



FOUNDATION FOR
Young Australians

Meeting the diverse needs and experiences of young people in the 21 century

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& Rachell Li

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Overview

About The Foundation for Young Australians:

- o Research
- o Programs
- o Advocacy



Overview

- o What are the goals of schooling that underpin curriculum change?
- o The landscape of young people: a snapshot
- o We are more than our marks
- o How do we design learning experiences that meet the needs of young Australians for the 21st century?
- o Why teachers are important

Background themes

- o “any official curriculum... comes to ground via an enacted curriculum and teaching and learned events ‘lived by students and teachers” (Luke)

Improving achievement amongst most ‘at risk’:

- o “Sustained scaffolded student talk and dialogue around issues of cultural and intellectual substance; and...
- o Visible connections of school knowledge to everyday civic, cultural, political and social life” (Luke)
- o What are our educational goals?

Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

- o 'All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens'
- o How do we conceptualise, articulate and measure the success of active and informed citizens?
- o Are young people more than their marks?
- o Young people are not a homogenous group

The Landscape: A Snapshot

- o 1 in 5 Australians aged 12–24 years
- o Indigenous people account for 3.6% of all 15–19 year-olds and 2.8% of all 20–24 year-olds
- o 1 in 5 Australian young people born overseas
 - Asia 6.6%
 - Europe 2.6%
- o 1 in 5 speak a language other than English at home
- o 66% 12–19-year-olds live at home with 2 parents, and 20% live with 1 parent

Source: Muir et al (2009)



Equity and social inclusion

- o What is social inclusion?
- o Economic – intra-generational inequity in earning and learning
- o Educational: socio-economic disadvantage and “persistent patterns of educational inequality in test score achievement, retention and completion” (McGaw 2010, Luke)
- o Cultural
- o Political
- o Technological
- o Environmental
- o Demographic change and inter-generational inequity

What do young people think?



Schools need to recognise success as more than just marks

- o Tell Us is a national campaign to ask students what success at school really means. Over 10,000 students participated in the campaign and 7,000 took the survey
- o The majority of students say that what they know cannot be measured by tests or marks (60% of students)
- o 1 in 2 students say they don't help decide how their school runs (50%)
- o Only 4 in 10 students say their school listens to what they have to say (35.6% say their school doesn't listen)

Students already have ideas about how school can change...

“I want schools to change so that the society that we students in the future will build will reflect us, our talents and our accomplishments.” Dalia, Tell Us Advocate

“I want schools to change because I want schools to be places where extracurricular talents are fostered more effectively, and places where students can enjoy going to every day.” Joshua, Tell Us Advocate



Brendan Lim

o Brendan sat for the Higher School Certificate last year and is a Tell Us advocate...

Observations through the Chalkboard - A Student's Perspective

words by Brendan Lim

edited by Chris Warren

It is wonderful to observe such a genuine, united and national interest of educational bodies; institutions; academics and teaching professionals all working collaboratively with the utmost desire for the betterment of the education of the children of Australia. The aim of this article is to share with you some experiences and observations I have made as a recent student of our Education System to provide some perspective from the other side of chalkboard.

In my experience, good marks can only measure what is measured within the test. Marks reflect the ability to provide the correct answer, as dictated by a marking criterion. Furthermore, even if the correct answer is given, the test only measures ability as deeply or as accurately as the marking criterion determines.

As each student is an unique individual, and each teacher is different academically and stylistically, both learn and teach in different ways respectively. This calls for the conscious employment of 'intuitive teaching'. It is a small and largely semantic, but important, shift: not a 'teaching to' but rather a 'learning with' mentality.

Two years ago I was asked to privately tutor mathematics to a girl in year ten, preparing to sit for the School Certificate examinations. At that time it was halfway through Term 2 and she was in the bottom half of the bottom class of an academically mainstream school, averaging 26% in all her assessments. After the first time meeting with her, I discovered that this girl had, in fact, a rather good aptitude for Mathematics and the concepts she had been taught. She could clearly recall trigonometric ratios and recite set formulae with ease. Where it all fell down was when the variable we desired to find was not the subject of the equation, she had no idea as to where to start. This girl, who had been in the same class since year 7, and who's Mathematics class had been the same since year 7, had never been taught the basic algebra that many fourteen year olds learn to master by the time they reach eighth grade. For the remaining two months we had until the examinations would be upon us, we focused only upon algebraic concepts, learning what many of her peers sitting the same examination had been practising for nearly three years. To this day I still remember the telephone call I received after the School Certificate results had been released, her excited voice down the line telling me that she had received a band 5, albeit just only, for Mathematics. The elation I heard in her that day is something that I will always remember.

