Engineering* component of this KLA. The result of this lack of training in the primary classroom, together with the general lack of confidence in teaching technology in general, and digital technology in particular, is that primary students are often placed in computer rooms working through screen-based activities for the requisite number of curriculum hours each week. This is not a learning activity – it is an activity devoid of understanding. How will learners gain a passion for these subjects and a career in these areas of great demand if the teacher is under prepared and themselves lack a passion for these subjects and the skills encompassed in them.

There is clear recognition across the globe that the acquisition of technical knowledge and know-how (mastery and techniques), though valued, is not sufficient for young people to navigate life and work in a world that is complex and characterised by ambiguities and uncertainty. Many countries are taking steps in response to this reality. They are doing this as part of broader reforms and through different measures including curriculum policy renewal and/or redesign. Some of these measures include locally [ACARA \(General Capabilities\)](#), and internationally [Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies](#), [EU Key competencies for lifelong learning](#), [NASA Expeditionary Skills for Life](#), [Partnership for 21st Century Skills](#), [21st Century Skills \(Tony Wagner\)](#), amongst many others. While there is a degree of commonality in the competencies being foregrounded, there are local contextual factors at play driving the prioritisation of particular skills, attitudes, dispositions and knowledge within each country or region.

b. *Quality and relevance of the evidence-base underpinning the recommendations (compared to CESE findings)*

The new NSW syllabuses from 2024 are detailed to focus on ‘what is essential for students to know and do’, but what about student voice students have a voice? We also need to highlight the need for industry to be involved in these discussion. No one can say they weren’t invited to contribute, but as someone who works across education and other industries, many weren’t aware of this review. We also need to consider how we promote this opportunity to external stakeholders explain the value of their input and in some cases, promote their involvement, through ‘true’ stakeholder engagement, rather than tokenistic input (as it may be perceived)

As the syllabuses were developed and introduced separately there is a need for a coherent framework that assists teachers to identify the key concepts, skills and processes central to understanding within each disciplinary area. This framework will enable teachers to make sense of the dots in relation to a coherent whole and will stress the flexible relationship between specific subjects and the general capabilities. Specialist or experts within the Department should be able to speak to the syllabus and the linkages with the general capabilities and with other subjects (to promote integrated curriculum). A specialist in secondary science should understand the linkages and repetition between subjects such as Maths as well as across stages. They should be able to identify exemplars and support the scaling of best practice.

Such a framework needs to provide teachers with the flexibility they need to respond to the interests, learning needs and instructional needs of their students in a context that has meaning for them and connects to their world, their community and local industry.

c. *Recommendations for student-centred ‘progression points’ and ‘differentiated learning’ in schools and whether such initiatives are research-based and proven to be effective*

It is inappropriate for a curriculum to be stage-based, when students’ learning needs are diverse and come from different starting points, this is the inverse of personalisation. The variance of students at any given stage is well documented but needs to be recognised in curriculum and in learning experiences. Under the current curriculum teachers cannot properly meet the needs of students whose learning is outside the expected range for their chronological age. Teachers describe how children whose learning is behind for their age often move grade levels inappropriately, falling further and further behind. The curriculum review went some way to addressing this, and to ensuring that every child is known, valued and cared for.

Learning progressions

One of the priorities from the Gonski 2 report is to deliver at least one year's growth in learning for every student, every year. Evidence shows that delivering the maximum individual learning growth for every student every year is key to reversing the decline in Australia's education outcomes. The greater the number of students who realise their full learning potential, the greater the cumulative lift will be in our overall national performance.

Teachers’ support the Gonski 2.0 recommendations to move from year-based curriculum to a curriculum expressed as learning progressions independent of year or age. Underpinning this, teachers must be given practical support by creating an online, formative assessment tool to help diagnose a student's current level of knowledge, skill and understanding, to identify the next steps in learning to achieve the next stage in growth, and to track student progress over time against a typical development trajectory. The review in detail is a move towards this, but the implementation and communication does not reflect this.

d. Relationship with the national school's curriculum

NSW has a strong and successful heritage of curriculum development. National entities in education do not figure prominently in the thinking and orientation of the great majority of parents, teachers and principals in NSW. This culture needs to change.

