

Chapter 14: The Teaching Transformation Agenda

What's our Key Message?

- There is an urgent need for transformation change in education, schooling, and teacher education highlighted by current challenges and the outdated industrial age system.
- Government leadership is crucial in defining societal goals and shaping a coherent curriculum to equip students with 21st-century skills.
- Adoption of new success criteria recognising diverse forms of new success in modern society, beyond traditional metrics.
- Call for a new grammar of schooling, including teacher preparation reform and the introduction of specialist teaching roles, to support individualised learning and teacher agency.

In this chapter, we resolve the conundrum around the teaching transformation agenda by identifying seven “agenda items” that now represent immediate steps for changing education, schooling and teacher education in line with what this book has suggested. There have been enough government reports and ongoing debates about education, schooling, and teacher education to realise that the time has come for the profession to change course. Reviewing our commentary in the preceding thirteen chapters, it becomes apparent that transforming what is now a two-hundred-year-old system strongly influenced by the logic of the industrial age is challenging. At its heart, change propositions fundamentally react to a sustained cultural problem because of the power of the status quo, the lack of clarity about the purpose of schooling, and a lack of coherent understanding of the field of education and its complexity. Further complicating it all is the emergence of digital media platforms that have enabled innumerable voices to enter debates about transforming education, hijacking or clouding pertinent issues. In addition, the reward systems do not appear robust enough for anyone, from politicians to education system leaders to school staff and university academics, to consider transformative, sustainable change as we have outlined. Such discussions seem only to happen on the fringes of mainstream education.

This is all compounded when one considers that we are living in times of ongoing exponential technological innovation and disruption. Trying to pin something down is difficult, not unlike holding back the tide. A significant problem is that the profession, particularly classroom teachers and their school leaders, are becoming exhausted just trying to keep the current system operating, let alone radically changing it. The international problem of teacher shortages should be seen as the proverbial canary in the coal mine. This might be a comment about society's political leaders not having the gumption to resolve what it means to be educated. It is a challenging undertaking that probably does not offer any political advantage given the short horizons due to the election cycle and lack of meaningful discussion in the daily news cycle. Adding more things to the curriculum to appease a lobby group or deal with an emergent social issue, keeping the school day the same because that is the expected norm, and reinforcing old teaching mindsets and logic are not the solutions. Nor are simple remedies like embracing the latest educational fad, conducting yet another review into teacher education, or throwing more money at the same old problem. There must be a new agenda, and the profession needs to take agency over it.

Before concluding with our seven teaching transformation agenda items, we first recap what we have covered in the book as a frame for these items. In Chapter 1, we explain how exponential technological and societal changes profoundly impact people's lives and how work is undertaken. At the centre of the discussion was a call for change in a system of schooling that has hallmarks from an era now long past. Because schools prepare young people for the future, and society has changed fundamentally and will continue to do so, schools must change accordingly. In Chapter 2, we explore these societal changes further by examining the concept of a Knowledge Society. This revealed a set of impacts on schools that we argued have a direct implication for those who teach. To exemplify the effects of a Knowledge Society, in Chapter 3, we explored the government's actions in Australia, England, and the United States of America to reveal an education landscape that tells a repeating story of what can only be described as education in crisis. Chapter 4 focused on the question of "What does it mean to be educated"? We suggested in this chapter that a national narrative is needed to underpin answering such a question, and we firmly implicated government leadership in undertaking such a task. We responded to the framing of this question in Chapter 5 by identifying three lenses for rethinking the curriculum in a school: (i) wellbeing as the centrepiece of curriculum aspirations, (ii) dealing with old and new knowledge, and (iii) education and its interplay within and for society.

