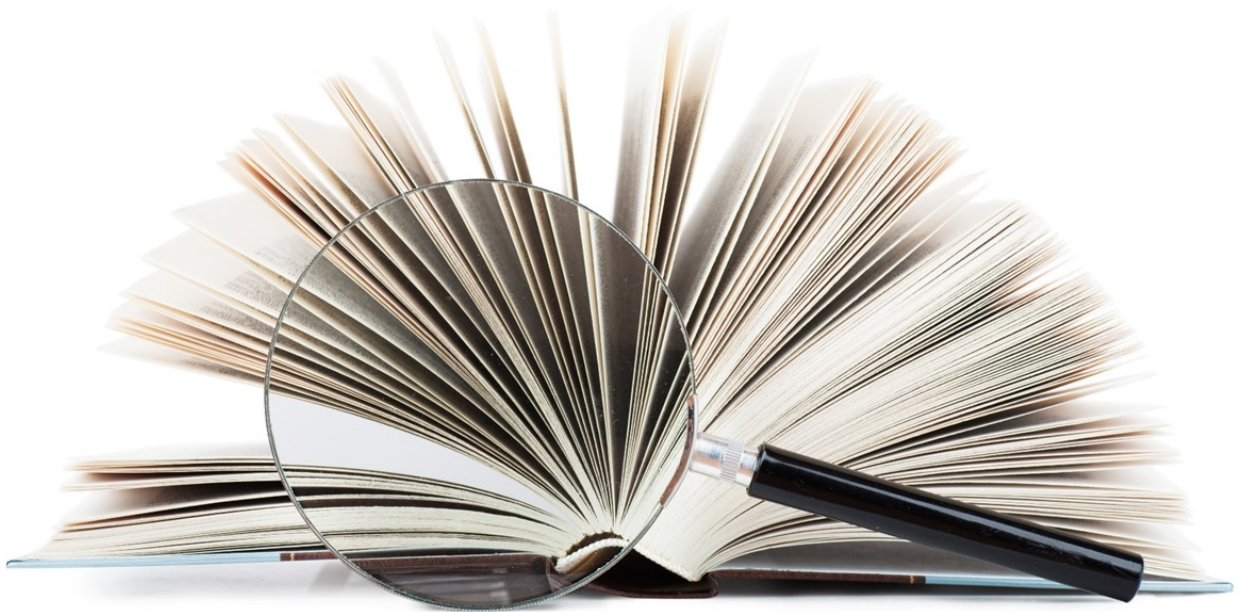# LEADING QUEENSLAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS INTO THE FUTURE:

## Unleashing the Learner Potential to Enhance the Social, Economic, and Educational Benefits

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Dr Cheryl Bauman
Associate Professor Joan Conway
Professor Dorothy Andrews

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past few decades, leadership within Queensland primary schools has experienced major shifts in relation to the influence of academic, social, and economic decisions. The pandemic that began in 2020 collided with the world's social, economic, political, health care, and schooling systems resulting in the on-going composition of new norms and new narratives. Australia may be one of the current leaders internationally of the health pandemic recovery. However, according to Sahlberg (2021), Australia has an education epidemic that it is not progressing effectively. Two decades ago, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) considered Australia as one of the leading education nations in the world. However, there is claim that this is no longer true (OECD, 2020a; Sahlberg, 2021).

High-stakes accountability has altered what leaders need to *know* and *how* they spend their time. Currently, a world-wide race sets up countries, regions, and school systems against one another. This competition has been designed by a minority of world-wide testing programs. The popular media outlets respond to the results by declaring the winners and losers. Fear of failure and of falling behind haunts policy makers and currently helps to shape the priorities in relation to education in Australia and as well as around the globe. More than ever, the acknowledgement by educational community leaders has reflected the urgent need for change so that schools are able to face the on-going complexities as well as opportunities in the 21st century (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020).

This literature review examines the past, present, and future school systems in Queensland, Australia and explores how a new narrative is required to support Queensland primary schools to run the race in the right direction. Dr David Turner (2021) advocates for Queensland primary school leadership to envision and engage with a new schooling story. Thus, the priority granted to *quality* primary education as a key instrument of formal learning is postulated on the belief that an emphasis on education early on in an individual's life lays the foundation for a child's initiation into the social and economic world. Quality primary education has a far-more-reaching impact than that of just "academic schooling", as it influences the transformation of Australian societies' economic and social systems effecting its modernisation process.

In this literature review, two main questions are asked. First, in what ways does primary schooling impact the economic and social performance of a community/nation? Second, what is the contribution of school leadership to the achievement of quality primary school student outcomes, academic and social? The review was shaped by Queensland's primary schooling's contribution to the social and economic performance of the Australian nation through the collation of evidence from national and international literature. The outcomes define aspects of Queensland primary school leadership that will better account for *quality* schooling outcomes necessary for the 21st century to inform policy formulation, advocacy, professional learning activities, and essential leadership capabilities.

## FINDINGS

An analysis from the literature review implies that to effectively lead Queensland primary schools into the future, it is imperative that a new narrative is implemented (Turner, 2021). A summary of key findings from the literature review is outlined:

- ❖ Acknowledge the pivotal role of education in Australia's social and economic development –
  - o Focus on the role of educational quality
  - o Provide equitable educational opportunities for all students
  - o Understand the far-reaching implications of primary education

- ❖ Value and invest in teaching as a profession in Queensland –
  - o Strengthen the engagement and voice of the teaching profession
  - o Enable time for teacher collaboration and professional learning
  - o Invest in development of whole school-wide approaches
  - o Fund technology for all primary students toward enabling opportunities in the global economy
- ❖ View the primary student as a whole person –
  - o Involve students as partners enabling voice in planning
  - o Engage students in the learning process with meaningful opportunities
  - o Ensure inclusive education for all
- ❖ Address current and emerging inequalities in education –
  - o Develop comprehensive educational policy reform
  - o Build and maintain positive community-wide relationships as partners
  - O Implement new school structures, such as community schools and resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As was discovered from the analysis and synthesis of the literature review, primary school leaders in Queensland, Australia need to responsibly commit to playing a pivotal role in relation to a changing world, so that they enable the unleashing of the learning potential in themselves, their staff, and students to improve the *quality* of schools (Conway & Andrews, 2016). The literature review explored research that supported the recommendation of twelve (12) leadership capabilities essential for the 21st century leaders as they courageously write a new narrative for Queensland primary schools, to effect a stronger Australian nation in the present and the future. It was established that courageous (Robinson, 2020) successful school leaders, who are open to a shift of mind – a new mindset (Dweck, 2006) – inevitably motivate themselves and others to collective actions (Conway, 2008; Conway & Andrews, 2016) and embrace the following 12 Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities (see Figure 3.1):

Figure 3.1

- - Visionary
- - Relational Collaborator
- - Cultural Capacity Builder
- - Creative Innovator
- - Competent Carer
- - Adapter
- - Agile Creator
- - Emotionally Intelligent Influencer
- - Entrepreneur
- - Equitable and Inclusive Attender
- - Advocate
- - Life-long Learner



Twelve School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities

## CONCLUSION

The literature review of *Leading Queensland Primary Schools into the Future: Unleashing the Learner Potential to Enhance the Social, Economic, and Educational Benefits* formed the basis for an establishment of key issues related to successfully leading Queensland primary schools. The concept of leading primary schools into the future has been developed throughout this literature review by utilising historical and current knowledge on this topic to ensure that the next phase of this research project does not just repeat what others have already done. This investigative review of national and international literature has identified gaps in knowledge and unresolved problems that still require reconciliation.

These findings from the literature review must be further corroborated. It is intended that development of a survey from the themes identified in this literature review, and dissemination of the survey administered to Queensland Primary School Principals (Government, Catholic, and Independent) will assist in the identification of perceptions of primary school leaders. These might then form the basis of interviews to gather contextual examples promoting the work of primary school leaders in constructive and positive ways.

*Everything we do during and after this crisis [COVID-19] must be with a strong focus on building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change, and the many other global challenges we face.* — António GUTERRES, Secretary-General of the United Nations (United Nations, 2020, p. 66)

The aim of this literature review, *Leading Queensland Primary Schools Into The Future: Unleashing The Learner Potential to Enhance the Social, Economic, and Educational Benefits*, is to capture current evidence, and identify existing gaps in an emerging new narrative in Queensland primary schools. This literature review connects past, present, and future focuses on improving primary school results – academically, socially, emotionally, and equitably. As supported by the literature, a definite shift needs to occur from an industrial age model of schooling to then support the identification of a future paradigm that celebrates in the joy of learning and unleashing each individual student's potential (Conway & Andrews, 2016). As Dr David Turner (2021) suggests, a new story of primary schooling is needed in Queensland, one in which the school leader collectively envisions and engages. The literature review provides a detailed search into this new and necessary emerging narrative. Stories are powerful, as they create meaning and connections for people. They help to decipher and solve the complexities of this world. Humans are hardwired for narratives and are shaped by the stories that provide the underpinnings necessary for change processes to occur. Stories can alter attitudes – such as views on relationships; political ideologies; social and economic inequities; and contextual and environmental concerns (Simons & Green, 2018).

Exploring this unfolding story is the view that primary education is both socially and economically advantageous to a person's life-long existence, as well as to the continued growth and prosperity of all nations throughout the world, inclusive of Australia. Primary school education today is focused on establishing the fundamental literacy and numeracy skills of children, as well as developing their social awareness and understanding of the world (UNESCO, 2020). These skills are increasingly necessary for life in the modern world and are essential to the functioning of developed economies (United Nations, 2015). For this reason, primary education is compulsory and provided by the state of Queensland in Australia, as well as in many countries around the world (see Figure 1.1). The importance of primary education on a global scale was paramount to the second United Nations (2015) Millennium Development Goal to "ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling" (p. 24). This goal was missed, but significant progress has been made.

As depicted in Figure 1.1, in 2015, Australia's net enrollment rate for students at primary school age was 100% (The World Bank, 2015). This is a significant statistic, and very promising, given the many rural and remote areas within Australia and more specifically in the state of Queensland. However, 100% enrollment in and of itself does not ensure a "quality" education, one in which primary students begin acquiring the cognitive, social-emotional skills necessary to build an economy that has the capabilities to compete on the world stage (Hanushek, 2020; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020). Educational "quality" improves cognitive, social-emotional skills, not so when measured by the "quantity" of students in attendance at school and/or the length of time in attendance. The "quantity" of educated students does matter to society and to the economy, but less so than the "quality" of education itself. Length of time in school has more of a significant impact on the economy and social-emotional needs of individuals when students receive a "quality" education (Grant, 2017; Hanushek et al., 2008; OECD, 2020d).

**Figure 1.1**

*Total Net World Enrollment Rate in Primary Education, 2015*

## Total net enrollment rate in primary education, 2015

This is the ratio of the total number of students (of both sexes) of the official age group for primary education who are enrolled in any level of education and the total population of the same age group.

Our World in Data



| <40% | | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |

No data
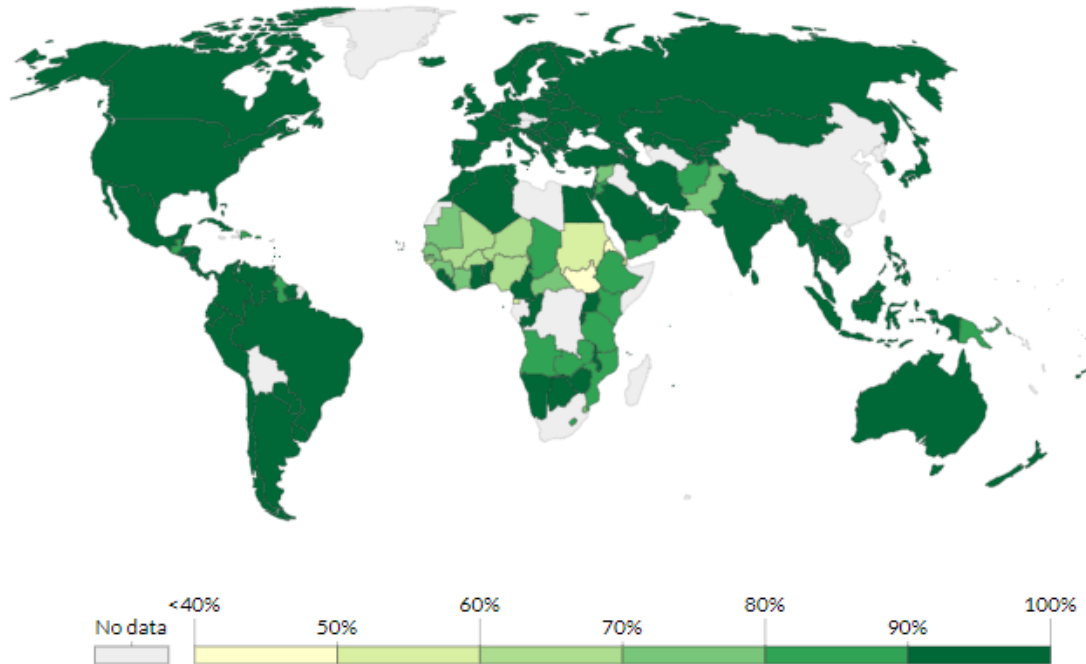
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics          OurWorldInData.org/primary-and-secondary-education • CC BY

https://ourworldindata.org/primary-and-secondary-education

As seen in Figure 1.1, Australia has the "quantity" of students in attendance, yet according to a United Nations report (UNICEF, 2017), the "quality" of education is not presenting itself. Australia disappointingly ranked 39 out of 41 in high-and-middle-income countries in relation to achieving "quality" education. From this report, it is evident that the country is falling behind in basic measures of teaching and learning, and that this literature review, focusing on a new narrative, is imperative.

The question then begs an answer as to what can be done to help stop this steady decline in the schooling system within Australia and more readily, the primary schooling system in Queensland, Australia. Of the eight goals from the United Nations (2015) Millennium Development Goals, goal two, educating children with a primary education, was proven to have the greatest impact on the economies of the world, eliminating poverty and providing equality for all. Education is a powerful driver of development and one of the strongest instruments for improving health, equality, peace, and stability. The World Bank has placed primary education at the forefront and is one of the biggest financial contributors to furthering global attendance of children at primary schools, particularly in developing countries (The World Bank, 2015). Primary schooling is where the focus needs to be placed, as the data from the testing results used in the United Nations report (UNESCO, 2017) are from 15-year-old Australian students. However, by the time a student reaches the age of 15, if the foundational learning has not

occurred, it is very difficult to "make up for lost time". Primary school is the initial introduction to learning. If primary education was non-existent, there would be no such thing as successful promotion to high school, tertiary education, and/or the workforce (Chiatovich & Stipek, 2016).

It is essential to determine what needs to transpire in Queensland primary schools to improve the quality of education, and the social-emotional well-being of students. This review explores what is currently happening in primary schools, and what needs to yet be accomplished in the future if Australia is to improve its schooling system so that its learners are ready to compete in the job market on a national, as well as global scale. This literature review presents the importance of a quality education in Queensland's primary schools, as it sets goals to increase the economic growth of a nation, as well as bolster the social and emotional well-being of everyone. The review demonstrates the multiple factors that must be in place for students to receive a quality primary education, that is, effective school leadership, knowledgeable and engaged teachers, and motivated students (Fullan, 2021; Gurr, 2015; Hanushek, 2020; Hanushek et al., 2008; Harris, 2008).