Unlike the State and Territory Curriculum Authorities that have well-developed, long-standing processes for syllabus development, ACARA at its instigation had to develop its structures and practices as it developed its curriculum in each subject area. It had no time to develop its processes before it had to begin to develop subject curricula. In this process ACARA attempted to avoid being seen to have been 'captured' by a particular State or Territory.

There is necessarily considerable mediation between an ACARA curriculum, as written, and a teacher's instructional program as experienced by students in NSW schools. This is where NSW specific support becomes relevant. We need to consider who is responsible for implementing – do they have specific training in curriculum development? This is no longer part of a teaching qualification. My experience has included curriculum development for certification completed by over 16 million people worldwide, but this is not recognised as experience for these roles, rather priority is given to experience in NSW schools, reflecting previous methodologies and curriculum – and we wonder why we aren't moving forward. These skills and experience took years to build, alongside stakeholder management across more than the education sector, can we say that the collaboration and quality assurance is of the same calibre in NSW. This raises the question as to why we need to in fact have a separate curriculum body, should we not co-create quality curriculum for the whole of Australia, through a team who have expertise in this area? We should instead allocate resources input and feedback to ACARA and to the effective implementation of a nationwide curriculum, reflecting best practice, that balances, knowledge, skills and capabilities.

ACARA's functions include development of national curriculum, administration of national assessments and associated reporting on schooling in Australia. ACARA's strategic directions are set by its Charter and any other written instructions from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Education Council. The Charter states the need for *a world-class curriculum from Foundation to Year 12 in specified learning areas agreed to by Council*.

The NSW Syllabuses incorporate the Australian Curriculum and reflect NSW priorities and standards. Any review of NSW curriculum congestion must address the mandatory relationship that exists between the federal and state authority, and must ask if we can justify NSW having different priorities and standards to ACARA and the other states? Does the disparity between states curriculum and implementation negate the value of PISA scores?

The emotional commitment to this NESA review was high, as were the expectations for meaningful reform hence the valuable and numerous contributions and attendance at events. Unfortunately, this was also mixed with some cynicism and fear – that the curriculum body's reputation as fearful of media, risk sensitive and lacking in innovative thinking would smother the much-needed change, through the curriculum and its implementation.

Curriculum and pedagogy are associated strongly and critically. Teachers are the implementers of the curriculum through pedagogical practice and effective learning experiences. The experience, assumptions and practices that teachers bring to promote student learning are evident through their instructional programs. The practices that underlie sound and effective teaching methods have always been utilised by effective teachers. The personalisation of learning experiences through the tailoring of lessons to what students know and using examples from students' own context and experience promote each student learning and forming a unique understanding from their own perspective. The teacher's role is to ensure that students' own learning and understanding is consistent with that of the required syllabus outcomes.

2. The extent to which the Masters Review meets key Government policy objectives,

a. Addressing concerns about the overcrowding of the curriculum

Consultation on a jurisdiction and subject basis has exacerbated the overcrowding problem, as claims for additional material were accepted and documents sometimes expanded in the process. Does the disparity in what is needed reflect ineffective stakeholder management, collaboration or other issues in the national curriculum development? This work needs to reflect stakeholders, effective leadership and informed decision making.

To define the scope of curriculum, we must define the role and scope of responsibility of schools, without this we do not have parameters in which to work.

As society's institutions evolve or dissolve, schools have continued to absorb the vacuum created. Curriculum requirements have increased because of community, educational, technological, employer and political expectations. Taken in isolation, changes to the school curriculum may be readily explained and be popular with the community but, when all these changes are aggregated, we have a considerable level of discontinuity. The chopping and changing of the curriculum, and its direction may provide governments with some favourable short-term press coverage and community support, but this can be at the expense of quality teaching and learning - a process that requires continuity, patience and perseverance. The effect of curriculum implementation must be considered from design through to evaluation. We must detail the outcomes we want from the curriculum and ensure they are assessable, with consideration of the required time for implementation and the time required for determining the success against the expected outcomes, balancing accountability and time considerations.

The current review has the potential to radically reshape school education for the first time since the 1960s. However, there have been other reviews and much syllabus revision and curriculum development in the more than half century between Wyndham and now. We need to define the baggage from past reviews, syllabus revision and curriculum development and the opportunity that this review provides. We must also ensure that any recommendations are implemented as clear initiatives, not as piece meal justification for existing agendas or projects. It is worth reflecting on this as we embark on yet another upper house review.