In Chapter 6, we investigated the notion of “teaching transformation” as a backdrop for a set of change propositions we made in the subsequent chapters. We explained the concept of “teaching transformation” and contrasted it with “teaching improvement” agendas to point out that teaching transformation is a radical rethink of teaching. It means an end to ongoing “tinkering”. Again, we reinforced the idea that using all that is known about teaching effectiveness, social change, technological innovation and disruption, not to mention explosions in understanding the neuroscience of the brain, the emergence of artificial intelligence, and engaging in client-centric models, was needed as reference points to create new approaches to teaching which are fit to the future. Chapter 7 began a sign-off from the education past by presenting a different approach to how teaching is organised in our schools and creating an agenda for a revolution in the role and function of what is universally known as the “schoolteacher”. Key to our logic is the creation of (teaching) “Consultants” who lead teaching transformation in schools by engineering workforce stratification and engaging multi-disciplinary teams in the schooling equation. Ultimately, we suggest expanding their role, not unlike how the medical profession has achieved specialist roles that have advanced patient care, into specialist educational functions centred on complex learning design diagnostic and education process advice and guidance to those “involved others” in schools. Accordingly, the Consultant would coordinate these multi-discipline professionals in the actioning and achieving outcomes specified in individual learning plans.

Chapter 8 expanded the premise of this new school teaching logic to identify six fundamental and interrelated concepts: (i) education as a specialist field, (ii) codified teaching practice, (iii) scope of practice, (iv) workplace stratification, (v) teachers as researchers and (vi) increased teacher agency. An interplay of these concepts, as mooted in previous chapters, can be understood as a “new grammar of schooling”. In Chapter 9, a new grammar of schooling was explained as movements away from age-related student groupings and the division of learning into subjects and “one-size fits all approaches” that are synonymous with what young people currently experience. A new grammar of schooling would see schools move towards client-centric models. We used six key considerations to locate and explain the new grammar of schooling. We envision (i) the school as a nursery for future citizens and (ii) engineering schools as centres of care and wellbeing, (iii) systems to support and enable a new approach to teaching, (iv) a new model for school leadership and management, (v) the exploitation of technology for teaching and learning effects, and (vi) the exploration of a new education market to stimulate innovation and disruption for futures orientated teaching and learning impacts. Chapter 10

continued the themes from Chapter 9 by investigating (i) technology-rich environments, (ii) new systems of education and (iii) the education market. Chapters 11 and 12 focused the book on preparing a different type of teacher. These chapters effectively provided a blueprint for how teaching transformation work can be actioned. We outlined our thinking on preparing a new teaching construct by identifying seven concepts that together scope the goals of a teacher preparation program. These are (i) stratification of teaching work, (ii) a scope of practice, (iii) education as a specialist field, (iv) teachers as researchers, (v) teacher agency, (vi) codified teaching and (vii) a mechanism to address the theory-practice divide. The theory-practice conundrum, which is an issue in teacher education at present, we explored in Chapter 12 by identifying five innovative mechanisms: (i) new teacher education pathways, (ii) teaching schools as the place for learning to teach and for furthering the evidence base of the profession, (iii) portal tasks as the focus for what needs to be learnt and demonstrated for graduation, (iv) new content required to be learned and (v) a model for learning how to teach. In Chapter 13, we sought to understand what has been done before in the teaching transformation space, take stock of the critical elements that need to be considered for success, and how these inform our teaching transformation ideas. We sought to learn about undertaking transformation in education, teaching and schooling and ensure our proposals have a high chance of success by reviewing the associated research evidence and issues experienced in the past that hindered innovations from taking hold. A key and interesting finding is that “education research” is not packaged ready for teacher consumption and that there are very few large-scale and longitudinal studies into teacher education, especially from the perspective of graduate teachers' capabilities - how well they can teach and their life cycles post-graduation.

Having revised what we have covered in this book, we conclude the book with seven agenda items. These represent the critical work that now needs to be undertaken if a “teaching transformation” is to occur. We start by picking up a key theme from Chapter 4, the role of governments in the teaching transformation agenda.

