GLOBAL EDUCATION REFORM MOVEMENT
How to kill the virus before it’s too late?

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ABOUT THIS SESSION

Purpose of this session is to provide you with a big picture of current trends in education and encourage you and your communities to have deeper conversation about the kinds of changes we need in our schools and education systems.
Part 1: Don’t let a good crisis go to waste

Part 2: Return of GERM and its new variants

Part 3: Finnish Lessons 3.0
Part 1: Don’t let a good crisis go to waste
Pre-pandemic education

There is a global learning crisis that amplifies educational inequalities that severely hobbles the disadvantaged youth who most need the boost that a good education can offer. – World Bank Human Development Report 2018

The performance differences across the OECD countries between the most socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students is equivalent to over 3 years of schooling. – PISA 2018

260 million children, adolescents and youth are not at school and only three quarters of 15-year-olds in middle income countries attend school, and just half of them achieve the basic level of proficiency required. – Global Education Monitoring Report 2020
Challenge 1: Student learning

Average PISA performance in OECD countries

Source: OECD database (2020)
Challenge 1: Student learning vs. education spending and published research

Source: OECD database (2020)
Challenge 2: Student wellbeing vs. sedentary time

Growing Up Digital Australia
https://www.gie.unsw.edu.au/GUDAustralia
Challenge 3: Growing inequalities

Average reading literacy PISA scores in Australia by SES quartile

Source: OECD, 2019
Proportions of low and high performers in Australia on the reading literacy proficiency scale from PISA 2000 to 2018, by Indigenous background

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Indigenous Low-performers</th>
<th>Indigenous High-performers</th>
<th>Non-indigenous Low-performers</th>
<th>Non-indigenous High-performers</th>
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Source: ACER, 2020
ACTIVITY 1:
How to fix the inequities in Australian education?

In international comparisons Australian education is often labelled as unequal and unfair to many children and their families. Learning gaps between more affluent children and those living in disadvantaged homes and communities remain large. Discuss with colleagues how educational equity could be strengthened, including something that your school could do.

Further reading: Achieving a bright future for all young Australians
Achieving a bright future for all young Australians (2020)

Mission Possible: Fix Inequalities

Mission for policymakers
Make a priority in education policy
Equity doesn’t happen by chance. Effective and targeted policies can drive better practices. Policies should ensure that all schools have sufficient resources and enough trained personnel to make teaching and learning happen. Policies can also make clear what more equitable education would require schools to do. We know that quality education is easier to have with stronger equity. Consider these

Mission for schools
Make wellbeing a cornerstone of a great school
Children learn better when they are healthy and happy. In recent times the wellbeing of young Australians has been a focus. As a result, school and social well-being is a particular concern among unprivileged children. Therefore, care for children’s health and mental wellbeing should be part of the work of every school.

Mission for parents and caregivers
Host a school improvement BBQ
All parents and caregivers want to send their child to the best school. In Australia, unlike many other countries, much time and effort is spent ensuring these best schools. What is best for one child may not be for others. Parents and caregivers play an essential role in supporting the school and can make significant contributions to the school community. Supporting your child’s school is as easy as organizing a fun gathering with friends to talk about how ways of improving the school to better serve different children, not just your own children.

Mission for businesses
Ask for excellence and equity
Employers know well educated employees are the heart of successful business. This trend can be the expectation for schools to raise levels of excellence at any cost. But inequity can be very expensive for companies and taxpayers. Advocate for high quality education in your local community. Don’t stop there, ensure that education system must deliver these high value equitable results.

Mission for teacher educators
Mission for children
Give all new teachers a course: “Equity in Education 101”
Teachers play a key role in schools to make all students learn beyond expectations. Initial teacher education can provide new teachers with a broader mindset and approach to student learning. Design a course for all students in initial teacher education that provides new teachers with the basic knowledge, values and skills work in a school and education system that promotes greater equity.

Mission for journalists
Look after one another
Because we are all different, so are the children in our schools. Some students find school a comfortable place to be and learn, others don’t. We can do much better in every school to help each and everyone to think that school is their favourite place. Find someone who looks lonely and doesn’t have many friends in school. Go and talk to a fellow student you don’t yet know. Create a culture in your school that ensures helping everyone to succeed is the norm.

Mission for artists
Tell the success stories
Media plays an important role in improving education systems. Too often, however, bad news stories are reported because the content seems to garner more attention. Australian world-class education educators who not just report the news of others but often investigate their own information for their stories. Write a story about a school or a community that has done extraordinary things in helping all children succeed in school. Collect real stories from children and parents and encourage inspiring school leaders and teachers to communicate what is possible in our schools.