Many teachers are justifiably cynical about review processes that lack transparency, appear to pay lip-service to genuine consultation and result in recommendations that add layers of compliance rather than contribute to any significant improvement in education. There is particular concern about worthwhile recommendations being distorted by the need to serve multiple political agendas or as a result of implementation by heavy-handed bureaucracy.

We must consider and communicate how will this review's processes, and the way in which its recommendations are dealt with, improve upon past practice and avoid embedding long-term problems that will need to be addressed by future reviews.

b. Ensuring students' acquisition of excellence in literacy and numeracy, as well as deep knowledge of key subjects

We must address the fact that literacy and numeracy are no longer sufficient to prepare our students. The importance of these is not diminished, but they are no longer adequate on their own. These terms are not consistently understood, more so the perception of being literate aligns to that of the [Merriam Webster dictionary](#) as "able to read and write" and the term numerate as "having the ability to understand and work with numbers". Due to our historic 'year' approach, literacy and numeracy are assumed at many of the stages, no longer dealt, hence students fall further and further behind.

We need to embrace literacy as including reading literacy, mathematical literacy, digital literacy and critical literacies.

c. Professor Masters' explanation for NSW declining school results and the role a revised curriculum can play in reversing this decline

As Greg Whitby said:

"Those of us with a hunger for big changes in education had high hopes for the NSW Curriculum Review led by Professor Geoff Masters. The NSW Government's Curriculum Review response is rooted in the past, nostalgic in the now and fearful of the future. What is becoming clearer each and every day is that gutless governments of all stripes will never deliver the gutsy reforms required –

The NSW Curriculum Review led by Professor Geoff Masters had some bold and inspiring suggestions... the weak response to these sensible calls for reform is disappointing

The gap between the way schools operate, and what we know about child psychology and educational neuroscience, is widened through this review. This was our opportunity to narrow it.

Policy makers & shapers in Education don't get it. It's not the "what" that is important as this is always contested space. It the "how" that is critical, student agency and staff efficacy is the focus as they do the work. Trust them don't control them"

3. Other matters of public concern and interest in the development of the NSW curriculum

a. To what extent, if any, 'cross-curriculum priorities' are needed to guide classroom content and teaching

We need to ask, "What is the correlation between subjects and the real world?" No one goes in to their workplace and spends an hour working on maths, an hour on English etc. There is repetition across subjects that students don't even recognise. PBL etc start to resolve this, but we need to address the silos that exist between subjects, particularly at secondary school level. To realise the focus of real world learning from the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration we must revisit the concepts of stages, years and subjects.

We need a renewed commitment to prioritising general capabilities within the Australian Curriculum. Much of the commentary on skills was talked about in the context of preparing for and improving students' prospects for getting and keeping employment in a dynamic, global market. Being able to function in diverse cultural contexts was also a common theme, as was gaining skills that would enable the student to have functional relationships and fulfilling personal lives. The most mentioned essential skills, including those referred to as 'soft' skills'. As detailed above, critical and creative thinking is knowledge dependent so far, more emphasis on this is crucial.

Most educationalists call for improvement of the integration of 'general capabilities' within a discipline-based curriculum, to strengthen curriculum delivery and the development of higher-order skills. The often-repeated recommendation is to repeal the general capabilities and the cross-curriculum priorities should be rejected, these areas need strengthening.

b. To what extent, if any, knowledge and the curriculum are 'socially constructed', requiring the teaching of source verification and fluidity principles

The seven general capabilities of Literacy, Numeracy, ICT capability, Critical and creative thinking, Personal and social capability, Ethical understanding and Intercultural understanding should be considered equally important, not literacy and numeracy with the others as secondary considerations. . The three cross curriculum priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia and Sustainability, should also have increased prioritisation, not as addons when time allows.