To further enhance support and understanding as to the critical need for a solid-foundational primary education both within Australia and around the world, this literature review relies upon several key definitions of "primary education" and "education". First, Grant (2017) defines primary education as being typically the first stage of compulsory education, coming between early childhood education and secondary education. In Queensland, primary education spans from Prep to Year 6, which is from the age of 5 years to 11 years (www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/find/enrolment/age). The Cambridge Dictionary's definition for primary school is, "a school that provides the first part of a child's education" (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/elementary-school).

Second, the definition of education from an economic perspective derives from the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2016), "as the stock of skills, competencies, and other productivity-enhancing characteristics" (para. 1). In general, from an economic point of view, education is a "critical component of a country's human capital" (para. 1), that is, a population's education and health status. It:

> . . . increases the efficiency of each individual worker and helps economies to move up the value chain beyond manual tasks or simple production processes . . . human capital has [long] been considered the "most distinctive feature of a nation's economic system" and further work has proven the impact of education on productivity growth. (para. 1)

Third, this literature review explores education from three sociological perspectives which are categorised into the: 1) functions of education; 2) symbolic interaction/social-emotional approaches to education; and 3) equality of education (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012). Table 1.1 summarises the major assumptions underpinning each of these categories and provides a glimpse into how they are integrated in the literature throughout this review.

**Table 1.1**

*Theoretical Snapshot of Education*

| Theoretical Perspective | Major Assumptions |
|---|---|
| **Functions of Education** | Education serves several functions for society. These include: (a) **socialisation:** If children are to learn the norms, values, and skills they need to function in society, then education is a primary vehicle for such learning; (b) **social integration:** For a society to work, its people must subscribe to a common set of beliefs and values. The development of such common views is a goal of the system of compulsory primary education that developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Australia. Thousands of children in Queensland, Australia are learning English, Mathematics, Science, and other subjects that help prepare them for the workforce and integrate them into Australian life; (c) **social placement:** Beginning in primary school, students are identified by teachers and other school community personnel either as bright and motivated or educationally challenged. Depending on how they are identified, children are taught at the level that is thought to suit them best. In this way, they are presumably prepared for later in life. Whether this process works as well as it should is an important issue, one that will be explored further throughout this literature review; and (d) **social and cultural innovation:** Scientists cannot make important scientific discoveries and artists and thinkers cannot come up with great works of art, poetry, and prose unless they have first been educated in the many subjects they need to know, and this all begins in primary school. |
| **Symbolic Interaction/Social-Emotional Approaches to Education** | This perspective focuses on social interaction in the classroom, on the playground, and in other school venues. Specific research finds that social interaction in schools affects the development of gender roles and that teachers' expectations of students' intellectual abilities affect how much students learn. Symbolic interactionist studies help educators and educational leaders understand what happens in the schools themselves, but they also help all understand how what occurs in school is relevant for the larger society. Some studies, for example, show how children's playground activities reinforce gender-role socialisation. Girls tend to play more cooperative games, while boys play more competitive sports. This perspective will be integrated throughout the literature search in thoughtful ways as to how teachers and school leaders can better support all students with social-emotional learning. |
| **Equality of Education** | The critical theorists do not dispute the functions of education as described above. However, critical theory offers the above functions of education a different lens through which to look by emphasising how education also perpetuates social inequality. Education promotes social inequality through the use of tracking and standardised testing and the impact of its "hidden curriculum". Primary schools in Queensland, Australia differ widely in their funding and learning conditions, and this type of inequality leads to learning disparities that reinforce social inequality. These topics of inequalities and what can be done about them will be probed in this review. |

*Note.* This Table is an excerpt and was adapted from: University of Minnesota. (2021). Social problems: Continuity and change. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing (on-line book - https://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/chapter/11-2-sociological-perspectives-on-education/).

Practically providing education for thousands of students in Queensland's primary schools is where the fundamental importance rests. Education has played a central role in the social and economic life and well-being of Queensland's society (Ballantine & Hammock, 2012). A nation's progress is intricately linked to the vitality and impact of its education system, from the pre-school to the post-doctoral levels. Today, more than ever, investment in education produces economic and social rewards for individuals and nations such as Australia, supporting its connections to the greater global economy. Education remains one of the key methods to achieve fuller human development which then translates to a reduction in poverty and exclusion (The World Bank, 2015; United Nations, 2015).

The promotion of universal primary education has long had as its goals in nation-building and national integration, the fostering of shared values, the socialisation of children, and the channelling of young people into productive roles as adults. In addition, education has increasingly become an economic imperative (Grant, 2017; Hanushek, 2020). In today's world where information abounds, the development of opportunities that link to knowledge and skills needs to ensure that education increases in its importance of Australia's international competitiveness in the global economy. The economic imperative provides for greater adaptability to the fast-paced changes in the organisation of life and business dealings. In this new world where knowledge-based societies are paramount, primary education has become critically important as an economic force. This in turn demands an emphasis on individual and organisational life-long learning (Hanushek, 2020; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020; The World Bank, 2015; United Nations, 2015).

The priority accorded to primary education as a key instrument of formal learning is premised on the belief that an emphasis on education early on in an individual's life, rather than at the secondary and tertiary levels, lays the foundation for a child's initiation into the social and economic world. Universal primary education is seen to have a far-reaching impact beyond "schooling" and will be pivotal in the transformation of Australian society's modernisation process. Furthermore, primary education is a prerequisite for higher levels of educational attainment. There is also much empirical evidence supporting the argument that primary education plays an important role in launching initial economic growth in countries (The World Bank, 2015; UNESCO, 2020; United Nations, 2000, 2015, 2020).

Thus, the next likely question to be asked is, what importance does primary education have in supporting the state of Queensland in relation to its well-being in terms of economic growth, human and social capital? Through the investigation of the following two research questions, this literature review is intent on unravelling a "new story" by discovering the essential foundational truths that currently exist and determine what is still missing:

- Research Question 1 – In what ways does primary schooling impact the economic and social performance of a community/nation?
- Research Question 2 – What is the contribution of school leadership to the achievement of quality primary school student outcomes, academic and social?

This literature review's narrative is premised on two intended outcomes:

- the promotion of Queensland's primary schooling's contribution to the economic performance of the Australian nation through the collation of evidence from national and international literature; and
- to define aspects of Queensland primary school leadership that will better account for the schooling outcomes necessary for the 21st century to inform policy formulation, advocacy, and professional learning activities, in relation to school leadership.

As depicted in Figure 1.2, a conceptual map was designed to support the necessary scaffolded framework required to undertake the aims and research questions upon which this literature review is founded.

**Figure 1.2**

*Conceptual Map for Leading Queensland's Primary Schools into the Future*
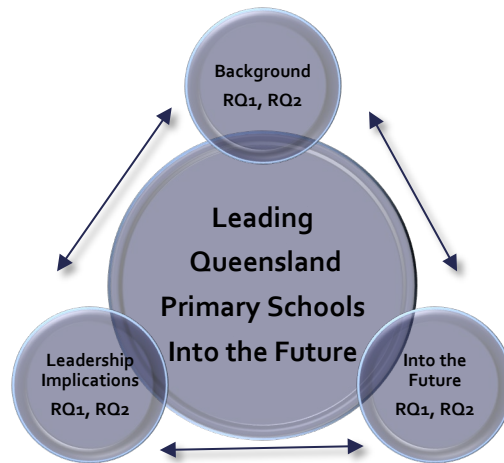


Figure 1.2 depicts three perspectives for leading Queensland primary schools into the future. First it emphasises that the literature review explores existing Background Knowledge and History to ensure that this examination is not just repeating what has been done in the past. This background search also determines what is currently happening in Queensland primary schools – politically, academically, socio-culturally, and economically – and in relation to national and international perspectives. This first section also begins by glancing into the future, by establishing leadership implications, and developing big picture speculations for primary schooling. Second, the literature review explores Into the Future by examining the research questions to determine in what ways primary schooling impacts the economic, political, socio-cultural, and academic performances of communities in Queensland as well as the nation of Australia. Comparisons have been drawn from international literature to equate economic impacts and the OECD's analysis of data, including class size, NAPLAN, and PISA results. The final portion of the literature review maps out Leadership Implications, considering school leadership literature from the world's high performing systems, and comparing the contribution of school leadership, nationally and internationally to the achievement of quality primary school student outcomes, academically, socially, and economically. Prior to unpacking the two research questions, a brief synopsis of historical and current research into Queensland primary schools is discussed.

# SECTION I: BACKGROUND

## 1.1 OVERVIEW OF SECTION I – FROM WHERE HAVE WE COME?

The research questions have been explored throughout this portion of the literature review in relation to the background of primary schooling in the literature and its connection to political, socio-cultural, economic, and leadership implications, as illustrated in the conceptual map (see Figure 1.2) and as listed:

- Research Question 1 – In what ways does primary schooling impact the economic and social performance of a community/nation?
- Research Question 2 – What is the contribution of school leadership to the achievement of quality primary school student outcomes, academic and social?

The new millennium arrived over two decades ago. Educators and political leaders are still struggling to make numerous changes in schools while attempting to work within an educational system that was never designed for today (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). The lack of progress in NAPLAN and PISA results causing concern on multiple levels is calling upon Australian schools to undergo major reforms (OECD, 2020a). Unfortunately, the current landscape is bleak in Australian schools because the reform changes that truly matter have been neglected for decades and instead they have continuously struggled within an educational system that has evolved organically (Sahlberg, 2021). In the span of over 20 years now, top-down policies in Australian schools declared that the responsibility for these issues is the problem for their schools, their school leaders, their teachers, and their students. It is unfortunate that some of the major problems rest with the policies focusing on school accountability frameworks, according to Sahlberg and Cobbold (2021). Thus, reforms have failed to gain any real momentum.

It is obvious in the 21st century that educational policy is easier to change than schools (Grissom et al., 2021; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Educational leaders attempt to respond to the public's pressure for accountability, for increased student achievement, however, conflicting demands have pulled their attention in too many competing directions. Research, both past and present, has established that in-school factors contributing to the best outcomes for student learners are first, capable classroom teachers, and second, high-quality school leadership (Grissom et al., 2021; Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Smith, 2021). High-quality individuals who want to become teachers and school administrators are dwindling in numbers (Fullan, 2021; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020).

The pandemic has caused the world to take a closer look at the current education systems and realised the exposure of fundamental flaws in the learning systems. As this literature review was being written, Australia was not as hard hit as the rest of the world, due to continually enforced strict health measures. However, the nation still needs to utilise the COVID-19 pandemic as a catalyst to step forward with a new narrative. According to Fullan (2021), the model for education currently in place is out of date. Correspondingly, a new and better education system would be one of the very few avenues required for surviving in the short run, albeit thriving in the future (Fullan, 2021; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020; Sahlberg, 2021). Thomas Kuhn (1962), in his 50-year-old book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, made the case that scientific models, or paradigms as he called them, sometimes run their course. He said that two conditions are necessary for change to happen: one is that the current system becomes "catastrophically ineffective", which this literature review is demonstrating in the Queensland primary schooling system; and the other requirement is the presence of an alternative paradigm to take its place – in effect, a new narrative in Queensland primary schools.

Delving into the historical lessons of primary schooling and the leadership of it are necessary, as much can be learned from a nation's past (Patton, 2015). Mistakes made in the yesteryear can be altered in the present, the passing along of informed wisdom, if navigated appropriately, can effectively direct the current and future stories (Fullan, 2018, 2021; Patton, 2015). The necessities of an historical overview provide for primary school leadership within Queensland more clarity and conciseness in relation to the economic, social-emotional, academic, and political decision-making of today and into the future. The past always influences what is currently happening and inspires the potential of what is yet to come (Patton, 2015; Schein & Schein, 2016).

### 1.1.1 HISTORY OF PRIMARY SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIA AND QUEENSLAND

Providing students for generations with the skills and abilities to produce economic, social, and political stability is the premise upon which this literature review is based. To dig deeper into this discussion, first and foremost, it is essential that a brief view into the history of Queensland primary schools be conducted to provide the necessary background knowledge that has formed the current educational system's historical roots. Patton (2015) was emphatic that the intellectual history of a topic must be explored, as it is only then that people will know and understand their intellectual traditions, and the impact that they have had on the issues of today. Thus, unfolding a brief investigation into the historical roots of Queensland primary schools' educational system will allow for further clarification as to present day traditions, artefacts, beliefs, values, and underlying assumptions of this vast educational system to be better understood (Schein & Schein, 2016).

As stated on the Queensland Government Education website (https://education.qld.gov.au/about-us/history/chronology-of-education-in-queensland, March 2022):

> Queensland's first school opened in 1826 with 16 pupils, the children of soldiers and convicts from the first settlement in Moreton Bay. It was not until 1860, however, that the first *Education Act* was proclaimed, and all primary education was placed under one general and comprehensive system controlled by the Board of General Education.

A brief history of Primary Education (https://education.qld.gov.au/about/history/Documents/primary-education.pdf) further states:

> . . . the State Education Act of 1875 was introduced. The Act provided several key initiatives in education:
>
> - Primary education for children aged from 6 to 12 was to be compulsory. (This provision was not fully implemented until 1900.)
> - Education was to be secular, i.e., under the control of the State. (In conformity with this policy, all assistance to non-vested schools was withdrawn in 1880. This provision occasioned considerable ill-feeling among Roman Catholics and some Anglicans.)
> - Primary education was to be free.
> - A Department of Public Instruction was established to administer the Act. (p. 3)

During the early 1900s, the external Scholarship examination was introduced to provide opportunity for secondary education. However, by the 1950s, after two major World Wars and the Great Depression, austerity measures were in place and education resources seriously hampered. Then followed the effects of the post-war baby boom which impacted classroom crowding and staff shortages which might be argued as ongoing to this day (https://education.qld.gov.au/about-us/history/). The Scholarship examination, viewed as the endpoint of primary education in Queensland until 1963 was for several previous decades viewed with some criticism from teachers feeling restricted by the content and methods of primary education as required by the examination. History

reveals that the use of standardised tests in measuring a mark of success has long held concerns in Queensland education.

History records (https://education.qld.gov.au/about-us/history/Documents/primary-education.pdf, p. 7) state that:

> The abolition of the Scholarship examination in 1963, and the passage of the State Education Act 1964 which replaced the 1875 Act and its amendments, marked the beginning of a new age in primary education. An extensive revision of the syllabuses was carried out, with new syllabuses introduced in [a range of subjects].

> These programs reflected the new spirit in primary education. They gave the teacher a statement of the general aims of education, a statement of subject aims, and a basic syllabus structure, but did not, as in the past, force schools into a uniform mould. Within the guidelines provided by the programs, teachers were permitted greater flexibility in planning learning experiences for their students.