Here is one clear example where the tests she encountered failed to accurately identify her ability and knowledge in a subject; in this case a fifteen minute conversation was sufficient to provide the direction in which to help this student's learning and education.

Brendan Lim received the HSC last year, and has entered university to study for a Bachelor of Engineering (Computer), a Bachelor of Science (Chemistry) and a Diploma in Music with the intention in pursuing a Graduate Diploma in Primary Education. Since the commencement of the school calendar, this year, he has also worked within a tutoring centre, teaching primary English and primary and secondary Mathematics.

Michelle Hamilton

How do we design learning experiences that meet the needs of young Australians for the 21st century?



Our challenge as practitioners:

**Meeting young people's
needs lies as much in the
how as the what**



Shifting perspectives

Education

Learning

Passive

Active

Recipients

**Co-creators and
partners**

**What is it like from the learner's
perspective?**



Design

**How can we avoid
students feeling that they
are being fed a syllabus
dot point by dot point?**

Design Principles

Personalised

- o Drawing on the passions of the individual
- o Recognising the complexity of students' lives beyond school
- o Accommodating of all talents and learning styles

Flexible

- o Place/space
- o Time
- o Modes
- o Pace



Design Principles

Connected

- o To the community
- o To what students perceive to be the 'real world'
- o Offering authentic experiences:
- o Students learn through making a meaningful contribution

Facilitated and collaborative

- o Developing positive and collaborative relationships with adults, both teachers and other experts beyond the school



Design Principles

Shared ownership and control

- o Students feeling that they have times they are in the 'driving seat'

Technology enabled

- o Embedded use of technology with a enabling rather than fear based view of its power

Design Principles

Entrepreneurial

- o Developing young people who have learnt the skills and mindsets of being entrepreneurial through doing

Experiential

- o Following the powerful model of action and reflection

Design Principles

Inquiry driven

- o Using compelling questions and rich interdisciplinary tasks to engage and extend thinking

Allow them to live the capacities you teach

- o You can't teach leadership and then not let them lead!

Meeting the needs of 21st century learners:

- ✓ **Personalised**
- ✓ **Flexible**
- ✓ **Connected**
- ✓ **Facilitated**
- ✓ **Shared ownership**
- ✓ **Technology enabled**
- ✓ **Entrepreneurial**
- ✓ **Experiential**
- ✓ **Inquiry Driven**
- ✓ **Allow them to live it**



Students inquire into “What does it take to succeed in life and work?”

- o Year 10 students
- o CBD 5 day program
- o They visit workplaces and participate in workshops based in positive psychology focusing on strengths, optimism and well being.
- o Students exposed to different pathways for transitioning to work and post-compulsory education.



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- o **Personalised**
 - o **Flexible**
 - o **Connected**
 - o **Facilitated**
 - o **Accommodating**
 - o **Entrepreneurial**
 - o **Experiential**
 - o **Inquiry driven**
 - o **Authentic**



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- o I felt the main point they were trying to get across the whole week was connections. Being able to communicate with people that you wouldn't normally, to be able to create those networks of friends that will help you later on. I pretty much learnt that that was an important thing to do for later on at WOW. That was really helpful.



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- o I think they wanted to keep the definition of success abstract as well in the fact that they wanted you to define it for yourself. They didn't want to say 'success is working in an office building' or 'success is helping people overseas', they wanted you to make up your own mind, so it was quite personal that way.

WOW
WORLDS OF WORK



Cityscape
CITY
INSPIRED
LEARNING

**No
Regrets**
respectful relationships

**Classroom
2 Community**

ruMAD?
are you Making A Difference?

youngsocialpioneers

fya

Bringing student voice into the planning

**How are you including the
needs of your students in
planning for the rollout of the
Australian Curriculum?**

Do they feel included?