Mission for politicians
Help every school to become an art school
Australian schools have a long tradition of teaching children about the rich culture of arts, music and drama. Still, success in school is determined by grades or test scores in a select few academic subjects. Arts subjects offer many children opportunities to actively engage in learning in school and that is a condition for greater equity in education. Create a project with a school to use traditional storytelling and music that includes all children. Make every school in your community an art school.

Mission for educators
Listen to the experts
When the going gets tough, we often turn to expert advice. When politicians in Australia were coping with the global health pandemic COVID-19, they systematically relied on the experience of health specialists and the top national and international scientists. Now, when you continue to develop Australian education systems to provide world-class teaching and learning for all our children, make your decisions after listening to the advice of your top experts and practitioners. Communicate to schools and school leaders on overall direction and trust them to lead the way. Equitable education can’t be created by force.

Achieving a bright future for all young Australians (2020)
Part 2: Return of GERM and its new variants
Origins of the GERM

1. Competition and choice
   “Trying to create more competition among schools, as many school systems are doing, will not lift student performance.” – Grattan Institute, 2013

2. Standardisation
   “There is very little evidence to prove that establishing national academic standards for K-12 schools will improve the quality of American public education.” – The Education and Public Interest Center, 2020

3. Test-based accountability
   “Across most OECD countries test-based accountability does not relate to academic achievement.” – OECD, 2021

4. De-professionalisation
   “High performing systems invest in a profession of teaching. Where systems invest in teacher’s knowledge and skill, teachers are acknowledged as expert educators who are trusted to make judgments about practice and how to improve it.” – Empowered Educators, 2017
Antidotes to GERM

1. Competition and choice → Collaboration
2. Standardisation → Flexibility
3. Test-based accountability → Trust-based responsibility
4. De-professionalisation → Professionalism
Antidotes to GERM

The highest performing education systems are those that combine equity with quality. – OECD 2012

New GERM variants

1. The myth of learning loss

Learning loss is the assumed slipping test scores and the ability to project that data into the future. Test scores do not predict the future of an individual’s success very well, and non-cognitive skills may play a bigger role than cognitive skills for future life.

Much more serious losses include kids’ social-emotional well-being, attitudes toward learning, social relationships, and physical and mental development that can have long-lasting affect in life and are difficult to measure.
New GERM variants

2. Bad side effects of education reforms

In the world of epidemics the basic principle is to rely on best available science and expert knowledge to maximise the effectiveness of treatments while minimising their harmful side effects.

Evidence-based education policies and practices use research to link selected treatments and expected outcomes. But they almost always fail to identify side effects to schools, teachers or children.

Test-based accountability ➔ teaching to the test & rote learning
School competition ➔ growing inequity
NAPLAN ➔ narrowing curriculum
New GERM variants

3. Play deprivation

In NSW, a quarter of school children attend private tutoring or after-school academic coaching classes. Homework and growing parental expectations have made many children think they are too busy to play.

In Australia, 80% of parents believe that children are under pressure to grow up too quickly, and 85% think their kids today spend less time playing than they did when they were their kids’ age.

And yet, more than half of parents reject the idea of children having more unstructured time during their school days for free play.
ACTIVITY 2: Can we stop the GERM?

Global education reform movement (GERM) manifests itself in multiple ways in practice that have an impact in teaching and learning in schools. Many of the symptoms (e.g., narrow focus on learning, declining student engagement, loss of creativity, play deprivation) of GERM are due to system level policies and directives, not what schools have decided to do. You are not probably able to change those policies alone anytime soon. But there might be something that can be done in schools and communities. Discuss with colleagues how some of the negative consequences of GERM-type policies can be addressed and mitigated at school level.

Further reading: Putting Students First: Moving on from NAPLAN to a new educational assessment system.
How to stop the GERM?

1. Be aware harmful side effects
   We should stop claiming that there is an extensive evidence base behind suggested educational reforms (treatments) if we don’t understand what their unintended consequences to teaching and learning might be.

2. Demand evidence-informed policies and reforms
   It is unfair to expect schools to base their pedagogical decisions on solid evidence unless the policies and reforms behind these expectations are based on best available science and professional practice.

3. Improve education as we have done with public health
   Protect schools from being infected by GERM. Make education policies to enhance public good. Implement policies using expert advise.
Part 3: Finnish Lessons 3.0
Average National PISA Score in reading, mathematics and science vis-a-vis Levels of Parental Education in Finland in 2009 and 2018

Levels of parental education converted into years of schooling

Source: Finnish Lessons 3.0 (2021)
Early lessons from the disruption

TRUST

FLEXIBILITY

CREATIVITY
We are here
THANK YOU!

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