Post 1973, Commonwealth funding was channeled into specific areas of State education with the intention of boosting equality of State educational opportunity for all. This then led to an increase in community interest in education and a resulting concern for accountability to the community where debates in an increasingly diverse modern society "prompted the appointment in 1978 of a Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate the education system" (p. 8). In 1989 a new Education Act was enacted and the Department of Education's first strategic plan was adopted. The last and current version of the Education Act in Queensland was in 2006, known as the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 – An Act about the education of children and the participation of young people in education and training, and for other purposes (Queensland Government, 2020b).

It is noted through this historical overview of the Queensland Primary Education System many issues that were historical problems continue to be reported as continuing challenges in the 21st century:

- Government control of funding
- Standardised testing
- Standardised curriculum content
- Equal access to education for all
- Inclusive education for all
- Class size
- Challenges associated with the education of marginalised groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Rural and remote access to education
- Educational access for all
- Primary education viewed as a community endeavour
- Accountability of school leadership to the internal and external school communities
- The effects of the economy on the education system, and vis versa (Fullan, 2021; Grissom et al., 2021; Sahlberg, 2021).

Curriculum development and content, teacher designation as a profession, primary school teacher and principal salaries, class size, compulsory education for a designated range of years in a child's life, regional/rural/remote, equity, inclusion and diversity, and the government funded multi-system schooling (State, Independent and Catholic), all have historical roots that cannot be dismissed (Fullan, 2021; Patton, 2015; Sahlberg, 2021), as all influence how the government currently makes decisions in these very significant and influential areas

of primary schooling in Queensland. This historical context has a current impact on the social-emotional well-being of students and the long-term economic impacts of primary schooling on students as well as on the nation of Australia. As Schein and Schein (2016) noted, it is very difficult to change a primary education organisational culture that has deep historical roots, when employees view the day-to-day decisions and interactions as, "this is the way things have always been done around here" (p. 27). Some of these present-day assumptions as to how the primary educational system should work have come to be taken for granted and fall into the realm of people's unconsciousness because they have historically learned and developed basic rules as to how to get along in different levels of situations. These assumptions and rules by which Queensland primary education systems are governed have derived from the micro- and macro-culture of the evolved history of Australian society (Schein & Schein, 2016).

The influence of history cannot be dismissed, and forgotten, as it impacts what is currently happening in primary schooling. Comparing what is existing to the pre-existing history of Queensland primary schools is imperative, as well as necessary for today's primary educational leaders so that they can practise balanced discernment in their decision-making; it is all inter-connected within a system invariably linking past with present (Patton, 2015).

## 1.1.2 STRUCTURE OF THE QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

It is vital to provide a brief overview of the structure of the Queensland school system, prior to advancing how to change the old narrative into the new. Evidence from history must be accounted for if a cultural change is to be understood, adequately planned for, thought through, and successfully integrated (Schein & Schein, 2016). These assumptions and rules from which the education system derives its structure are historical in nature. Queensland's primary education system has developed micro- and macro-systems as structures and ways for people within the system to interact by networking and forming micro-systems as ways of engaging with one another (Senge, 1990). The repeated success in implementing certain ways of doing things is known as "underlying cultural assumptions". The repeated success may be faulty, or it may be effective, but either way, these underlying cultural assumptions become engrained within organisations as the way to operate and function (Schein, 2010; Schein & Schein, 2016). Schein and Schein (2016) argued that underlying cultural assumptions are the most difficult part of a culture to change, as they are rooted and grounded in the organisation's history. It is difficult to undo the past, for many complex reasons that will be discussed throughout this literature review. However, some parts of an organisation's structure are working well, and do not need to be changed. The educational leaders of Queensland's primary schooling system need to be able to discern what needs to be changed, and what should remain status quo (Fullan, 2021; Schein & Schein, 2016).

Australia's schooling system has a unique historical structure in three publicly funded educational sectors: the State sector (refers to the public education system in Australia); the Independent sector (private schools); and the Catholic sector. With this structure, traditional "systemness" poses challenges (Fullan, 2021), yet it is expected that all three sectors uphold the "general capabilities" of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, n.d.a). Further, the Government of Queensland proclaims that with an education system encompassing three publicly funded sectors, parents have the choice to enrol their child in a Queensland State school, an Independent school or a Catholic school (Queensland Government, 2016). Yet, public debate reigns as to the equity of this choice (Boyle & Anderson, 2020) in the Australian national educational system and its State Education jurisdictions.

***School Enrolment in Queensland***

Schooling in Queensland starts with a preparatory or Prep Year followed by 12 years of primary and secondary school: "a child is considered to be of compulsory school age from 6 years and 6 months until they turn

16, or they complete Year 10 (whichever comes first)" (www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/find/enrolment/age). In general, children of the Prep year are supported to develop the skills and knowledge to better prepare them for school, and children of Primary years develop skills and knowledge relevant to their present and future needs and gain a greater understanding of other cultures and technology.

### 1.1.3   HISTORY OF INEQUALITY AND TESTING IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

As noted in the previous section, Queensland schools have a formal structure and designated compulsory ages as to who must be registered and in attendance at school (www.qld.gov.au/ education/schools/find/ enrolment/age). However, making school compulsory alone may not eliminate the inequalities that are found within Queensland schooling experiences. Existing and historical inequalities in education have been the focus of many systems and governments, including Queensland's education system, resulting in the provision of funds in the form of allocations for additional resources and opportunities. Despite the setting of goals to improve equality in education through considerable expenditure directed at improving equity for all, this literature review highlights that, over the past 40 years the goal of greater equity continues to be a concern for Queensland's primary education system. Various studies conducted across the Australian education systems (Fullan, 2021; Sahlberg, 2021; Sandel, 2020) have revealed limited to no discernable impact on equality of educational initiatives for all. Sandel claimed that various solutions have proved to be no more than band aids and ineffective throughout the systems, resulting in an "admissions obsession" based on a merit system of elitism.

Two decades ago, the world-wide landscape of education was significantly different from what it is today. At the time, international student achievement tests existed, however, there was not an accepted index to measure educational performance of global education systems. In fact, quality of educational systems was substantially determined by student enrolment and graduation statistics. A country's educational attainment levels were also often determined by the reputation they had in other areas such as Higher Education, research, or technology. During this time-period, the international educational superpowers included the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, among others. The countries that now dominate the international educational frontier, such as East Asian nations and cities, Norway, and Finland, did not receive much global attention at the time (Fullan, 2021).

In the year 2000, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) began its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The PISA test measured reading, mathematics, and scientific literacy of 15-year-olds in 28 OECD member countries and four non-member countries. The PISA test, which is administered every three years in Australia (and a host of other countries), is a sample-based standardised test that allows different countries to compare themselves to one another. Since its introduction, 70 countries (or economies) have participated in the PISA test. Thus, PISA launched the origin of the global testing culture (Smith, 2016). The impact of PISA and other international student assessments on national education policies is well documented (Breakspear, 2014; Meyer & Benavot, 2013). The global testing culture has shaped educational policies, perceptions, and practice, with many an impact that were in all likelihood unintended consequences of national and international student assessments (Smith, 2016).

Since 2008, Australia has had a national program called NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) with annual tests at Years 3, 5, 7, and 9. For the past dozen years, schools overall in the Australian schooling system have shown little or no improvement (OECD, 2021a; UNESCO, 2021b). The Australian Government, in 2019, funded researchers to conduct a review of the education system and to make suggestions as to how the system could be improved.  The recommendations from this review resulted in the researchers recommending an addition of science literacy to the NAPLAN annual tests, and that all three NAPLAN tests – Literacy, Numeracy and Science – be conducted in Years 3, 5, 7, and 10 (McGaw et al., 2020). The researchers were

unable to provide a viable alternative, as they, as well as others, remain with a preoccupation on academic (NAPLAN) test scores. Fullan (2021) firmly believes that this "testing culture" narrows the curriculum and does not address the motivation of students or teachers. The current educational cultures have enabled an increase in "academic obsession". As noted by Fullan (2021), this obsession with testing has widened the equity gap, and has not improved academic standards.

Research continues to state that testing is not an instrument for improvement when it is combined with high-stakes accountability, and being "judged" is not a motivator for students to do better on these tests. As well, when students do not so well, there are no solutions provided as to how to improve (Fullan, 2021). From an American perspective, Jal Mehta (2015) drew the conclusion that "standards and accountability are a weak technology to produce the outcomes policymakers seek. Improving teaching and learning requires the development of skill and expertise; simply increasing expectations [even when accompanied by evidence] does little to bring about results" (para. 13). Some educational districts have tried to combine testing with strategies that address teacher skill and expertise necessary to improve the testing results. However, Fullan (2021) believes that standardised tests that become ends in themselves – will always dominate. This is because it takes courage on the part of the educational leaders to advocate for halting an over-reliance on data from standardised tests to measure the global educational systems. Educational leaders must also understand how and why to go about the undoing of historical cultural ways that are so embedded in the education systems of today (Patton, 2015; Schein & Schein, 2016). Sahlberg (2021) advocates for a collaborative effort on behalf of policy makers and educational leaders to transform the existing primary education system, as historically it is built on collecting data from standardised tests. He insists that if this is done, the system will become more equitable and inclusive for all learners, not just some learners (Sahlberg, 2021).

### 1.1.4    HISTORY OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN AUSTRALIA

Sahlberg (2021) concludes that in previous years, Australia has made educational changes based on evidence from the United States and Britain. However, there is little proof to support these changes in policy. Moving into the future, what could be learned from Australia's education history? It is known from looking to the past at evidence-based education policies that the use of research to link remedies and expected outcomes is good practice. In Australia, historically, the policy makers have ignored some possible harmful side effects these policies may have on districts, schools, teachers, and students. The standardised NAPLAN testing is an example. There are many who advocate for these national tests, however, they ignore the many risks, such as, narrowing the curriculum, teachers feeling that they must teach to the tests, and reduced student motivation (Sahlberg, 2021). It is not wise to expect schools and school districts to base their pedagogical decisions on evidence produced by the testing culture unless the policies behind these expectations are based on best professional practices in situ. Sahlberg claims that unfortunately, history shows this has not occurred.

### 1.1.5    HISTORY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

School leadership is another aspect of history important to the future of the Queensland primary educational system. Progress within a primary educational networked system cannot make significant gains in a system that might still reflect remnants of Frederick Taylor's (1966) scientific management system. Taylor's management system is designed around hierarchical managerial controls (aka school principals) that separate them from the employees (teachers). The notion from the past that the principal is the only leader is evolving into a clearer understanding of the leadership roles that both principals and teachers must take if Australian primary schools are to be successful (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Conway & Andrews, 2016; Grissom et al., 2021; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, 2009). Historically, formal school leadership was a set of functions (Leithwood et al., 2004; Lieberman, 1992).

Years and years of leadership research have stated that school leaders needed to be embedded in the community. Lambert (1998), more than 20 years ago, proclaimed that the principal cannot be the only instructional leader in the building (school). This begs the question as to why government documents and ministry guidelines still refer to the principal as the primary instructional leader within the school community, and rely on data from testing to inform their decisions.

The obsession with the testing era has made demands on educational leaders to become part of an existing data-informed leadership in education, which mirrors the evaluation movement in the 1960s and 1970s. This obsession is coupled with the early 2000s providing a variety of techniques and strategies to accompany these data-informed decisions. Historically, district and educational governments ensured that school leaders systematically evaluated the implementation, effects, and effectiveness of educational programs, policies, and initiatives all based on data (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020; Knapp et al., 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004). In addition to this, principals were expected, by the district leaders, to take on the role as leaders of instruction (Knapp et al., 2006). Simultaneously, standards-based reform gained ground for outcomes and results, with an unbalanced reduction of interest in meeting the needs of students (Patuawa et al., 2021). Since the late 1980s, the accountability movement pressuring educational leaders is associated with standards-based reform and has been steadily revving up the demand for an evidence-base to demonstrate the effectiveness of student learning and educational programs. Simultaneously, placing all the accountability of success on the formal school leader. During this same era, a rapid increase in technologies has allowed for the prospect of making education-based decisions with supporting evidence more realistic. The downside to all the advances in technologies has been that they have added additional complexities and costs to an already financially strapped system. The result has been that educational funding from policy makers has been channelled into establishing and maintaining these complex technological systems, all the while the funding resources directly associated with an emphasis on real student learning and professional development for educational leaders has been dwindling (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020; Knapp et al., 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Researchers have established that the data collection and interpretation movement has in turn unintentionally established a lack of capacity by educational leaders to engage in data-informed inquiry, as they do not have the proper training, or understanding of this complex technological system and how to properly "use the data" they have been given. Datnow and Hubbard (2016) established that teachers' capacity to use data is shaped within their professional communities and they often fell short of sufficient knowledge about data to inform their instruction. Just 20 years ago, Massell and Goertz (2002) discovered that despite pressure from systems to increase test scores, schools and districts varied considerably in their understanding as well as what types of assessment data to use. Researchers have concluded that educators as well as educational leaders are generally not skilled in interpreting systematically collected data, despite a belief to the contrary (Baker & Linn, 2004; Heritage & Chen, 2005; Schmoker, 1996). This lack of technical skill likely hinders most educators' abilities to both physically work with data and make valid interpretations of data. Ingram et al. (2004) found that teachers have their own metric for judging teaching effectiveness. Many choose to base their decisions on experience, intuition, and anecdote rather than systematically collected data. It is plausible to believe educational leaders approach data use in similar ways (Ingram et al., 2004; Snipes et al., 2002).

In the early 2000s, there was an increasingly institutionalised assumption that data can and should be used to give credence to one's stated purposes, proposals, problems, and solutions (Young, 2006). This assumption about data use drives many of the past and current educational initiatives described in this literature review. It is in this context that some important issues are raised concerning the way policy environments promote and discourage activities aimed at improvement. The persistent demand for performance data in the context of

accountability can limit inquiry into local educational problems at the primary level as well as how to solve them (Fullan, 2011, 2021; Knapp et al., 2006).

Considering how Queensland primary schools might make changes towards becoming learning communities, the focus is less on data and more on primary students, and their needs. One superintendent recognised in 2006 when he was interviewed for the Wallace Report – Data Informed Leadership in Education – (Knapp et al., 2006) that he did not know how to teach all kids in a way that would guarantee their success. He believed that the only way to achieve continued improvement is, to turn the district into a real learning community where there is a teacher community working alongside the principal. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) established two decades ago that teacher leadership needs to be a strong catalyst for change, that principals are unable on their own to make the necessary sustainable changes to lead the entire school community in a shared school vision through ensuring social-emotional well-being and increased academic standards for all students. Thirty years ago, Wasley (1991) declared that the work of educational leaders to bring about school change to promote learning for all students is complicated, exhausting, and uncertain. It is imperative that in the 21st century, school leadership involve both principals and teachers working together as change agents for the betterment of student success, and less focused on data driven test results (Conway & Andrews, 2016, 2019; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Harris, 2008).

## 1.1.6   HISTORY OF CLASS SIZE AND FUNDING

Historically, primary student learning in the past, as well as the present, has been influenced most directly by classroom conditions which are a result of state, district, and school conditions, as well as individual teacher preferences, school leadership, capacities, and motivations. There is little debate in the research community over the contributions of student learning of smaller primary school class sizes (Leithwood et al., 2004; Mosteller, 1995, 1999; Mosteller et al., 1996; Slavin, 2013; Webb, 2008).