The general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities are not content. The content of the Australian Curriculum is found in the seven Key Learning Areas of English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, the Arts, Health and PE, Technologies and Languages. The general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities are 'lenses' through which teachers look at content as they do their planning. They are not always applicable or relevant and there has never been an expectation they appear in every lesson or unit of work a teacher delivers. Contrary to rhetoric on social media, these capabilities should not be forced on every subject to the same degree, nor end.

c. Whether and to what extent schools should be involved in the 'social and emotional development' of students, as per the Melbourne/Alice Springs Declarations, and growing popularity of 'wellbeing programs' in NSW schools

A significant challenge over the next ten years is the continued acceleration of social and technological change. Technology is no longer a separate strand of learning, rather, an integrated tool. Supporting young people to become critical and ethical users of technology will continue to be an important consideration for all education sectors and is detrimental to their future, and the future of Australia.

Given that students will increasingly become creators of digital content and knowledge, rather than mere consumers, our curriculum needs to reflect, and be embedded in flexibility to respond to a continuously changing environment.

Our curriculum needs to enhance the action 'supporting quality teaching and school leadership' to promote excellence in teaching and learning through ongoing development for teachers and leadership to constantly adapt and respond to an everchanging world. Knowledge requires schools to ensure that they develop the capacity to exercise responsible digital citizenship.

To ensure their success, students need to be able to engage confidently and positively with digital technology in order to effectively participate in an increasingly globalised society and communicate respectfully with others. Young people will continue to develop digital and media fluency that is already in many cases surpassing that of the teachers who are educating them. In an age of global connectivity and opportunity, we should not only focus on the use of technology in student learning, but the potential for education sectors and schools to harness the benefits of technology more effectively to provide the flexibility needed to deliver a broad curriculum that is relevant to all learners. Supporting education leaders in this challenge will be vital.

d. Adequacy of the content and depth of teaching of Australian history, pre- and post-1788

The notion that every student should develop a basic knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal languages, cultures and histories and this should be explicit in the curriculum. We need to acknowledge the outstanding work of teachers who are already addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and histories in their teaching and learning programs. The very nature of the syllabus supports students developing understanding of our rich Aboriginal culture and history, with investigations into historical and contemporary Indigenous practice. It is important that any addition in this area should be undertaken appropriately within the framework of the discipline. As a significant focus, it is imperative that teacher education courses support teachers' understandings in authentic and meaningful ways and there should be additional professional development opportunities in this area.

e. Given the importance of English literacy across the curriculum, adopting the most effective evidence-based approaches to language acquisition, especially for reading and writing

Literacy (making and creating meaning), particularly listening, speaking, writing and reading need to be explicitly taught to students using the content and context of specific subject areas. Literacy is fundamental to a student's future - and it is increasingly unlikely they will learn it anywhere else. A common theme across community groups and sectors was that students should leave school both literate (reading/ comprehending/ writing skills/ speaking) and numerate, as these are essential for students' successful function in work and life. Literacy and numeracy capabilities were viewed as being core to the achievement of other desired outcomes, but there were various suggestions for ways to achieve this. These suggestions were sometimes linked to themes about the curriculum and syllabuses being overly complex and overprescribed. In particular, making it difficult for teachers to address literacy issues for individual students when they need to 'move on' to cover required content areas in the curriculum.

BUT, we need to talk about 'literacy' in broader terms, for example, in terms of students needing to have knowledge and understanding across a range of subject areas, most commonly mentioning scientific, digital and financial literacy. Skills in reading and writing are useless if we don't also provide the skills to critically evaluate what we are reading and the sources of it, or what we are writing and the repercussions of doing so, whether in books, online, text based or graphically represented.

As a nation and as a state our response to the need for students to learn languages has had very mixed history, compounded by costly false starts. Internationally schools and other educational institutions provide the main opportunity for the vast majority of people to learn languages, while linguistic diversity is actively encouraged within many further education establishments and workplaces. The debate about such a requirement with the curriculum is beyond discussion. The only real questions are how, when and by whom. Teachers recognise that Languages can only be taught effectively in primary schools if there is a qualified teacher available, if adequate time is available, and if the language can be maintained for a period of years, this can be achieved through the embracing of face to face, blended and online teaching and learning.

f. Role and effectiveness of vocational education syllabuses in NSW schools

The review supports the move towards a more integrated curriculum and away from the dichotomous academic-vocational nature of the present reality. In saying this, NESAs has missed a great opportunity to dump ATAR focus (major recommendation in original draft). Was this omission at final stages an oversight? Transparently determined, or in fact a conflict of interest, as they are the implementers of the HSC. Without the HSC, can we argue the case for NESAs, or for a review of their role?