Teaching transformation agenda #1: Governments must show leadership in defining the society they want to engineer

The first important consideration in any transformational agenda is leadership. It requires top-level buy-in, which implies a level of courage. Change requires clarity of purpose followed by robust, committed and informed leadership for success. In authoring this book, we have endeavoured to generate the required insight for “key agents” to now take carriage of the

transformation of teaching, schooling and teacher education. However, this needs to be triggered by leadership at the political level. This agenda item is about governments creating an instructive national narrative that defines the society “we” want young people to grow up in and contribute to and accordingly constitute a coherent curriculum for our schools. This underpins a curriculum standpoint that appreciates that knowledge and one’s capacity to exploit it in new and interconnected ways is crucial to success in our modern world. This points to a series of 21st-century skills needing to be honed by students and, accordingly in contexts far removed from the past’s pencil and paper classroom regimes. This alone does not scope the complete “new curriculum” because, as our commentaries have indicated, “exponential change” has a fundamental impact on humans, and accordingly, preparing people to live with and embrace uncertainty is the new civics curriculum. This needs governments to define “what is in” and “what is out” and, in doing so, declutter the curriculum and allow schools and teachers clarity on what being educated means and to fill in the gaps for students as individuals. We lament the rise of the populist politician in all this and decry the banalities of modern political-centric debates about education. We call out for a return of the visionary “statesperson” who builds on life experiences, listens to the research evidence and articulates its benefits in a way that engages the population! Perhaps this book can start a revolution along these lines.

Teaching transformation agenda #2: New success criteria

As we have argued in early chapters, long established norms and ways of doing things in society are in flux. A personal capacity to not only operate within such circumstances - that is earn a living, raise a family and pursue one’s interest and passions - but also thrive in it, are arguably the hallmarks of success in this modern society. We mentioned that success in modern society has another important dimension: coming to terms with one’s humanity in a world where personal wellbeing gets lost in the seductive and compelling vortex of screen time and social media. We captured these intents with the idea of creating new success criteria. In effect, it responds to a refined curriculum, as in the previous agenda item, but it also recognises that “success” in modern society takes many forms. It rounds off discussions about the world we want for our future citizens and thus motivates them to succeed and be acknowledged for that success in new and different ways. Not unlike the Knowledge Society that it all represents. For those in “education”, it also points to the need for different types of schools and a journey of education that is not defined by just “getting into university” or achieving “a qualification” but ongoing learning and adaptation through life.

Teaching transformation agenda #3: A new grammar of schooling is required

The central organisational feature of current schooling is mass education. This is an affront to the life potentials of every young person enrolled, in that no system that makes decisions for the masses will ever be able to ensure every individual succeeds. In a Knowledge Society, a personal capacity to deal with knowledge in unique and creative ways is now a centrepiece of employment. To fall through the gaps in school today is a sure passage to an unfulfilled life. Surely, allowing such an outcome is modern society's greatest social justice issue. Schools must transition to client-centric models, and this transition is dependent upon a teaching workforce positioned to deal with students as individuals and a teaching repertoire focused on codified evidence-based approaches to guarantee optimal outcomes. A new grammar of schooling means we need a fundamental and strategic reset of the “what, when, where and how” young people are taught the “new curriculum”. This new grammar is built on a simple yet powerful logic that emphasises the importance of teacher agency in the student’s learning process. It rethinks schooling-of-old around a clear focus on teachers applying specific education knowledge for individual student learning outcome effects. However, it also presupposes new ways of organising teacher work beyond the classroom. The teacher has to be all things to all students, and teaching happens within the four walls of a classroom. This invokes technology, but it also imagines new education markets, new operating logics for what is “a school”, and “qualification regimes” that represent new life cycles of work and home life. It also means teachers have to learn new things in new ways!

Teaching transformation agenda #4: Teacher preparation attuned to a specialist body of education knowledge and teaching skills, honed in and for real-work contexts

The propositions that a new grammar of schooling and a rethought teacher constructs represent are all commensurate to specialist teaching knowledge and codified practice. This implicates both the teacher preparation regime and the organisational logic of future schools. We believe teacher education is the place to start. Teacher education has undergone numerous reviews across the globe, citing the inadequacies of current organisational regimes. Our book has identified five mechanisms for reforming teacher education: (i) new teacher education pathways, (ii) “teaching schools” as the place for learning to teach and for furthering the evidence base of the profession, (iii) “portal tasks” as the focus for what needs to be learnt and demonstrated for graduation, (iv) new content required to be learned and (v) a new model for learning how to teach. Taken together, these mechanisms blueprint a rethink on teacher

education and can potentially seed the growth of a highly skilled and Knowledge Society-centric teacher. The BLM experience detailed in Chapter 13 does not augur well for teaching transformation agendas. However, with clarity of purpose, committed leadership, and consideration of the points we've made throughout this book, including considering the obstacles apparent in the BLM experience, we believe there is a viable way forward in the teacher education space.