Historically, class size research conducted by people such as Finn (2002) and Mosteller (1999) suggested that reductions from a typical 22 to 30 student class, to an approximately 15 student class have the potential to significantly increase student achievement, provided that suitable changes are made in teacher practices which take advantage of fewer students. Evidence from the past about class size effects not only identifies optimum sizes, but it also suggests that the greatest benefits of reducing class size are found in the first two years of primary schooling when accompanied by appropriate adaptations to instruction (Finn, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; Mosteller, 1995, 1999; Mosteller et al., 1996; Slavin, 2013; Webb, 2008). These benefits are most advantageous for students who are socially and economically disadvantaged. The effects realised by smaller classes in the primary grades appear to be maintained three or four years later (Leithwood et al., 2004; Mosteller, 1995, 1999; Mosteller et al., 1996; Slavin, 2013; Webb, 2008).

Various studies have included a modest-sized Indiana study called Project Prime Time (McGiverin et al., 1989) which found benefits in having small classes in the early grades, and an investigation by Glass and Smith (1979, 1980) and colleagues at the University of Colorado and Murdoch University in Australia that used meta-analysis to review the literature on the effects of class size. The results of this latter investigation suggested that a class size of 15 or fewer would be needed to make a noticeable improvement in classroom performance. Meta-analysis, however, was not viewed favourably by all professionals at that time, and the effect of class size continued to be seriously debated (Mosteller, 1999). Mosteller reported the results of a much larger study involving 79 primary schools in Tennessee with children from varying backgrounds, carried out in three kinds of groupings: small class size (13 to 17 students); regular class size (22 to 25) with a teacher's aide; and regular class size without a teacher's aide. The long-term study followed students from kindergarten through to grades 4, 5, 6, and 7 when they were placed into larger classes. It found that the positive benefits of a smaller class size in the

early primary years had positive and lasting effects on the students in comparison to their peers who had started primary school in larger classes.

It is possible that Queensland primary schools might learn from the likes of the Tennessee study with more experiments of comparable quality to guide wise policymaking. Historically, formulas for calculating class size have not always been forthright. The formulas include non-teaching staff, such as librarians, into the student-teacher ratio, which gives an inaccurate reflection of the number of students being depicted by as much as six or seven students per classroom. More of an accurate calculation is required to realise the benefits reported in the class-size research. This more accurate description needs to involve counting the actual number of students in each classroom (Finn & Achilles, 1999; Mosteller, 1999).

Less than a decade ago, an OECD's annual "Education at a Glance" report (OECD, 2014) demonstrated that Australian teachers have larger classes and more teaching hours than the OECD average and that the school resourcing is less equitable than other nations. The report found that in 2013, Australia had higher than average class sizes for primary schools – 24 students – versus the OECD average of 21. The report further provided an overview of the Australian Government spending on public schools in 2012 which was 3.3% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), at the OECD average, with overall funding to primary schools slightly below the OECD average. Australia's spending per student at the primary school level in 2013 was $8,289.00 (US), lower than the OECD average of $8,412.00 (US). Australia's government funding to primary schools includes State, Independent and Catholic allocations. However, of note, the overall amount of funding provided by the government for primary schools dropped from 83.7% in 2000 to 82.0% in 2012. This is far lower than the OECD average of 91% (OECD, 2014).

The argument for the present and future can be made for smaller class sizes, that would be more in alignment to OECD averages, as well as increased funding to also coincide with the OECD average. In the next two major sections of this literature review, the present and future reasonings as to why class sizes need to be smaller will be further explored. One key argument for smaller class sizes is that teachers are able to provide more individual attention to each child in the classroom and are better able to differentiate for their individual needs, thus improving student learning and promoting equity. With the increase in diversity in classrooms around the world and particularly in Queensland, Australia, the importance of a smaller teacher to student ratio is significant for academic, social-emotional, and future economic reasons. The historical research clearly points to the provision of the greater the feedback that students have from teachers, the more they tend to progress (McKenzie et al., 2014).

Some have concluded that additional resources into schools is thought to be the best way to ensure that all students get the support and attention that they need in an equitable manner, regardless of the school that they attend, or the socio-economic background of the student population. Hattie (2009) argued that many more factors need to be considered, not just additional funding – although it certainly helps. Factors such as high-quality principals and teachers, retention rates, initial training, on-going professional development, class size, access to resources, a growth mindset, and connection to the school community are some additional factors that must be considered for successful, thriving school systems (Hattie & Smith, 2021).

### 1.1.7 HISTORY OF TEACHING AS A PROFESSION IN AUSTRALIA

In 2014, Australian teachers were conducting more face-to-face teaching than the OECD average. Australian primary school teachers taught more hours, totaling 872 per year, in comparison to the OECD average of 776 hours per year. Lower secondary Australian teachers taught for 812 hours in comparison to the OECD average of 694, whereas upper secondary Australian teachers taught a total of 804 hours versus 644 for the OECD

average (OECD, 2014). Among teachers, fewer than one third agreed that "the teaching profession is valued in society" (OECD, 2015a, p. 98).

Historically teachers have not been invited to participate in policy formulation, on boards of professional bodies or at the helm of critical agendas. This invokes a lack of trust in those who work each day with students in classrooms. There are many around these tables who "speak" for teachers, and plenty of contexts in which non-teachers are invited to speak on how to improve teaching. Unfortunately, this is a global problem, where education is debated, criticised, or celebrated by those who speak from a distance, who are not actually involved in the day-to-day realities of teaching and working in schools. The history of excluding teachers from educational decision making does little for the identity and agency of the profession in broader society, let alone for the individual teacher. Teachers have such a richness of experience and breadth of expertise; yet their voices have not been consulted with or heard, despite being a large part of the "heart and soul" of the school community. Their voices need to be heard as they represent and characterise the educational system. Writing the new narrative must consider the variability of contexts across the vast education landscape, together with the ideas, opinions, and voices of the teachers (Netolicky et al., 2019).

## 1.2 WHAT IS CURRENTLY HAPPENING?

The Australian Government is motioning, through their national educational initiatives, that early learning in primary schools is a priority to life-long learning, skill development, and future employability (Education Council, 2019). Research confirms an obvious point that individuals with more skills are more productive and more adaptable to technological changes. The more skilled the national population, it is likely the faster they grow. In many countries, including Australia, the reactions to the pandemic have, however, threatened the long-run future of the current cohort of primary as well as secondary students, and the harm to them from recent events can ripple through the world's economies in ways that will be felt far into the future (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020).

Crucial educational priorities outlined in Section I and Section II of this literature review align with several national priorities that acknowledge the critical role of Australian primary school leaders in creating a world class education system that supports every student to be the best that they can be (Sahlberg, 2021). The documents that acknowledge the key roles played by school leaders as well as what is now happening in Australian primary schools are, "Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools" (Gonski et al., 2018), "The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education" (Halsey, 2018), and the "Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration" (Education Council, 2019). As well, three established key national agencies play a major role in the educational reform equation – the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), and Education Services Australia. The reform strategies of the past were to drive reform by better standards, assessment, monitoring, intervention, and development (Fullan, 2011, 2021). It is vital that adjustments in Australian national priorities still need to be in place, as the current Australian educational system is in need of a fine tuning (Boyle et al., 2020).

When viewing the latest PISA results from 2018 (OECD, 2020a), Australia is behind in its results in comparison to other countries. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assesses 15-year-old students' capacities in reading, mathematics, and science, as well as their ability to apply this knowledge. It is an international assessment of student learning outcomes. The results from PISA can be very helpful for both education systems and education professionals as the results compare how Australian students are achieving in relation to other countries around the world. Students in 79 countries and economies completed the test in 2018, representing about 32 million 15-year-olds (OECD, 2020a).

The report assesses the quality and equity of learning outcomes attained around the world and allows countries to draw on lessons from the policies and practices applied in other countries. According to the 2018 study results, over 10 million students were not able to complete even the most basic reading tasks. In many countries, findings show that the quality of the education a student acquires can still best be predicted by the student's socioeconomic background. In fact, on average, the 10% most socioeconomically advantaged students outperformed their 10% most disadvantaged counterparts in reading by 141 score points. This gap is equivalent to over three years of schooling. This divide between the advantaged and the disadvantaged, for the most part, has remained unchanged over the past decade (OECD, 2020a).

In 20 education systems, including those of 15 OECD countries, over 10% of 15-year-old students were top performers. Australia was not listed in the 15 OECD countries (OECD, 2020a, p. 16). These findings from PISA are a significant signal to Australia's educational systems' decision makers. These statistics are definitive in nature, in that the nation of Australia, that was at one time a world leader in reading, writing, and mathematics, is no longer at the top. Major changes to the primary schooling system need to occur for results in student achievement to increase (Sahlberg, 2020, 2021). These findings support the literature review's aim in discussing a new narrative, one where Australia will once again enjoy top performer status on the educational world stage. A brief overview is required in relation to student attendance, class size, student retention, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This information is pertinent to help piece together the bigger picture as to what is currently happening and how improvements can be made in primary schools, and specifically as the focus for this literature review in Queensland.

## 1.3 NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN ATTENDANCE AT AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

A report, released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on February 19, 2021, established that Australia had over 4 million students attending their schools in the year 2020. This is a record number of students in attendance at Australian schools, with an approximate increase of 58,163 students (1.5%). Government schools held the largest share of enrolments (65.6%), followed by Catholic schools (19.4%) and thirdly Independent schools (15.0%). These enrolment percentages have remained fairly stable over the last decade with 65.6% of students enrolled in Government schools, 20.3% in Catholic schools, and a slightly smaller number of students were enrolled in Independent schools in 2010. See Table 1.2 for the breakdown of student population, 2016-2020, by Government, Catholic and Independent Schools (ABS, 2021).

**Table 1.2**

*Student Enrolments by School Affiliation, Australia, 2016-2020*

|  | 2020 | 2019 | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Government | 2,629,143 | 2,594,830 | 2,558,169 | 2,524,865 | 2,483,802 |
| Catholic | 778,605 | 769,719 | 765,735 | 766,870 | 767,050 |
| Independent | 599,226 | 584,262 | 569,930 | 557,490 | 547,374 |
| TOTAL | 4,006,974 | 3,948,811 | 3,893,834 | 3,849,225 | 3,798,226 |

*Note.* Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021, n.p.).
https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/2020

Total student enrolments in Australian schools have continued to increase in the five years to 2020 (see Figure 1.3), with a 5.5% increase. Non-government schools had the largest increase with 9.5%, followed by Government schools with 5.9% (ABS, 2021).

**Figure 1.3**

*Proportion of Enrolments by School Affiliation, Australia, 2000-2020*
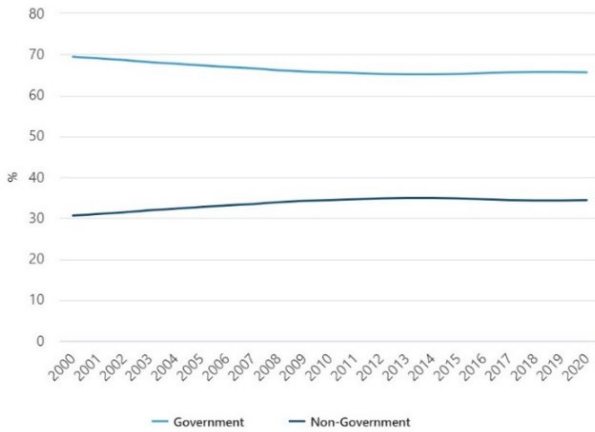
The highest annual growth rates of student enrolments in 2020 were found in Queensland (2.8%), the Australian Capital Territory (2.5%), Victoria (1.6%) and Western Australia (1.5%), while the Northern Territory reported the lowest growth rate (0.3%) (see Figure 1.4). Note that the patterns of growth in student enrolment correlate with the changes in relation to the increase or decrease in the 5- to 19-year-old populations in the corresponding states and territories (ABS, 2021). The Australian population is increasing, and the school system must keep up with the demands of the growing needs that are being presented. Queensland schools had the highest increase in student enrollment for 2020 in all of Australia (ABS, Schools 2021).

**Figure 1.4**

*Annual Growth Rates in Student Enrolments by State and Territory, 2019 to 2020*
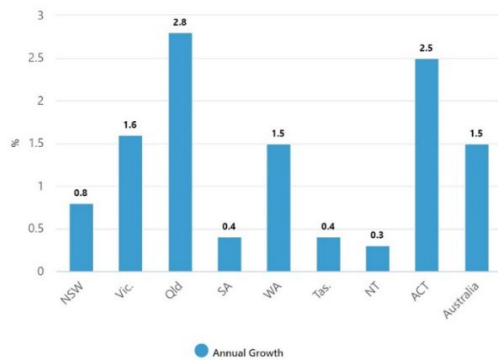
See Figure 1.5 for reproportions of student enrolment in Australian non-government schools in comparison to that of government schools. Student enrolment in non-government schools was highest in the Australian Capital Territory (38.5%) and Victoria (36.0%). It was lowest in the Northern Territory (25.5%) and lower for students enrolled in schools in very remote areas (12.7%) than for remote areas (21.1%), outer regional areas

(26.2%), inner regional areas (33.9%) and major cities (35.9%). In the state of Queensland, 66.9% of students enrolled attend government schools, while 33.1% attend non-government schools (ABS, 2021).

**Figure 1.5**

*Student Enrolment Counts by Australian State and Territory and School Affiliation*



*Note.* Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021, n.p.). https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/2020
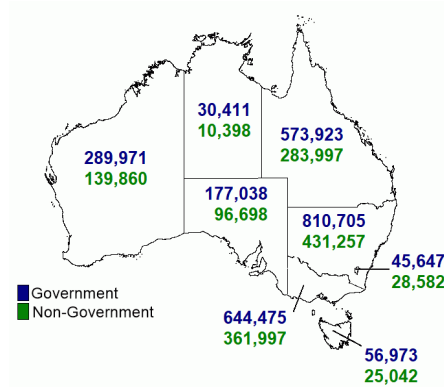
According to the ABS (2021), in the year 2020 there were 9,542 schools in Australia, a net increase of 39 schools since 2019 (16 Government, 17 Independent, and 6 Catholic schools). Queensland reported the largest increase in total school counts (15 schools), followed by Western Australia (11 schools) and Victoria (7 schools) (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3

*School Counts by State and Territory, 2019-2020*

| Australia | NSW | Vic. | Qld. | SA | WA | Tas. | NT | ACT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2020 (9542) | 3, 107 | 2,254 | 1, 770 | 715 | 1,108 | 262 | 190 | 136 |
| 2019 (9,503) | 3,103 | 2,247 | 1,755 | 715 | 1,097 | 262 | 189 | 135 |

*Note.* Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021, n.p.). https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/2020

## 1.4 RETENTION RATES IN AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The apparent retention rate in 2020, for Australian secondary students staying until Year 12, was estimated to be 83.6%, which is around the same rate as in 2019, 84.0% (see Figure 1.6). Comparing the apparent retention rate to 2010 when it was 78.0%, Australian schools are improving somewhat in this area. Of note, students were considered by the ABS (2021) to be enrolled, even if schooling had been temporarily disrupted by COVID-19. As in previous years, in 2020, the apparent retention rate was higher for females, 88.0% than for males, 79.3%. Apparent retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were lower, however they demonstrated a more than 10% increase from 2010 to 2020 – 47.2% (2010) to 59.6% (2020) (ABS, 2021). Supporting the retention rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (see Sections 1.5 – 1.11) needs to be a priority for all Australian schools, including Queensland schools.