We need to address a culture that devalues vocational education against academic education, and this is much bigger than NESAs, or in fact, curriculum.

We need better options for senior students (or those who have progressed to this level at any age) on a 'non-ATAR' path, similar to the options we have for VET Courses.

Our educational bodies (school through to jurisdictional bodies) should provide all students with opportunity. Schools have a moral imperative to help ensure that all students are provided with multiple post-school pathways to prepare them to confidently and creatively navigate their future, and facilitate options for employment, education and training. Promoting university, vocational education and training and other post-schooling pathways as equally valid and valued is a shared responsibility of schools, government and broader society. It is timely to question the continuing emphasis on end-of-school examinations and traditional approaches for determining university admission post-school. In a changing world, these mechanisms are no longer fit for purpose in their traditional form due to the multiple pathways available to students now and in the future. Currently, schools are experiencing constraints on teaching, learning and assessment and the levels of stress and anxiety experienced by young people continue to grow.

g. Effectiveness of NESAs in curriculum development and supervision

The scope of NESAs's responsibility must be reviewed. This ranges from their expertise in their areas of responsibility to the staff experience.

As above, NESAs should be the leaders of curriculum implementation, rather than development as quality assurance of this implementation.

All of their processes should be subject to international quality assurance standards and their boards should represent a broad range of stakeholders, all with equal voice and decision making.

Professional development

Having had specific experience in this area across my own work and through my networks, NESAs's quality assurance of professional development is an extra level of bureaucracy that maintains the norm and contradicts every other state. The review is currently being undertaken to determine the quality of internal and external providers (both of which I have been involved in) will make decisions based on inconsistent data as no strategic evaluation process is currently in place. This could be addressed through the implementation of an evaluation framework and making use of the valuable analytical capabilities that exist, aligned with manual process such as 'secret shopper' approaches. The quality should be determined through an Australia wide evaluation cycle, not through existing NESAs processes. A consistent approach to evaluating offerings would ensure consistency across Department, school and external providers.

Currently the processes favour the jurisdictional bodies and schools – who have a much simplified process, but also allows for disparity in quality. The designation as an 'approved provider; should be reviewed annually, and with consistent approaches across level and across face to face, blended and online offerings. This approach should be implemented across ALL providers including NSW department of Education.

The current review has promoted internally Department provided courses and the 'select group' who they have already accepted. Traditional, safe providers are preferred by NESAs, disparity, outside the box thinking, best practice from industry – industry that our students will one day be working in. Online courses are reviewed by assessors with no experience or qualification in online pedagogies or systems. Assessors did not even access the online system where the course content and learning experience is available. Reviews are inconsistent and the processes across the system vary, in business as usual and in their communication and implementation of provider changes, the goal posts move with little consideration of the manually intensive workload that applications

require. I have received contradicting feedback and note inconsistency across assessors. Communication of the NESAs review stated: "Currently, NESAs only accredits providers of professional development and does not accredit individual courses," Ms Mitchell said. This article ¹also states that courses can't be accredited – only providers, which is incorrect. When I questioned this, I was told there was an error, but the same statement was made on the NESAs website. They also state poor quality from external; providers – this is a big accusation to make, where is the evidence?

NESAs lacks agility with a traditional mindset of face to face, whereby providers will continue to provide quality PL, in a traditional context, across traditional modes. This feedback requires 4-6 weeks (read 6 weeks) each time and does not provide constructive feedback – which contradicts the best practice which they are there to enforce. This promotes the rhetoric of more conservative teachers who say that effective PL can only be delivered by current teachers (or past teachers, of which I am one), this needs to be a collaboration and best practice approach that reflects there are cases where this is true, and others where it isn't.

NESAs needs to define their role and the roles of their team members. This needs to be supported through identifying staff with required skills or development of those skills to ensure they are capable of the role requirements. Experience as a teacher does not necessarily prepare people for these roles and the responsibilities, which undervalues the quality assurance.

Currently NESAs is perceived as mandating expectations without effective guidance, training or support, especially to often neglected primary schools and more so to 1800 public primary schools. In reality the teachers consider NESAs a secondary, if not HSC focused organization as the budget expenditure reports reveal.