Rachell Li

o Rachell Li is an eighteen year old high school student and Tell Us advocate...



A Student's Perspective

words by Rachell Li

To me, what has 12 consecutive years of schooling amassed to? An education? I hope so. My parents, they certainly hope so.

But what does an education consist of? And, as if that wasn't vague enough, what does an education consist of in the 21st Century? As a student, I do not believe that education in contemporary times calls for earth shattering new ideas, but simply a more applicable approach and perspective from teachers and students.

The classroom, for example, is not the enemy. It is just where the majority of scholastic learning takes place. Even the Ancient Greeks were reduced to such convenience of banality. They also focused with extreme intensity on the idea of rote learning.

Indeed rote learning was a recurring theme in my junior high school years. Though no teachers actively encouraged it, it was generally accepted among students to be a "failsafe" method to succeed in exams. Under this misguided consensus, my fellow classmates and I unconsciously developed bad habits that seeped into our senior years.

Come year 10, there was a sudden a great emphasis placed on originality, flair, and the notion of developing a sophisticated and knowledgeable personal voice. This all came with the expectation of flexibility – a strange sort of intellectual lissomness that was so foreign to a group of students who had just spent three years sitting in the hardest and straightest of plastic chairs.

Henceforth exams became less predictable. In reaction, I prematurely came to the conclusion that my teachers were not adequately preparing me. But preparing me for what? With time I realised that it was my responsibility to not only fulfil my schooling through self-study, but also to enrich it by making my education a personal experience. Of course my teachers wished for their students to pass exams, but they also expected, and rightly so, a degree of motivation from them. For them to think with their own minds and to construct their own ideas, to mould and shape their own learning experience to suit themselves.

Like no two people are the same, no two students digest and internalise knowledge in the same fashion. Though modern classrooms have utilised new and valuable techniques and teaching systems in an attempt to accommodate a wider range of learning styles, no system or curriculum can facilitate every student. Thus, the student must develop their own system, and they must be given ample freedom to do so. A formidable task. Why go to school then? For lunch?

I believe that though independence should be encouraged, it certainly should be mentored. I know, rather shamefully, from personal experience that teenagers can be arrogant, vain, flippant, neurotic, sensitive and insecure. Almost bipolar in mood. Enthusiastic and quixotic to the point of idealism one minute and apathetic and nihilistic to the point of passive existentialism the next.

I am not implying that all teachers should mother their pupils, rather that between the student and the teacher there should exist a mutual passion. I am not talking about the type of relationship where 3am phone calls are the norm. I am talking about a type of relationship wherein a teacher will lie awake at that same unholy hour, tossing and turning because one of her students (maybe me, maybe not) is having trouble sculpting.

I am aware that it is presumptuous to demand this level of commitment and care from a teacher, but I never demanded. My senior art teacher, Mrs Robinson, offered. It is this selflessness and compassion that has the ability to encourage students to engage in the wider world.

To bring the macro world into the classroom, we must take the classroom into the macro world. There are few practical or encompassing ways to increase a student's social and personal awareness as a capable young adult– an active agent- in a national and global context. The most effective method would be to draw upon each individual student's own flair, originality, interests and personal voice and to show them that these attributes are valuable not only to them, but to the world at large. To open up and unbind their passions.

Passion. A loaded term. Too much to expect from a seventeen year old? I believe that, in setting a solid example for his or her students, a teacher has the ability to influence and inspire thirty or more people at one time. At a dinner party, when Taylor Mali, an American high school teacher was asked by a patronising and tipsy banker "what he made in a year". Mali replied, "a difference".

Now, though no teacher is or can be expected to be a paragon of excellence or a model citizen, they should be greatly respected and repeatedly praised for their life decision to dedicate themselves to the lives of others. Let their passion be known to their students. Their example should act as a keyhole in the door of institutionalised education for their students to peer into and glimpse and gauge the otherwise blinding light of the opportunities of the wider world. Their mentoring, open attitude and encouragement of independence are the most valuable assets of a 21st Century education.

It is these tools that allow students to become conscious of and readily engage with their abilities, influence, potential and place in what will one day become their world. During my secondary schooling it is the moments in which teachers have in their own time and on their own initiative offered to help me individually to not only meet my scholastic requirements, but to learn to become a better organised, better equipped and more efficient person.