**Figure 1.6**

*Year 7 to 12 Full-Time Apparent Retention Rates by School Affiliation, Australia, 2010-2020*



*Note.* Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021, n.p.). https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/2020
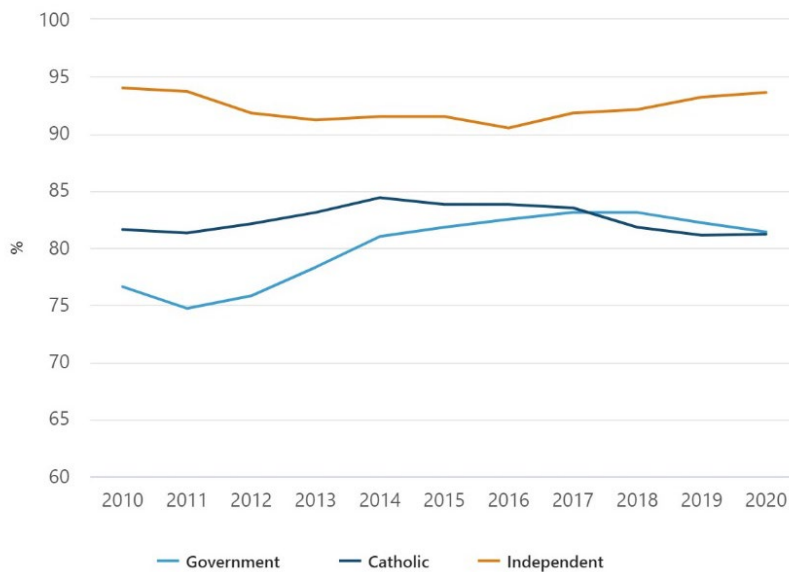
## 1.5 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POPULATION

According to the ABS (2018), it was estimated that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia at 30 June 2016 was 798,400 people, or 3.3% of the total Australian population. This estimate is a 19% increase in this population from the estimate of 669,900 at 30 June 2011. Among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in 2016, 91% of people (727,500 people) identified as being of Aboriginal origin only, 5% (38,700) were of Torres Strait Islander origin only, and 4% (32,200) were of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin (ABS, 2018).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia at 30 June 2016 was younger in age than the non-Indigenous population. The younger age population is reflective of both higher birth rates as well as higher mortality rates in comparison to the non-Indigenous population. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander median age population at 30 June 2016 was 20.3 years, compared to 37.8 years for the non-Indigenous population (ABS, 2018).

## 1.6 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER GEOGRAPHIC REMOTENESS

In statistics reported by the ABS (2018), the largest populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived in New South Wales (265,700 people) and Queensland (221,400 people), while the smallest lived in the Australian Capital Territory (7,500 people). Further, three quarters of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders lived in New South Wales, Queensland, and Western Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians comprised 30% of the population of the Northern Territory, which is the highest of any state or territory (ABS, 2018).

On 30 June 2016, a significant fact was that over one-third of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived in Australia's major cities (298,400 people), compared with approximately three-quarters of the non-Indigenous population (17,013,400) living in Australian cities. Of note, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Inner Regional Australia was at a population of 189,400 (24%) and 4,153,900 non-Indigenous people (18%). There were 161,800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (20%) who lived in Outer Regional Australia compared with 1,879,100 non-Indigenous people (8.0%). Of the populations remaining, 53,500 remaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (7%) lived in Remote Australia and Very Remote Australia (95,200 or 12.0%). This compares with 239,900 non-Indigenous people (1.0%) living in Remote Australia and 106,300 or 0.5% in very remote Australia (ABS, 2018).

## 1.7 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER REMOTE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

To ensure a thorough literature review, it is imperative to research the remote educational implications of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, as the statistics in the previous section present that many are living in these communities. The Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP) conducted a five-year Remote Education Systems research project, the key learnings of which were published as "Red dirt education" (Guenther et al., 2016). An important question was, "What is education for in remote communities?". The answer according to those who live there was that "education is not primarily about preparing young people for work; rather, it is to ensure that their language, culture and identity remain strong and that they maintain a connection to their land" (p. 51). Another important question that this five-year research project asked was, "What is educational success in remote communities?". The results of the study concluded that "educational success in remote schools is not primarily about Year 12 completion, retention or NAPLAN scores; rather, it is primarily about parent and community involvement in education" (p. 59).

The authors of the Remote Education Systems research project (Guenther et al., 2016) used the term "red dirt curriculum" as one that fits "the context of a school in a remote community, [aligns with] the aspirations of remote community educators" and can be meshed with the Australian Curriculum (p. 68). The authors believed that teachers who work in remote schools need to share in positive relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in schools, along with the students and the students' parents: "Successful teachers will bring traits such as passion, care, commitment, patience and respect and the ability to listen" (p. 77). One skill highlighted from this study is that it is critical for teachers to have training in teaching English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) if they are to work in these communities: ". . . an important finding from our research points to the need for better trained EAL/D teachers at the pre-service and post-graduate level" (p. 82).

Often the case is that non-local teachers are needed to staff rural and remote schools. Therefore, one strategy for recruiting non-local teachers is that of community-based pre-service practicums: "These offer opportunities for students who are about to graduate to learn in remote communities and engage with community members before they apply for a position" (Guenther et al., 2016, p. 83). One proposal offered is that of "reverse credentialing":

> The real problem in remote communities is the lack of skills that non-locals have—that is, the lack of understanding of language, local culture and environment, relationships, and protocols—and we believe that a good induction and professional development approach would allow local people to do the training for non-locals. . . . [This idea is] about providing a locally driven process that ensures non-locals have what they need to work effectively in the remote space. (p. 84)

The Remote Education Systems Research project concluded that literature recognises teachers play a key role in the success of students' learning. This report of learnings from the project emphasised that teachers need

to be "contextually and culturally responsive". The first point noted in this report called for non-local teachers to reflect on who they are and how they can be flexible in the current situation: "Contextually responsive teachers bring a degree of self-reflexivity to their roles in schools and communities, being aware of the differences that present to them within the context and responding with flexibility" (Guenther et al., 2016, p. 87).

Secondly, the report concluded that non-local teachers need to recognise the importance of language and culture to local people and actively incorporate these into schooling: "Culturally responsive teachers are those who understand their own culture, privilege the culture in which they work, facilitate use of local languages and involve local knowledge in teaching and learning" (Guenther et al., p. 87). A variety of possible responses by schools and education systems are outlined by the authors of the Remote Education Systems research project. These suggestions have a strong foundation of evidence from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote and very remote contexts and should be highly considered for future changes to policies and practices (Guenther et al., 2016).

## 1.8 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS

In the year 2020 the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Australian schools was 240,180 (4.1%), which was an increase since 2019. In 2020, that meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students accounted for 6.0% of all students, with a large majority of them enrolled in government schools (83.4%). The Northern Territory had the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at 39.0% (ABS, 2021). Thus, the importance of the Remote Education Systems Research project (Guenther et al., 2016) is significant, as apparent retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were bleak and demonstrated a more than 10% increase from 2010 to 2020 – 47.2% (2010) to 59.6% (2020) (see Figure 1.7) (ABS, 2021). These statistics in comparison to the population of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students need to be addressed at government and school system leadership level.

**Figure 1.7**

*Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Enrolments by State and Territory, 2020*



*Note.* Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021, n.p.). https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/2020
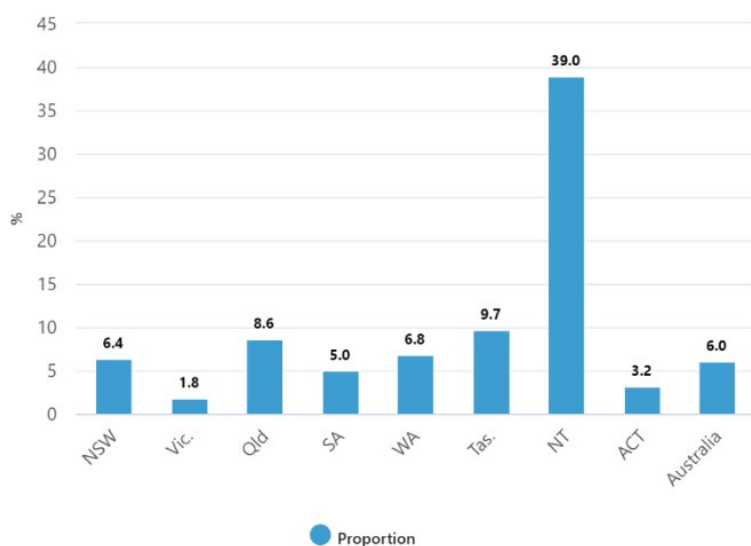
## 1.9 NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION STRATEGY 2015

In keeping with the previous information provided in this literature review in relation to educating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, it is imperative to have a national vision for the primary students of this at-risk group. Supporting an Australian national educational strategy, the Education Council's (2015) document declares, "All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people achieve their full learning potential, are empowered to shape their own futures, and are supported to embrace their culture and identity as Australia's First Nations peoples" (p. 2).

It is imperative that the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy (the strategy) builds on past commitments in education policy and strategic drivers that include:

- National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) *Closing the gap* targets for early childhood education, school achievement and attainment
- Council of Australian Governments [COAG] priorities of school attendance and post-school transitions as included in the Education Council's *Terms of reference*
- State, Territory and education sector plans
- Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians December 2008
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1989
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014 and the subsequent evaluation. (Education Council, 2015, p. 2)

Building on the learnings of these previous initiatives, the new strategy is significantly different from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-14. This revised strategy sets the principles and priorities that act as a framework to guide districts in developing and implementing localised policies and actions to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also outlines the first of a series of national collaborative actions. School education in Australia is a partnership between State, Catholic and Independent sectors. Delivery of the strategy, found in this document, draws upon the cooperative relationship between the sectors (Education Council, 2015), and is further supported by the Australian Government's 2020 report, "Closing the Gap" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2020).

## 1.10 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PRIMARY SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

For primary school-aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the evidence suggests that a culture of high expectations in schools, strong student-teacher connections, community relationships, and supports for their culture are particularly important. These factors must all be inter-connected with a strong and effective underpinning of school leadership (Productivity Commission, 2016). A significant question has been asked in the face of continuing poor results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students on academic performance tests such as NAPLAN scores: "If government priorities are already aligned with what the literature suggests should be done to improve Indigenous students' literacy and numeracy achievement, why has there been no progress in closing gaps in achievement?" (Productivity Commission, 2016, p. 83).

## 1.11 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER INVOLVEMENT IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY AND AT SCHOOL

The ABS (2018) reported that there was a higher rate of involvement in selected cultural events (such as NAIDOC week), ceremonies or organisations for Torres Strait Islander people living on the Islands (95%) compared with Torres Strait Islander people in the rest of Queensland (75%), and the rest of Australia (50%). Included within these statistics are many people aged 15 years and older who took part in cultural activities such as the creation of

traditional arts and crafts. This high participation rate in these activities demonstrates a very positive connection of these people to their Torres Strait Islander culture. This can in turn have very positive connections to community and it is also helping to preserve the many traditions of these people (ABS, 2018). Every 2 in 3 (68%) Torres Strait Islanders living on the Islands and in Queensland reported being taught their culture at school. This teaching of culture is imperative as the sharing of heritage is then passed along from generation to generation (ABS, 2018).

## 1.12 STUDENT ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS AND IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Australia has a legal requirement for children and young people to attend school from five years of age (in Tasmania) or six years of age (other jurisdictions), through until they complete a minimum of Year 10 (usually about 15 or 16 years of age) and then they are either involved in full-time education to Year 12, or training or employment until 17 years of age (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015). Student engagement is critical to the learning process. Regular attendance at school is an important indicator of student engagement, motivation to learn as well as it provides the potential for greater student success (Hattie, 2015b). Although, as shown earlier in this literature review, both "quantity" of attendance and "quality" of education are required for student learning outcomes to improve.

A comprehensive handbook of research on student engagement was produced by Christenson et al. (2012) which pointed to several areas of consensus related to key indicators that educators need to be aware of in relation to student engagement:

- Student engagement helps understanding of dropout and promotion of school completion;
- Students who are engaged put in effort, aim at goals, persist, and enjoy challenging themselves;
- Student engagement is positively linked with good academic, social, and emotional learning outcomes;
- Student engagement is a multidimensional construct;
- Context is important and student engagement is influenced by school, family, and peers;
- There is an interplay between student engagement and student motivation on outcomes of learning; and
- Use of student engagement measures can affect decision-making in schools.

At the end of Christenson et al.'s (2012) book, the authors presented a definition of student engagement:

> Student engagement refers to the student's active participation in academic and co-curricular or school-related activities, and commitment to educational goals and learning. Engaged students find learning meaningful and are invested in their learning and future. It is a multidimensional construct that consists of behavioral (including academic), cognitive, and affective subtypes. Student engagement drives learning; requires energy and effort; is affected by multiple contextual influences; and can be achieved for all learners. (pp. 816- 817)

Note that the authors believe student engagement can be achieved by all learners, but it is complex in that many factors affect it.

A survey in the United States of school teachers' self-efficacy in student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management indicated that with regard to student engagement there was no significant difference found between female and male teachers, nor between the different levels of education of teachers, nor between the number of years of teaching experience (Shoulders & Krei, 2015). These researchers suggested

that teachers need to have positive views of their own self-efficacy and then this would translate into their attitudes towards the engagement of students in the learning process.

Janosz (2012) summarised the work of numerous authors on the importance of student engagement and stated:

> . . . that to increase motivation and engagement of students, we must privilege age appropriate interventions, educational environments, and learning situations that respond to fundamental individual needs: to feel secure and respected, be active and autonomous, experience success, feel competent and have control over the outcome (success) of a learning task or situation, be related to others, understand the meaning and value of the effort demanded. (p. 699)

Setting the stage for student engagement is extremely vital for a teacher. A student wanting to opt out of learning should not be an option when student learning is designed to be personal and relevant. If teachers know how to program and develop pedagogical processes to engage students in dialogue as they work to extend learning, stimulate discussion, pose questions, provoke thinking, suggest resources, and help determine next learning steps, then students are more apt to remain motivated and engaged in the learning process.

Developing awareness, understanding and respect for what matters to students has become critical in education because "learning can no longer be understood as a one-way exchange where 'we teach, they learn'. . . . [Rather,] it is a reciprocal process that requires teachers to help students learn with understanding" (Willms et al., 2009, p. 39). In the shift from a transmission to a discourse model of education, researchers verify what classroom teachers know intuitively – that ensuring students are listened to and valued and respected for who they are leads to greater student engagement which, in turn, leads to greater student achievement (Cummins et al., 2005; Flessa et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2006; Willms et al., 2009).