We acknowledge that teacher education is somewhat a “chicken and egg” for teaching transformation. It requires competency with the new agenda in both schools and teacher education faculties, as well as in teachers who are experts and committed to that agenda. To this end, we signal that teacher education programming at all levels of the profession must go beyond the ad hoc release from class models that predominate the classroom teacher's life. It must find ways to address the theory-practice divide resulting from the most common on-campus and practicum model of initial teacher education and move to a new set of stratified teacher education qualifications. A stratification of the teaching workforce creates a new schooling capacity for teaching the curriculum to all learners and acknowledges specialist expertise. Teaching transformation requires a transformation in how the school and teacher education business is organised. Third space thinking - which is what a “teaching school” is all about - here, each party to the change agenda has an equal yet different contribution - i.e. the co-design of programs logic - is where all this starts and focuses on day-to-day operations.

Teaching transformation agenda #5: Introducing the “Consultant” role as catalyst for change

In Chapter 7, we introduce the (teaching) “Consultant” concept. These Consultants have a transition role in the birth of a new grammar of schooling and in teacher education changes. However, they are also a strategic mechanism that helps define how the learning design works for students in a new grammar of schooling. As a transitional role, they embody, at the expert level, the specialist education knowledge that a new grammar of schooling entails. This specialist-level expertise and leadership positioning build the required teaching capabilities as the key role in a stratified teaching work environment. In an operational sense, the role of consultants, which we have co-opted from the logic of how the medical profession organises its specialists in hospitals, provides complex learning design, diagnostic and education process advice, and guidance to those “involved others” and accordingly coordinates these multi-discipline professionals into the actioning and achieving outcomes specified in individual

learning plans. Consultants represent the career pinnacle for teachers and are achieved not through time served but higher levels of specific role-orientated formal education and the regular upgrading of their stock of complex knowledge, and ultimately by achieving membership of “the” pedagogic professional association. Once again, we reference how medical specialists hold fellowships in specialist colleges. As a mechanism for change, the preparation and positioning of consultants into schools to effect a new grammar of schooling is also an issue of scale, given that thousands of schools in our various education systems need to be transformed. However, we contend this is a strategy for creating higher levels of teacher agency in education. The knock-off effect here is that the role of the school “Head” changes from “managing” a system of mass education to one “enabling” a client-centric system where consultants are representative of teacher agency in education. To trigger this agenda item requires deciding the “new curriculum”, configuring a new grammar of schooling and then identifying candidates for intensive high-level training for “consultant” work. To counter the chicken and egg situation outlined earlier, we invoke agenda item #1 - Government actions - and then changes to teacher education along the lines outlined in Chapters 11 and 12.

Teaching transformation agenda #6: A stratified set of teaching roles

Stratification is about sustainably repositioning teachers for complex and multi-dimensional work. It can be understood as a new set of teaching roles within a new grammar of schooling, and for each new teacher role, it is a defining scope of practice. Scope of practice means teachers are no longer “individuals positioned to be all things to all students”. Teaching workloads are client-centric, commensurate to role scope and multi-disciplinary team capacities. We propose three levels of teachers: teaching associates, registered (or certified) teachers and consultants. The key point is that this stratification refreshes the current school/classroom-centric model by clarifying roles, capitalising on specialist functions for designed effects, and creating a sense of agency for incumbents and their assigned tasks. It also creates a foundation for multi-disciplinary teams to enter the school as productive and organised professionals to optimise student learning and wellbeing outcomes. On a related plane, our consultant role acts as a transitional strategy in early stratification iterations but foundations new practice models as the teaching profession matures. This will further manifest with new educational markets that enhanced teacher agency generates.