We support the reduction of the dominating influence of the ATAR if not eliminating the HSC. We believe this may encourage students to study in greater numbers, as students are often advised against selecting and directed towards subjects which are perceived to be higher scaled. This advice arises from perceptions that scaling in the formulation of the ATAR disadvantages students who choose in the arts in the HSC.

Spasmodically, the International Baccalaureate is suggested as an additional credential in NSW. This proposition has been floated around NSW for 40 years as long as has the IB. In that time, there has been little take-up of the IB. It serves as an elitist aberration. To discard the strong universal credential in NSW and encourage a non-accountable organisation, based in Geneva and that conducts its governance and business in French to undermine the common credential in NSW would border on reckless.

As NESAs's Budget is 85% directed towards on test – the HSC, and it as a functional tool for progress to University has long since expired, therefore NESAs itself should be scrapped with immediate effect.

4. Any other related matters.

a. Data and assessment:

NAPLAN should be removed, rather we should diagnostically utilise data from continual assessments to get oversight on current situations and improvement that has occurred. Interventions can then be assessed against the need to determine return on investment.

There is no such things as 'best practice school' rather elements and evidence of best practice across schools. Data would provide evidence of this and schools can be partnered for various elements where they can share expertise or gain insights to improve. Teachers can also be partnered where they have areas of weakness.

This data should support demotions as well as promotion of Principals (and other leaders, in schools and at executive) through professional development plans and programs. The same processes should apply for teachers.

¹<https://www.dailyliberal.com.au/story/6842359/teachers-to-undergo-development-to-receive-nesa-accreditation/?cs=112>

b. Digital Literacy – for teachers and students

Digital literacy needs intertwined across all curriculum elements. Teachers need to have a benchmark which they need to meet, in line with other industries and international benchmarks in education and other sectors (e.g. ICDL and Microsoft)

Teachers should be trained to teach online as well as face to face. This would support emergency situations (such as Covid), but could also address teacher shortages in subjects and geographical locations and the sharing of expertise, either in short supply or by choice of learners.

c. Outcomes based accountability

The purpose / scope / responsibility of schools need to be defined, outcomes agreed, that they can be measured against. This can align stakeholders, reflecting context and strategic improvement.

Reporting capabilities should be utilised to provide full transparency at any time, whether for determining weakness, strength, defining exemplar, sharing best practice or for ministerial and media responses.

The Master's review fails to adequately address questions implementation. Despite the wide recognition and acceptance accorded the role of curriculum as a cornerstone national philosophy in the NSW educational system, there seems to be problems in the implementation of this important educational process. Many laudable goals of the curriculum have failed to pass the planning stage of the curriculum due to faulty implementation. Well-conceived curriculum ideas have remained virtually inert and dysfunctional. NESA or the former BOSTES have few powers surrounding the implementation of curriculum other than periodic compliance audits.

Successful curricular changes have emphasised that such implementation modifications should focus on all aspects of education from the curriculum to: assessment, teacher preparation, school calendar, content structure, educational context, organisational structure and institutional culture. Each of these components is interconnected and the institutional commitment to the innovation is essential in order to see the process through. Communication, coordination and cooperation of the leaders is essential for successful change as is willingness to make corrections during the process.

Assessment needs to change, along with instruction to ensure that what is being assessed is what is taught through the removal of A-E standards to real time continuous feedback to students, staff and parents using technology. School assessment continues to be on the traditional discipline-based design not in conformity with the innovative curricula proposed by Masters.

In the light of this, we think that any curriculum change management plan should ensure:

- Continuity of policies and commitment at governmental level
- Shared vision of teachers and administrators
- Gradual phase-in of the curricular change ensuring that all modifications are appropriate inclusive of the new continuous student assessment system
- Provision for continued financial, human resources and technical support for implementation
- Participation and involvement of all stakeholders at all levels from the beginning of the planning process.

An outcomes based approach where outcomes are assessable and transparent.

There is a need for a paradigm shift of some education policies towards implementation, poor school budget tools to education among others, to result oriented policies that would ameliorate the deplorable state of curriculum implementation in schools.

The support of principal is crucial. Principals who were committed to the success of the implementation demonstrated their support in different ways, depending on what was needed. In reality few Principals have detailed operational understanding of current NSW syllabuses. We now have a lost generation of Principals and school executive teams who have never been through a complete syllabus implementation cycle.