Over a decade ago, Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) also built on this insight, urging education leaders and policy makers to ensure that students are recognised as:

> . . . partners in change rather than merely targets of change efforts and services – more involved in their own learning and learning choices, actively consulted about the quality and improvement of teaching, and substantially engaged in the overall governance of the school and its development. (p. 59)

Involving students as "partners in change" invites teachers and educational leaders to:

- see all students as a whole person.
- know every student in other areas other than just academic.
- support students in having a more active role in their own learning.
- include student voice in planning learning opportunities.

While the exclusion of identity and voice from classroom learning and school experiences can lead to student disengagement and behavioural issues, such refusal to complete work or low attendance rates must be addressed. It is vital to attend to making students partners in change so that learning can be transformative for students and teachers. For the teachers, becoming more aware of students' capacities can ignite new excitement about teaching and enrich pedagogical practices (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007).

## 1.13 CURRENT CLASS SIZES AND THE EFFECTS OF TEACHER FEEDBACK ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The OECD's (2019a) *Education at a Glance* reported that class sizes in Australia are 14% larger when compared with the international average. Despite the on-going reporting of the OECD in this area, in 14 years, class sizes have not improved in Australia. In Australian primary classes, the average number of students per class is 24 students – which is three higher than the OECD average of 21 (OECD, 2020a). A closer comparison of Australia with other countries demonstrates that it has more students per class than the United States (20), Estonia (19), Finland, (19), Latvia (16), Lithuania (16), the Slovak Republic (18) and Luxembourg (15) (OECD, 2020a).

Larger class sizes, experts say, equates to students receiving less feedback and attention from their teachers, which can cause some to fall further behind. Throughout the decades, the argument, supported by credible research, remains the same, smaller class sizes would provide more individual attention for each child, as the teacher would have more time to devote to differentiating for the needs of each student (McKenzie et al., 2014).

Feedback has been a popular topic in schools for a while now. Research shows that feedback has the potential to increase student achievement – 0.66 effect size – according to Hattie (2014). If class sizes are larger as is the case in Australia in comparison to OECD averages, Hattie (2014) concurred with McKenzie et al. (2014) that students are receiving less feedback, as the teacher has a reduced amount of time with each student, and following the line of inquiry, student achievement can suffer as a result. Hattie and Zierer (2018) outlined four different types of instructional feedback that are essential for student achievement levels to increase: self, task, process, and self-regulation. According to Hattie and Zierer (2018): "task level feedback happens when the feedback lets students know when the answer is correct or incorrect and whether they meet the criteria for success" (p. 94). Whereas, process level feedback is present when students and teachers engage in discussions around the "strategies the students applied in the learning process or whether the student can detect errors in their work" (p. 94). Self-regulation feedback takes place when students "provide reasons for having completed a task correctly or incorrectly . . . [or] when they can explain their success" (p. 95).

When a clear understanding of learning intentions and success criteria are not present, feedback is often at the self level – unrelated to specifics about the task. This means that the feedback provided is more than likely in the form of praise than being directly related to learning. Receiving a positive compliment feels good – and positive compliments need to remain – however, a positive compliment supports socio-emotional development, it does not guide the students' learning to a deeper level. According to Hattie and Zierer (2018), this happens for a number of reasons. One reason is that the class size might be too large for the teacher to effectively provide feedback to the students. Another reason is the teacher may not know how to provide effective feedback as a result of lack of training in this area. Student achievement and outcomes are at great risk when appropriate instructional feedback is not provided (Hattie & Zierer, 2018). Teacher training issues are further explored in Section II.

## 1.14 SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

Unfortunately, there is existing evidence to support that primary students who are at the lower end of educational achievement in Australia are also more likely to experience poverty, social exclusion, and/or have poor health outcomes. Also in Australia, the gap in income inequality has increased since the year 2000 (ACOSS & UNSW, 2018). A recent report released in Australia in 2020 provided evidence that 13.6% of the nation's population is living below the poverty line (ACOSS & UNSW, 2020). The people who make up this group are those

who are unable to obtain employment, or sufficient employment to meet their needs. As well, many in this group lack educational attainment, or have other factors that affect their earning potential (ACOSS & UNSW, 2018).

As a consequence of the 13.6% of Australia's population living below the poverty line, since 2012, there has been an increase in social exclusion, meaning a larger number of people are, "unable to participate in the economic and social activities of a community" (Australian Government, 2018, p. 180). Further, evidence supports that this at-risk lower-socioeconomic disadvantaged group is at a greater risk of incarceration. Australian's prisons also have a higher proportion of people with disabilities, mental health disorder, and people with Indigenous backgrounds (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Given the challenges discussed in this literature review, it is not surprising to reveal that this group of people also experiences a higher rate of chronic health issues and a lower life expectancy (Australian Government, 2020; National Indigenous Australians Agency, 2020).

Plato's (2007) declaration more than 2000 years ago that "it's the direction given by education that is likely to determine all that follows" (p. 127) aligns with current evidence. Even though there is a correlation between poor educational attainment and lower life outcomes, it is not fair to place all the issues onto the educational systems, while eliminating society's responsibilities (Apple, 2015). However, educational systems, and the schools that operate within them do have a role to play. The people who have the power to enact change, such as government officials, also need to take responsibility for these problems (Apple, 2015; Fullan, 2021; Thomson et al., 2012; Timperley et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2020).

This responsibility by the people who have the power to make the necessary changes is agreed upon in many global educational policies that tout social justice and inclusive education for all students (Boyle & Anderson, 2020; Boyle et al., 2020). Inclusive education has been front and centre in educational policy for more than 25 years, however, the Australian educational system is undergoing an increase in segregation and inclusion (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

## 1.15 CURRENT FUNDING FOR AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

Australia's spending on education has increased 25% or $10 billion since 2010. However, when this figure is reported by government officials, it does not take into account that the student population has been on the increase in Australia requiring spending on new schools, school infrastructures and salaries for additional teachers. Eight billion of the extra funding (or 80%) accounted for: rising student numbers, wage increases, additional teachers' salaries, and the ongoing costs of increased investments in government school buildings. Student numbers have grown by 9% and the costs of educating these additional students is just under $4 billion which is two-fifths of the overall increase (Australian Bureau Statistics, 2021; OECD, 2020d).

While Australia, in 2020, spent just above the OECD average per student on school education, it spends far less than countries like Luxembourg, Norway, Austria, and Belgium. Australia ranks 8th in spending on school education as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product. This figure is behind New Zealand, Norway, Israel, UK, Iceland, Belgium, and Columbia. Australia increased the share of GDP invested in tertiary educational institutions by over 10% but reduced the share invested in school education by at least 5% during this period. Australia's total school expenditure as a proportion of GDP is just at the OECD average but as a percentage of total government spending on school education Australia spends less than the OECD average of 4.4% (OECD, 2020d). Many organisations are flagging the Australian Government to ensure that educational equity and primary schooling are priorities (UNESCO, 2020; UNICEF, 2020; UNICEF Australia, 2021).

## 1.16 EQUITY SPENDING AND THE EFFECTS OF INVESTING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

As the literature review progresses, it is becoming apparent that there needs to be a new narrative for Queensland primary schools. It is often a difficult task to argue for the importance of the economic benefits of primary education, as it is a short-term investment with long-term gains, that are not recognisable in a nation for a period of approximately 12 to 13 years later (Grant, 2017; Hanushek, 2020). Yet, as this literature review is unfolding, the issues surrounding problems without a solid foundation of literacy, numeracy, and social skills (taught at the primary level) that if left unchecked will spill over into society and manifest additional problems economically, socially, and health-care wise (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). Also, one year of schooling in a certain portion of the world, or region within the same country, does not necessarily equate to one year, due to the diversity of student populations (Grant, 2017; Hanushek et al., 2008). When politicians, who plan and deliver educational funding and programs, come and go more frequently and often than the length in years of an average student who begins in Prep school and ends in Year 12 (which is more than a decade of schooling), it is a real challenge for advocates within educational systems to stress the importance of increased funding and resource allocations. However, given the long-term nature of the benefits to the economy (Hanushek et al., 2008; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020; Sawhill et al., 2006; UNESCO, 2010, 2020), economists have long believed that investments in education, or "human capital", are an important source of economic growth, and educators need to look to economists' research to support the positive effects of investing in early primary education on the economic growth of nations (Grant, 2017; Hanushek, 2020; Hanushek et al., 2008; Komatsu & Rappleye, 2017).

The OECD's (2020a) latest report, *Education at a Glance*, does not discuss or report upon the significance of primary schooling in terms of financial incentives for nations to invest in. The report is detailed as to the importance of Early Childhood Education, Upper Secondary, and Tertiary, yet the report neglects to provide research data as to the relevance of the ages from 6 to 12 – primary education, and the lower secondary levels from 13 to 16 years of age (OECD, 2020a). However, UNESCO's (2020) report and UNICEF's (2020) Report Card 16 both point to the importance of primary education as foundational to the economic and social needs and outcomes of nations. Primary schooling is when most students learn how to read, write, and solidify the usage of mathematical skills (Forrester et al., 2021; Merki et al., 2021; Moyles, 2014). Imagine an economy and organisations lacking in people able to read directions, use a sophisticated computer, or understand cultural norms of behaviour – all skills taught in primary education (Hanushek, 2020; Hanushek et al., 2008; Sawhill et al., 2006). There seems to be a definite gap in the OECD's international collection of data and discussion as to the importance of primary schooling in developed and developing countries, as without foundational literacy and numeracy skills that begin in early childhood education and primary schooling, adults would not have the level of literacy and numeracy skills required to secure and maintain employment in many sectors. Primary schooling prepares young children and people to fill the jobs of the 21st century (Grant, 2017; Hanushek, 2020; Patrinos, 2016a; Sawhill et al., 2006).

Primary school prepares students for the 21st century, by developing a deep skill set to succeed in a world where automation is only a click away. Young students need to be taught and provided learning opportunities to become comfortable working with others, thinking creatively, and expressing their ideas at an early age, so that they are prepared to enter a world that has opportunities for them (Forrester et al., 2021; Merki et al., 2021). To have a stronger economy, primary school students need to build a solid foundation in the critical 4C skills – Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Communication, and Creativity. Primary students will then utilise these essential skills in the future by applying them to solve real-world challenges – some that are grounded in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM education) content. STEM skills as well as the 4C skills will help to boost

the economy and fast-track students to participate and work in the modern world (Department of Education, Skills & Employment, 2021).

Looking to the future, a more educated work force, that begins with the development of essential social, emotional, and academic skills, may hopefully develop much less crime-ridden and healthier environments in societies. Moreover, the teaching of these essential skills in the primary years will result in better functioning organisations (Grant, 2017; Sawhill et al., 2006; Timperley et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2020).

A paper by De Muro and Burchi (2007) examined the relationship between primary education and food insecurity across 48 countries. The results showed that doubling the attendance rates in primary education for rural populations would reduce levels of food insecurity by between 20% and 24%. The incidence of poverty across households is closely linked to educational attainment (UNESCO, 2010). With 13.6% of Australia's population living below the poverty line (ACOSS & UNSW, 2020) and some living in rural, remote, and stricken areas, a greater effort to promote literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills at the primary levels must be addressed, and quickly, as investments in education, (human capital), are an important source of economic growth (Grant, 2017; Hanushek, 2020; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2007).

Whatever the contribution of primary education to Australia's economic growth was in the past, investments in human capital may rise in importance relative to investments in other forms of capital as the nation continues to transition to a knowledge-based, technologically savvy, global economy. A more educated labour force is more mobile and adaptable, can learn new tasks and new skills more easily, can use a wider range of technologies and sophisticated equipment (including newly emerging ones), and is more creative in thinking about how to improve the management of work (Conway & Andrews, 2016, 2019; Goleman et al., 2013; Hanushek, 2020; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2007; Turner, 2021). It is imperative that the leadership of primary schooling understands and has the skills to ensure that these highly important skills are taught (Fullan, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Timperley et al., 2017), and that knowledge acquisition occurs at the Prep to Year 6 levels in Queensland primary schools.

The expansion of education – focusing on literacy and numeracy skills and social-emotional learning – at the primary schooling area leads to improvements in other areas across the population in general. This is even more the case for socially and economically marginalised groups who have the most to gain from primary schooling, teaching basic, foundational literacy and numeracy skills (UNESCO, 2010, 2020).

## 1.17 EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

Giving every student, regardless of race, gender, culture, language and economic background, a fair chance to obtain a high-quality education is a fundamental part of the social contract that needs to happen and a clear focus with educational leadership so that change can occur at the primary schooling level (OECD, 2020d). To improve social mobility and socio-economic outcomes, it is critically important to eliminate inequalities in educational opportunities. Educational attainment is measured as the percentage of the population who have reached a certain level of education and hold a formal qualification at that level. It is frequently used as a measure of human capital as well as an indication of the level of an individual's skills (i.e., a measure of the skills associated with a given level of education and available in the population and the labour force) (OECD, 2020d). Further, OECD reported that higher levels of educational attainment are associated with several positive economic and social outcomes for individuals and  tend to be more socially engaged, have higher employment rates, have greater levels of participation in formal and non-formal adult education and training and higher relative earnings. Over past decades, almost all OECD countries have seen a significant increase in educational attainment, especially

among the young and among women (OECD, 2020d). However, higher educational attainment would not be possible without the foundational learning and its success for individuals in primary school.

With the onset and on-going COVID-19 pandemic, some of the educational attainment as reported by OECD (2020d) could be regressing instead of progressing. In an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19, many schools across Australia and the rest of the world had to close, impacting the learning of over 1.5 billion children world-wide. Australia was not as affected in relation to school closures as other nations. With an uneven transition to distance learning, education systems are confronted with more extensive challenges of educational access, and thus, equity, quality, and inclusion in rural and remote areas were possibly more impacted than in urban areas. The medium and long term impact on today's children and youth are as yet unknown. However:

> As economic activity slows and government budgets shrink in response to the pandemic, there is a risk that governments will place an emphasis on short-termism that could shift funding away from education and undo some of the progress achieved over the last two decades in increasing public expenditure in education throughout the world. (Center for Universal Education, 2020, para. 1)

Whilst this increase in funding had, prior to the pandemic, been increasing, ". . . the impact of increased education expenditure was not necessarily reaching the poorest and most marginalized and has been insufficient for closing the learning gaps between rich and poor nations, and within rich and poor regions within nations" (Center for Universal Education, 2020, para. 2). While internationally there is a trend for governments in the short term to increase spending on health and stimulus spending:

> . . . in the medium term there is a risk that public education investment will decline and leave behind those children and youth around the world who are most in need of high-quality education. . . . How decisionmakers respond to the COVID-19 challenge will have lasting impacts on today's children and youth. (para. 3)

There are three key messages for the educational community in relation to equality of educational access distilled from these conversations (Center for Universal Education, 2020, para. 5-7.):

- Education must be perceived as part of the solution to rebuilding the economy.
- Education is the key to a country's competitiveness in a global economy.
- The extensive use of technology in education during the school closures can be a lever not only for transforming education systems but also entire economies.