When my society and culture teacher emailed me constantly, gently reminding me, each time with increasing enthusiasm, to submit my Personal Interest Project for review. The lack of palm to face contact from my maths teacher, an almost unrealistically patient woman, as she handed back to me my abysmal trial examination results. All the nights of sleep my art teacher lost as a result of her stressed students.

These extraordinary acts by my teachers inspired many of my own extraordinary acts. Their kindness, selflessness, genuine care and compassion sowed in me, the seeds of a socially and culturally literate person. A person with the desire, optimism and drive to not only better themselves, but to better their surroundings.

I recognise that this is a tremendous ask in terms of the responsibility of teachers, the openness of students, and the faith of both. While my peers and I can never expect a teacher to go above and beyond for a couple of oily, lanky and high pitched teenagers, we are most grateful when they do.

In my own education, I feel that I benefited most as a person because I undertook not only several major work subjects, but also subjects I found challenging. In these classes, my teacher's emphasis on the development of individuality fostered an independence that enabled me to grasp that an education is not a mark.

I have always been told, "you are not your ATAR", but I never quite believed it in my junior years. Isn't the ATAR the means by which I will be evaluated and defined by others? Perhaps. But it is not how I will evaluate and define myself. Because of my major works and their holistic approach, I have learnt to enjoy learning as a process of personal and intellectual development.

Therefore, as I have no authority to comment on our current or prospective curriculum, I can only speak for myself when I say: support major work subjects and please do not disregard the arts. Give them the time of day that they deserve. In many other national curricula, it is the visual arts, music and design technologies that are undermined. But how can a curriculum challenge a student if it lacks diversity and demand. There is more to art and, learning in general, than "fun", and to deny this depreciates not only the dedicated teachers of these most honourable subjects, but the students themselves.

Under these subjects, students are given the rare responsibility and right of genuine creation, and in an otherwise textbook based education system, this is a most valuable asset. In order for education to come alive, it must breathe through the valves of creativity.

Above all, please listen to the teachers and their concerns. They are a direct line to the students. They, under a curriculum that suits their intentions, can ultimately facilitate students with the freedom to create their own schooling experience that is tailored, diverse and challenging. Overall, challenging is vital, and a teacher and curriculum should have every intention of challenging every student. Though a curriculum cannot be "harder", it can certainly aim to provide depth of understanding and more hands on opportunities for Australian students to engage in their schooling experience.

It is in the challenges presented in major work subjects and strenuous content that students are violently shifted out of their complacency and their rote learning. It is these challenges that allow students to rise above their marks. It is these challenges that encourage students to view themselves as a person capable of real work and real impact.

A passionate, driven individual mentored and taught by other passionate, driven individuals will hardly regard a mark, a number, as a hindrance in any way. Fear is replaced by hunger and thirst. A hunger and thirst to take absolute advantage of the opportunities they are given and in turn to form a broader perspective wherein an education is no longer simply rote learning, but instead a chance to strengthen and stretch one's abilities and perceptions. An opportunity to engage in applicable studies that will aid them in understanding their place and powers in the modern world. Now there is a more rounded definition of a high school art education. Imagine a curriculum that is able to release herds of such individuals into the world.

Because it is these individuals who will be able to truly claim that they have made the most of their own schooling experience. Who, in their 12 years have slowly, and with help, craved their unique key that unlocks the door of institutionalised education. And they are ready to step outside, because the light is no longer blinding and the glimpses from behind the keyhole are no longer enough. And I am glad to be one of them.

Rachell Li Year 12 2010-09-28 Hornsby Girls High

Concluding questions

- o Moving beyond teaching to the test
- o Need for teaching more real skills, knowledge and methods of thinking/analysing in school syllabi
- o Sensitivity to the diversity of learning methods between students
- o Learning beyond the classroom takes place in environments where there is a need for these real skills to be applied
- o Teachers remain central
- o New landscape of partnership and student centred learning

Concluding questions

- o How can we enrich learning experiences in between the tests? Is this enough?
- o Business Schools Connections Roundtable: young people want real-life experiences and opportunities
- o How can the abstract curriculum, knowledge and skills be enacted in the lived worlds of young people?
- o How do we better articulate active citizenship?





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