Teachers need time. Time for concentrated curriculum development before implementation begins. Time spent in learning to work as a team and in developing the unit during the term is a crucial element. Planning time during

the school day is never sufficient to take care of immediate demands and leaves no time for teachers to engage in long range planning. The number of new, updated or revised syllabuses introduced over the last five years has made it difficult for teachers to develop a deep knowledge and understanding of each syllabus. Many teachers have not spent the time, or feel they have the time or professional support to understand the intention of the syllabus deeply. This results in multiple interpretations of syllabus documents and the sharing of resources that may or may not deepen teachers' professional knowledge and practice. Many teachers believe that the content is mandatory and do not understand the flexibility the outcomes afford.

5. The way forward

At a time where 'teacher quality' is high on the agenda, we should perhaps be balancing curriculum with evidence-based improvements to pedagogy. We have an opportunity to "shake the tree of our industrial age thinking" practices that are increasingly at odds with future demands. Fundamental school structures have altered little in generations, as the timing graphs presented earlier indicate.

Curriculum practices are entrenched and empowered by legislation and policy that are founded on outdated demands and a risk adverse culture, that are well past their use by date. The ludicrous notion that all Kindergarten teachers deliver the same content and those same students are assessed in the same way is chronically outdated. A contrastive alternative would be to restructure the curriculum along key competencies lines. The research to support this is long and detailed.

a. Some recommendations

This submission calls for a review of the curriculum implementation to meet contemporary need of the society, with the provision of more qualified and competent teachers to meet the challenges of the envisaged curriculum.

Recommendation: that the purpose of schools (NSW / Australia) is defined in relation to responsibility and scope.

Recommendation: that the terms 'curriculum' and 'syllabus' be clarified, defined and communicated for the purpose of the curriculum review.

Recommendation: that the philosophies and principles underpinning the NSW Curriculum be clarified and defined for the purpose of the curriculum review.

Recommendation: Prioritise the use of learning progressions for literacy, numeracy and other capabilities, in conjunction with syllabuses, particularly in the early years to ensure strong foundations for all students. We recommend that the implementation of the literacy and numeracy progressions is used to illustrate how other general capabilities, such as personal and social capability can be used in conjunction with syllabuses to differentiate learning in response to student learning needs.

Recommendation: Clarify and make explicit the inquiry processes, key concepts and skills unique to e(ach and shared between) each disciplinary area to support purposeful and authentic integration across disciplines.

Recommendation: (GONSKI 2) Provide school leaders with access to a variety of professional learning opportunities appropriate to their career stage and development needs and recognise and harness the skills and experience of high-performing principals by enabling quality assured professional development from an array of sources.

Recommendation: Move from a year-based curriculum to a curriculum expressed as learning progressions independent of year or age.

Recommendation: Introduce timely feedback (rather than reporting) arrangements with a focus on continuous progress in learning and achievement to provide meaningful information that students, teachers and parents can use to inform next steps in learning and continued growth.

Recommendation: Develop an online, formative assessment tool to help diagnose a student's current level of knowledge, skill and understanding, to identify the next steps in learning to achieve the next stage in growth, and to track student progress over time against a typical development trajectory.

Recommendation: Create the conditions that will enable teachers and schools to successfully adopt practices that support tailored teaching for growth, such as collaborative planning, teaching and assessment, and personalised learning for students.

Recommendation: Revise the structure of the ACARA curriculum to represent NSW context, present the learning areas and general capabilities as learning progressions that can be used diagnostically, formatively and summatively.

Recommendation: Focus on effective assessment practice as the driver for changes to teaching practices that improve student learning outcomes. This will also form the basis of transparency and accountability, rather than additional administrative requirements.

Recommendation: Limit the burden of non-core activities, such as administrative tasks, on schools and their leaders, so they can concentrate on instructional leadership and help teachers to maximise the learning growth of their students.

Recommendation: A more comprehensive examination of school times, school architecture, subject time requirements, and staffing requirements is essential. A re- definition of modern literacy and numeracy demands and definition is vital. Teachers, parents and students today demand increasing flexibility and personalisation in their learning journey.

It is the industrial age educational outlook that is at odds with contemporary realities. Maybe the curriculum is actually distracting us from the real issue and the better question is "Are we willing to change our expectations for how and what students learn?"