## 1.18 AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR TEACHING AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) commenced operations in 2010 and replaced the work of Teaching Australia which had started in 2005 (AITSL, 2011; Bourke, 2011). In 2011 AITSL published the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers as a framework of seven standards, prominently calling on teachers to reflect on their practice as they develop their expertise. Similarly, AITSL (2014) presented a set of Leadership Profiles in support of effective school leaders to implement leadership actions according to their context, career stage and capabilities. As explained, principals are required to be ". . . leading educational professionals" (p. 6) promoting "a shared vision . . . [for] effective and high-impact school leadership" (p. 4).

## 1.19 AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM DESIGN AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Karkkainen (2012) defined curriculum as follows: "Curriculum specifies what kind of knowledge, skills and values should be taught to students and why is that so, but it may also specify the desired ways of how students

should be taught" (p. 7). This definition appears to carry the assumption of teachers being in control and imparting prescribed material to students who receive it passively and reproduce it when obliged to do so. It embodies the banking concept of education – whereby teachers deposit knowledge in students (Freire, 1996). Curriculum commonly refers to an official written program from an authoritative body as distinct from an unwritten program. Assessment is defined as determining "whether or not young Australians are meeting important educational outcomes" (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016, para. 2).

Research by the OECD (2014) indicated that the education sector ranked fifth among 13 employment sectors in terms of having highly innovative jobs. More specifically, the education sector had the largest proportion (48%) of jobs involving innovation in knowledge or methods. "Innovation in knowledge or methods could include innovations in curriculum or assessment practices as well as, for example, changes in research methods in higher education" (OECD, 2014, p. 1). The breakdown of innovative jobs according to the level of education where the job is sited was higher education: 60%; secondary education: 43%; and primary education: 46% (OECD, 2014, p. 2). The next major section of the literature review – Section II: Into the Future – will look at a number of elements so that a new narrative in primary education can identify some barriers to innovation regarding curriculum and assessment and will identify a range of possibilities for the educational leaders for primary schooling in Queensland. However, first, the literature review will provide some detail into the Australian Curriculum Design to help further support the workings of a new narrative.

In 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) established the National Education Agreement and various National Partnerships about schooling (Council of Australian Governments, 2008). As part of understanding the narrative in its entirety – both old and new – the following government documents and initiatives are briefly reviewed: The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008), which was replaced by the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019), and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

*Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (ACARA, 2008), which is now replaced by *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Education Council, 2019) are the foundational documents for schooling over the past decade. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians proposed two goals: Goal 1 – Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence and Goal 2 – All young Australians become (a) Successful learners, (b) Confident and creative individuals, (c) Active and informed citizens (pp. 6-9). It has now been replaced with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019). The two revised goals are: Goal 1 – The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity; and Goal 2 – All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community (pp. 4-8). While these goals are similar to those of the 2008 Melbourne Declaration, the Mparntwe Declaration places detailed emphasis on addressing education gaps, as well as preparing students, from an early age, to thrive in a rapidly changing and challenging world in order to ensure "the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion" (p. 5).

The Mparntwe Declaration (Education Council, 2019) emphasises "[b]uilding upon a strong foundation from early childhood learning" (p. 13). It notes that "primary school is critical to further develop foundational skills which form the basis for ongoing learning throughout school and beyond" (p. 13). This declaration values:

> . . . a positive and successful start to school [that] gives children the confidence and motivation they need for continued learning success. It is important that primary school [principals and teachers continue] to understand, provide the right environment for, and respond to the needs of young learners to discover, explore, play, create, and express themselves. Primary school is a key stage for children as they enhance their communication skills, establish and grow peer relationships, and have a growing understanding of

their place in the world. This period of significant change and growth also sees children develop resilience and adaptability and strategies to manage themselves in different situations. The beginning of school is an important time to have in place effective early intervention and support strategies to ensure each young person has the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to thrive as they move through school. (p. 13)

Building foundational skills through the primary school years is a key commitment of the Australian Governments as noted in the following quote:

[The] Australian Governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that schools are responsive to students' developmental and learning needs in primary school to provide a strong foundation for continued learning success throughout school and beyond. (Education Council, 2019, p. 13)

During a review period that began in 2008, the most significant event regarding curriculum was the introduction of the Australian Curriculum. This was made possible by legislation in 2008 for the establishment of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). States and territories, rather than the federal government, are responsible for schooling. However, the federal government also wields power over education through some funding arrangements. According to Harris-Hart (2010), "Where the federal government could not constitutionally legislate a national curriculum, they have legislated the establishment of ACARA to advance their national agenda" (p. 310). The functions of ACARA, as set out in Part 2, Section 6 of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act, 2008 (Australian Government, 2008, n.p.) are to:

a) develop and administer a national school curriculum, including content of the curriculum and achievement standards, for school subjects specified in the Charter; and
b) develop and administer national assessments; and
c) collect, manage and analyse student assessment data and other data relating to schools and comparative school performance; and
d) facilitate information sharing arrangements between Australian government bodies in relation to the collection, management and analysis of school data; and
e) publish information relating to school education, including information relating to comparative school performance; and
f) provide school curriculum resource services, educational research services and other related services; and
g) provide information, resources, support and guidance to the teaching profession; and
h) perform such other functions that are conferred on it by, or under, this Act or any other Commonwealth Act; and
i) perform such other functions that are ancillary or incidental to the functions mentioned in the preceding paragraphs.

## 1.20 AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

To understand primary schooling in Australia and the new narrative that needs to be written, an overview of the Australian Curriculum – a framework for the Australian Educational System – needs to be briefly established. ACARA formulated the Australian Curriculum which consists of eight learning areas (English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies and Languages), seven general capabilities (Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, and Intercultural Understanding) and three cross-curriculum priorities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures,

Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, and Sustainability) (ACARA, 2016b). There is also a provision in the legislation for recognition of other curricula. The ACARA criteria stipulate that the specified curriculum:

- aligns with the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians [Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration]
- assists students to "become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens"
- meets principles and guidelines in the Shape of the Australian Curriculum v.4 2012 document
- provides for students to learn the curriculum content and achieve standards described in Australian Curriculum. (ACARA, 2016b, n.p.)

## 1.21 THE FRAMEWORK OF THE AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Australian education system is embedded within a framework that provides primary, secondary, and tertiary education. School education is similar across all of Australia with only minor variations between states and territories. School education (primary and secondary) is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16 (Prep to Year 9 or 10).

English is the official language of Australia and the main language of instruction in the Queensland education system. Many schools offer bilingual programs or programs in other languages. In this literature review, key elements of Prep to Year 6 literacy and numeracy (Queensland Government, 2018b, n.p.) are outlined.

The overriding aim of the Prep to Year 2 phase is for "children [to] learn through interactions with others, experimentation, scaffolding, explicit teaching, practice and play in the classroom and beyond. . . .to build on your child's previous experiences with new and different learning opportunities at school" (Department of Education, 2022b, para. 5). As research and experience note, not all children enter primary school with the same experiences and skills. There are many factors that contribute to their learning deficits and strengths (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). Teachers are the main source of help for all students to engage with the learning process and to connect their home language with spoken and written English used in the classroom and other environments (Chiatovich & Stipek, 2016).

During Years 3-6, students are expected to "consolidat[e] 'learning to read and write' through English . . . increasingly using literacy skills for 'reading and writing to learn' in other learning areas. . . . [with] the development of specific mathematical skills and knowledge [similarly progressed] across the curriculum" (ACARA, n.d.b, para. 2).

There is significant focus in the Australian Curriculum documents on literacy and numeracy skills in English at the Prep to Year 6 levels. However, it is recognised on the Queensland Government Education website that "English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), formerly known as English as a Second Language (ESL), is a specialised field of education concerned with teaching English to learners who do not speak Standard Australian English as their first language" (Queensland Government, 2018a, para. 1).

Further, Sahlberg (2021) has noted, more of a focus on well-being and social emotional development and support for students in the Prep to Year 6 levels needs to be apparent in the primary schooling system. Thriving school systems throughout the world, such as Canada and Finland, focus on these very significant areas of childhood development. Play-based learning, inquiry-based learning, social-emotional well-being, and inclusive and equitable education are discussed in Section II as suggestions to explore future educational directions for Queensland primary schools (Sahlberg & Doyle, 2019).

## 1.22 MULTI-CULTURAL SUPPORTS IN QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

The Queensland Government Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (cyjma.qld.gov.au) based on "The *Multicultural Recognition Act 2016* promotes development of Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community with opportunities for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to participate in all aspects of life in our state" (Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, 2021, para. 1). Further, ACARA emphasised a commitment to providing for all Australian students and their individual learning needs by stating that "ACARA is committed to the development of a high-quality curriculum for all Australian students, . . . All students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning programs drawn from a challenging curriculum that addresses their individual learning needs" (ACARA, 2016c, para. 1).

## 1.23 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS SUPPORTS

Providing opportunities for successful schooling outcomes for all students underpins the Queensland Government's Education focus on the release of the *Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student succeeding* strategy (Queensland Government, 2020a) which sets the direction through three priorities: connection to culture; high expectations; and meaningful pathways. Further, these priorities set four key targets for improvement by December 2022:

- proportion of educators who strongly agree they are confident in embedding cultural perspectives in learning
- proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving C or above in English
- numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students receiving multiple school disciplinary absences
- rate of student retention from Years 10 to 12. (para. 6)

This forthright approach prompts immediate action to be in place from the earliest schooling years for each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student.

## 1.24 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM – LITERACY AND NUMERACY (NAPLAN) AND MYSCHOOL WEBSITE

Students in Australia who attend State, Catholic and Independent schools participate in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The testing happens during the month of May, and it assesses the skills of all students in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and numeracy. According to the Queensland Government (2019), the NAPLAN tests support schools in identifying how the current educational programs are working. These tests help to discover what needs to remain the same, and what needs changing in the areas of curriculum, resource allocations, as well as assisting parents in knowing how their child is progressing in the fundamental learning areas of literacy and numeracy. A critique on the importance of standardised testing and whether the results help or hinder the further learning of students is discussed throughout this literature review (Fullan, 2021).

The Queensland Government encourages students to participate in the NAPLAN tests, as they believe the more students who participate the more data will be available. According to government officials, the increased amount of data will help to provide "a more accurate picture of how schools and students are progressing" (Department of Education, 2022c, para. 5). They advocate for "[b]etter data, both in terms of quality and quantity, [leading] to more effective decisions and greater support for all students" (para. 5). It is critical to focus on both the quantity and the quality of the education of primary students in the state of Queensland (Grant, 2017; Hanushek et al., 2008; OECD, 2020a).

The My School website (https://www.myschool.edu.au/), established in 2010, is intended to enable "information that supports national transparency and accountability of Australia's school education system through publication of nationally consistent school-level data" (n.p.) and a school's NAPLAN results to be compared with results of students who have a similar background.

## 1.25 BARRIERS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM, NAPLAN AND MY SCHOOL

The introduction of the Australian Curriculum, the use of NAPLAN and international standardised tests such as TIMSS and PISA, along with the presentation of school information on the My School website, according to Thompson (2013), appear not to have contributed to enhancing innovation in schools across Australia, and have not improved academic educational outcomes in many areas across Australia.

A survey of 941 teachers in South Australia and Western Australia indicated that:

> . . . 67% of coded responses identified that NAPLAN was not having a positive impact on learning. In particular, teachers perceived that NAPLAN had a narrow focus, lacked relevance to students and their prior learning, reduced collaboration in the classroom and promoted approaches that were detrimental to "deep" learning. Many comments from the survey reported that NAPLAN increased stress and pressure, did not enable inclusivity or timely feedback and is an exercise in test-taking rather than a task that promotes authentic learning. (Thompson, 2013, p. 69)

This feedback concurs with a range of concerns expressed by various authors, one of whom called "for richer forms of accountability located between informed prescription and informed professionalism and local community involvement" (Lingard, 2010, p. 133).

Lobascher (2011) noted that "[r]esearch indicating that high-stakes testing has a negative pedagogical effect is extensive. . . . The dominant argument is that high-stakes testing discourages teachers from being creative, and instead encourages didactic teach-to-the-test approaches that reduce motivation" (p. 14). Hardy and Boyle (2011) also maintained that the focus on numbers in Australia through the use of NAPLAN and My School does not include the context of students: "This approach erases the complexity of a broader conception of educational practices, and ignores the challenges of attending to the diverse needs of real learners, in real time, and in real places" (p. 220). Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2012) suggested the use of "alternative systems of accountability that have been described as more intelligent and that recognise the complexities of assessment purposes, modes, conditions and contexts" (p. 76).

Among the barriers associated with the testing culture is that the process and results lack an emphasis on the importance of context and place. Context and place are vital to understanding the "whole child" and how to provide better educational programming for them. A survey of Australian school leaders signalled that implementing the Australian Curriculum was limited by lack of the following: information, funding, access to curriculum experts, time for teachers to prepare, relief staff, professional development, and time for production of resources for distance education (Halsey et al., 2010).

## 1.26 ASSESSMENT IN RELATION TO AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS

A prominent focus on external assessment with NAPLAN, TIMSS, and PISA could be placed as the reason for neglecting the two goals of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Education Council, 2019). An emphasis on teaching to the tests could be neglecting most of the seven general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum as important educational outcomes – Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, and

Intercultural Understanding (ACARA, n.d.a). Such lack of focus is short-sighted and questionable as to what is being assessed and why (Fullan 2018, 2021; Sahlberg, 2021).

With the current focus on standardised national and international assessments, it seems as if the definition of a "successful learner" is someone who produces results at or above the national/international minimum standards in NAPLAN, TIMSS, and PISA tests. A critique of current assessment approaches suggested that "the most ambitious and vital aim of schooling [is] for every student to gain at least a year's growth for a year's input . . . [further that the focus should be on] . . . interventions with an effect size of at least 0.4, the average expected effect size for one year of progress in school" (Hattie, 2015a, p. 1). Hattie further expressed concern that "too often, . . . curriculum expectations are stipulated in 'years', as if all students in a year cohort are working at the same level" (p. 13) and suggests that the actual reality in each year level is in fact a spread of students' performance levels.

Hattie (2015a) advocated change to both the curriculum and assessment. He claimed, "it is still possible to ameliorate the worst damages of grouping children as if they were all working at the same achievement levels. . . . [this can be done] by implementing a levels-based curriculum with levels-based assessments . . . rather than a year-based curriculum" (p. 13). He further stated, "there is little evidence that creating more achievement tests will help much. . . . as long as they are focused on providing information about student achievement, they will continue to tell us little" (p. 16). Hattie argued, "until we see tests as aids to enhance teaching and learning and not primarily as thermometers of how much a student knows now, on this day, on this test, then developing more tests will add little and will remain an expensive distraction" and indicated that the purpose of assessment should be on providing information to teachers and school leaders about their impact (p. 16). Hattie (2015b) further believed, "Perhaps most urgent is the need to reframe the narrative away from standards and achievement and to move it towards progression" (p. 5).