In many ways, the solution for transformed teaching resides in teachers having the required agency in their own business, which, one could argue, is very low in Australia, the USA, and

England. Teacher agency means teachers have a more significant influence and control of their profession and, accordingly, would see its esteem rising in the public's minds. It is a “chicken and egg” thing again. Teacher agency is commensurate to high levels of professional teaching prowess, which is commensurate to high levels of teacher education, which requires teachers with high levels of teaching prowess to design and deliver teacher education. Add to the complexity of over-busy and frazzled teachers and teacher educators focused on reward systems contrary to what is required, and it becomes, so it seems, an intractable problem to address. The task becomes doable, starting with a redefined and focused school curriculum, committed top-level leadership, and a preparation regime commensurate to the tasks ahead.

Teaching transformation agenda #7: Increasing research into education, teaching and teacher education and packaging it for teacher consumption

At the heart of such calls for change in schooling, teaching, and teacher education is a deficient body of research evidence to inform and guide the preparation and practice of teachers. This problem is compounded by educational research not being packaged nor organised to be instructive to the work of teachers. The available research is often small-scale, incomplete, narrowly focused, and published behind paywalls in formats that inform other researchers but are not instructive for teachers, their work, and their professional growth and development. This means governments must match their numerous reviews with strategically funded research agendas that focus on answering questions that matter for the curriculum agendas they confirm, ultimately preparing and positioning the teaching profession for required work. As we outlined early in this book, people who work in “education” know that there are many moving parts to contend with when changes are mooted in the constructs of schooling, teaching and teacher education. These three constructs, individually and especially when considered together, form a complex system with many knock-on effects when an element in the prevailing system of things is altered. These effects are often unanticipated and surprising and may cause problems elsewhere in the system. For individual actors in this system, enacting change can end careers when plans contradict dominant cultural norms and positions. This should not be a disincentive to trying. What is needed is a logical, defensible and engaging “why” to position - the reason for this book - increased levels of psychological safety within schools and systems to enable courageous actors to move to change and the security of research evidence as paving the way and mitigating catastrophic failure.

In concluding this book, we acknowledge again that schooling as we know it in Western countries is steeped in tradition, with long-standing practices and norms valued because they have been in place for decades or even centuries. These are the sacred cows that may need to be sacrificed. Schools are very busy workplaces, and the constant seems to be change, role creep and an increasingly crowded curriculum. While teachers are over-busy, teacher educators' reward system focuses on publishing in their chosen fields rather than effecting change. This lack of alignment further complicates and dilutes any willingness to do more than publish about change and certainly not to guide reform. In crafting our seven agenda items, we have attempted to focus on what we think represents a set of potent levers for change. While the levers themselves are potent, they still need brave people to pull them.

As the previous chapters have shown, we recognise the difficulties of generating and sustaining change in the education field. Moreover, as former classroom schoolteachers, we recognise that frontline teachers prioritise the interests of children and are interested in anything that can assist them in their complex everyday work. Our experience since the 1960s reinforces the position that blockages to change, reform, and transformation in education can arise beyond the classroom in the ideological fields of what Australian First Nations leader Noel Pearson refers to as the “ideology-producers” in universities and bureaucracies. If teachers resist change, it is primarily because of the ideology reproduction in schools of education and halls of power and regulation – the power of the status quo. The material interests, personal investments, and status in these areas have greater priority than what works well for children’s learning of curriculum knowledge in schools. They oppose whatever does not fit their ideological slogans or interests, irrespective of what credible research findings might suggest and their lack of data. The trigger for enabling the kinds of transformations we suggest in this book then lies with the political class: their lesson is that progressive thinking around teacher preparation and teaching practice, rather than being a democratising influence, leads to the visionary outcomes of so much education policy, is the bastion that prevents it.

The Seven Teaching Transformation Agendas

- Governments must show leadership in defining the society they want to engineer.
- New success criteria.
- A new grammar of schooling is required.
- Teacher preparation attuned to a specialist body of education knowledge and teaching skills, honed in and for real-work contexts.
- Introducing the “Consultant” role as a catalyst for change.
- A stratified set of teaching roles.
- Increasing research into education, teaching and teacher education and packaging it for teacher consumption.