Both Hattie (2015b) and Masters (2017) have proposed changes in the purpose of and approach to assessment. Hattie (2015b) pointed to the importance of expectations, "the greatest influence on learning is the expectations of the students and the teachers. . . . It should be a major role of schools to assist children in exceeding their expectations" (p. 11). Masters (2017) suggested that "successful learning is not indicated by completing easy material, but depends instead on providing every learner with well-targeted, personalised stretch challenges" (p. 3). Masters argued for the monitoring of a student's learning progress over time. Instead of defining a student's learning in relation to year-levels, this approach, proposed by Masters (2017) recommends, "successful learning is defined as the progress or growth that students make over time" (p. 4).

Hattie (2015b) further advocated developing new assessment and evaluative tools to provide feedback to teachers. He believes these new tools should assess and evaluate students' attitude and achievement attributes. Moreover, he pointed to the need of increased:

> . . . measures of learning, such as the extent to which students can engage in collaborative problem-solving, deliberate practice, interleaved and distributed practice, elaboration strategies, planning and monitoring, effort management and self-talk, rehearsal and organisation, evaluation and elaboration and the various motivational strategies – the 'how to' aspects of learning". (p. 13)

It is noted that many of these suggestions would be aligned with some of the general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum, particularly Information and Communication Technology Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking and Personal and Social Capability.

The years 2020 and 2021 have been a unique time in history. Australia was not immune to the devastation that jolted the world. Beginning in 2020, wildfires raged out of control, leaving the air dense with heavy smoke cover across the nation's major cities, towns, and rural communities. As volunteers and emergency crews worked tirelessly to contain and douse these fires, some of the nation's schools were threatened. This led to some of Australia's school leaders entering 2020 under extremely stressful conditions. Adding to these wildfire stressors of 2020, in March 2020, COVID-19 was declared an international pandemic. The state governments in Australia collectively proclaimed that schools are an essential service. Thus, the state schools remained open, despite government lockdowns. Unfortunately, due to the daily changes in the pandemic and what to do about it, this decision by the state governments left most school leaders learning of updates and numerous operational changes through local media outlets. This led to a rapid decline in organised communication. Despite the lack of an organised communication system, as continual changes in the health care status occurred, school leaders continued to ensure the ever-evolving safety and operational protocols were put in place for students, staff, and school community members. Most state schools throughout Australia offered both onsite and online education. Providing these two options demonstrated at a deeper level the socioeconomic disparity between city and rural schools: Government, Independent, and Catholic schools (Australian Research Council Project, 2020).

Still, two years later since the global pandemic was announced, globally COVID-19 has not yet been brought under control. Australia is doing much better than most other countries. Unfortunately, many essential service workers such as school leaders are stressed and burning out. In the latter part of 2020, The Australian Research Council Project conducted *The Australian Principal Occupational Health, and Safety Wellbeing Survey*. The results are alarming, as they demonstrate that Australian school leaders in 2020, in comparison to the results from 2019, were much more fatigued from continual exposure to work stressors. Compared to 2019, Australian school leaders reported the following:

- Worsening results for short-term measures of Quantitative Demands, Work Pace, Role Clarity and Justice.
- Worsening results for long-term health indicators of Burnout, Sleeping Troubles, Stress, Depressive Symptoms and Somatic Stress.
- Better results for short-term measures of Influence, Commitment to the Workplace, Role Conflict, Social Support from Internal/External Colleagues, Social Support from Supervisors, and Work-Family Conflict. (Australian Research Council Project, 2020, p. 6)

In the midst of these worsening health and occupational conditions, one wonders about the care of the school leaders. The survey signaled that school leaders work long hours, "an average 54.5 hours per week, over 14 hours longer than the standard 40 hours workweek" (Australian Research Council Project, 2020, p. 6). Not surprisingly, "22.1% of school leaders [were above this average, working] more than 60 hours a week" (p. 6). While these school leaders are extending their working hours due to an ethic of care and an ethic of profession, 83% continue to be in harms way of at least one form of offensive behaviour within 12 months leading up to the collection of the survey data:

- Approximately 43 in 100 school leaders have been subjected to Threats of Violence (5.5 times more than the general population);
- Approximately 37 in 100 school leaders have been subjected to Physical Violence (9.4 times more than the general population); and
- Approximately 33 in 100 school leaders have been subjected to Bullying (4.0 times more than the general population). (Australian Research Council Project, 2020, p. 7)

Of note, the data collected in the survey do not delineate between primary school leaders and high school leaders. In general, the population of Australian school leaders, and arguably school leaders from other nations such as Canada (People for Education, 2021), "as a group, are at risk of fatigue, mental health decline, and burnout" (Australian Research Council Project, 2020, p. 7).

In his book, *Changing Australian Education*, Alan Reid (2020) advocated for a new narrative in Australian education. Reid believes that a new story must be told to help unravel the damage that has been done to education as a result of the standardisations of policies. Reid views that changing the direction of educational policy will be a very difficult feat due to the ideologies that shape it such as the embedded language, concepts, beliefs, and assumptions of both the people who make the policies and the educators themselves. According to Reid, the first step in this task is to understand from where the origins of standardisation have evolved. He asserts that the standardising that has arisen in education is a result of the philosophy of neoliberalism.

According to Reid (2020) and others, for well over 40 years, neoliberalism has shaped Australian society. David Harvey (2005) explained neoliberalism as:

> . . . a theory of  political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. At its heart is the individual, who advances their self-interest by competing with others to get ahead. Neoliberalism posits that the best way to organise people is to create the conditions for competition to flourish; and the most efficient way to do that is through the free market. (p. 2)

The Neoliberal belief system fosters that all areas within a society should be run like a business, where profit is the dominant motive. Found within this belief system are winners and losers. In this process, the individual becomes a customer or consumer, rather than a citizen (Cahill & Toner, 2018). Neoliberalism maintains that the path to wealth creation requires governments to get out of the way of the wealth creators by removing regulations that constrain business, and by lessening their tax burden. Rather than governments orchestrating the distribution of wealth, this should be managed by the market, with the rewards to business trickling down to benefit all. In this way, inequality is seen as a social good (Reid, 2020).

As Monbiot (2017) asserted, neoliberalism defines human society by the market, and as a market, which is ". . . run in every respect as if it were a business, its social relations reimagined as commercial transactions; people redesignated as human capital. The aim and purpose of society is to maximise profits" (p. 30). According to Reid (2020), so entrenched is neoliberal philosophy that they have shaped Australian language, and the way Australians see the world, themselves, and the alternatives that are open to them in the future.

Several questions arise that must be considered if there is to be a chance of rewriting the narrative of education and in particular, primary schooling. How are all these conditions altering the mindsets of people in Australian society and the landscape of Queensland primary school leadership, both now and into the future? What historical lessons of primary schooling and leadership can help to navigate future directions – politically, socio-culturally, and economically – during these extremely uncertain times? The final portion of Section I in this literature review will provide a brief overview as to what is being said about the future in relation to primary school students and the relational implications for educational leadership.

## 1.28 WHAT IS BEING SAID ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Berliner and Sahlberg (2017) asserted that countries are being pitted against one another, as the "testing culture" becomes increasingly more recognised "as the way to do things" within the sphere of education.

Unfortunately, the media controls the announcing of which countries are the winners and which countries are the losers. This in turn spreads fear of falling behind in "testing scores". Thus, policy makers jump on board and prioritise the international assessments and ensure that the testing culture is alive and well within their realms of influence. Are Australia and the rest of the world headed in the right direction? The nation of Australia has a stake in education, and this literature review is attempting to understand the increasingly influential and controversial phenomenon of international testing and what it means for students and the future of Queensland primary schools.

Literature and research are very clearly aligned that the international testing programs and the school systems have been less and less successful (Fullan, 2021; Sahlberg, 2021). Many school district systems are still operating under industrial age models (Schleicher, 2018). There is very little credibility in the positioning that the international testing programs and the school system are not needing to change. In fact, the opposite is being proclaimed. There are social implications as well that must be attached to educational reform in the post pandemic age. Seeking to return to normal is not an option if learning and the health and well-being of students is prioritised (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020; Sahlberg, 2021).

Australia has a national curriculum, however, in many ways it is chained to its past. In its educational policy and practice, Australia is often known to follow other countries such as the UK and the U.S. Moving into the future, educational leaders as well as policy makers must understand that education is a vast human and economic resource that is forever evolving. All the while, students and their voices are for the most part invisible in the measurement of educational impact. In the past decision, making in education has been heard from a privileged group, while others have been marginalised and ignored. In the new narrative, Queensland policy makers need to include contributions from a balance of educational sectors to include diverse perspectives from varying cultures, races, roles, and experiences (Netolicky et al., 2019).

Moving forward to the future, the new narrative for Queensland primary schools must advocate for considering the identities, voices, and professional autonomy of teachers, as well as considering the complex, unpredictable work of school leaders as they navigate the many competing roles and responsibilities. Netolicky et al. (2019) believed that the Australian educational system has the potential to be inclusive and collaborative by providing teachers and principals with an opportunity to share their opinions and ideas. This new educational culture would require relationships built on trust with all key stakeholders. Primary schools need to be places where all educational community stakeholders seek to understand and grow, rather than to blame.

Fullan (2021) states that the COVID-19 pandemic has provided the school system with "a once-in-a-generation opportunity" to make much needed alterations. He is hoping that key stakeholders do not miss this very auspicious time to incorporate necessary changes (p. 32). Fullan (2021) designed "the human paradigm" as a new governing model for the future of education. He recommends that during this pandemic period educators must avoid a "learning loss" mindset. The human paradigm consists of a combination of four right drivers which are:

1. Wellbeing and Learning (essence)
2. Social Intelligence (limitless)
3. Equality Investments (dignity), and
4. Systemness (wholeness). (p. 5)

Fullan (2021) is calling for educators to circumvent a "learning loss" mindset, in the wake of global school closures in 2020, 2021, and possibly on into 2022. Most of Australia has not suffered as long and as hard as many

other parts of the world. However, undoubtedly due to the fact that Australia is a part of the global economy and global social network, there are implications as a result of the pandemic as well as a result of other factors.

## 1.29 SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND WELL-BEING LEARNING IMPLICATIONS

When writing a new narrative, the social-emotional and well-being of primary students cannot be ignored. To study social-emotional well-being and its effects on learning, it is essential to look at and to compare the results from children who live in the world's richest countries, which includes Australia, as outlined in the latest UNICEF (2020) Innocenti Report Card 16 – *Worlds of Influence: Understanding What Shapes Child Well-being in Rich Countries*.

> The evidence from 41 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and European Union (EU) countries tells its own story: from children's chances of survival, growth and protection, to whether they are learning and feel listened to, to whether their parents have the support and resources to give their children the best chance for a healthy, happy childhood. This report reveals children's experiences against the backdrop of their country's policies and social, educational, economic and environmental contexts. (p. 3)

The issues of health, skills, and happiness dominate the report, with two crucial questions addressed, "What makes a good childhood? . . .[and]. . . Why do all children in rich countries not have a good childhood?" (p. 3). The report further addresses what needs to be done with "UNICEF call[ing] on high-income countries to act on three fronts: Consult children . . . Connect policies . . . Create strong foundations" (UNICEF (2020, p. 4). Perhaps it is this focus, with a more serious read of the report, that might best form the basis of a new narrative in Queensland primary schooling rather than the pressure of standardisation testing for all.

Educators of early childhood through primary schooling ages will attest to the fact that all children need the foundations of learning how to establish and maintain relationships, manage emotions, and cope with stress. The research of Powell et al. (2018) across a large number of schools to hear student views on the meaning of "wellbeing", reported that student agency and relationships are central to their wellbeing. Furthermore, they claimed that "the findings point to immense potential in accessing and utilising children and young people's views for change and reform in schools in the area of student wellbeing" (p. 515), with a strong emphasis on including children in conversations about how best to support their wellbeing and thus enabling policy makers to recognise children's viewpoints as evidence for policy development. Poignantly, their call for "closer attention to how rights are negotiated within schools since dialogue with students regarding the identification and implementation of their rights in both policy and practice in school settings holds much potential for their wellbeing" (p. 527), should surely herald heightened attention. Of consequence is the importance of authenticity of structures and procedures within the context of the child's experience.

## 1.30 ECONOMIC LEARNING IMPLICATIONS

The shift needs to occur away from the learning loss mindset that is settling in across schools around the world. While economists Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) state that the exact amount and types of "learning losses are not yet known [as the pandemic is still on-going], existing research [in 2020] suggests that students in grades 1-12 affected by the closures might expect some 3 percent lower income over their entire lifetimes" (p. 3). While disadvantaged and marginalised students will most likely experience larger impacts. The costs will only become larger, as the disruptions to educational life have not yet halted (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). "These [learning] losses will have lasting economic impacts both on the affected students and on each nation unless they

are successfully remediated" (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020, p. 3). Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) signal that the learning losses are also not evenly spread across the nations, as:

> [t]he economic losses will be more deeply felt by disadvantaged students. All indications are that students whose families are less able to support out-of-school learning will face larger learning losses than their more advantaged peers, which in turn more than likely translate into deeper losses of lifetime earnings. (p. 3)

The 2014 OECD report linked high-quality, accessible education to employment and noted that "[i]t is critically important to address inequalities in education opportunities in order to improve social mobility and socio-economic outcomes, and to promote inclusive growth through a broadened pool of candidates for high-skilled jobs" (p. 137).

## 1.31 IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND STEM FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA

Newly evolving technologies are changing the methods in which students receive, read, and send information, either at home or at school. Digitalisation has resulted in the creation and availability of newly formed materials such as "text messages; . . . annotated search-engine results; . . . tabbed, multipage websites; [or] . . . archival material scanned from microfiches" (OECD, 2019b, p. 86). Educational systems and schools need to respond to the increase in digitalisation by incorporating digital reading into all instructional programs. (OECD, 2019b).

With digital technology now a part of the landscape, schools need to ensure that they are willing and able to shift mindsets so that primary school leaders are visionary and future-oriented in their approach towards primary school-aged students' learning, resource allocation and professional development for all school staff. If school districts in association with schools have a plan for visioning digitalisation into instruction, this will send a clear message that they are concerned and caring in relation to the future of primary-aged students. Ensuring that technology is a priority also helps to set the direction for their upcoming higher educational endeavours, careers, and jobs. Digital skills are imperative to be taught and learned in primary school. Primary level education is where the action needs to begin to make sure that primary school children will thrive in the workforces that currently revolve incredibly around digitalisation (Foundation for Young Australians [FYA], 2016).

The gap is widening in relation to the knowledge that is being taught and understood in the education system and the actual skills that are required in the workplace. These current limitations need to become a priority for all educational systems in Australia, beginning in the primary years. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), must be incorporated more into the curriculum and daily instruction of students so that they are equipped and ready with STEM skills, thus enabling them to competitively participate in higher educational endeavours as well as find employment in the workplace. Careers of the future will also rely on skills such as critical thinking, creativity, cultural awareness, collaboration, and problem-solving. All of these "21st century skills" need to be taught in the Australian classrooms from a very young age, beginning in primary school. If a teacher plans well, STEM education can compliment the on-going incorporation and instruction of "21st century skills". It is predicted that future workers will spend more than twice as much time on job tasks requiring science, mathematics, and critical thinking than they are currently (FYA, 2016).

Australian schools must keep pace with technological advancement for the good of its economy. Being prosperous must be of prime concern for the nation of Australia. Teaching STEM skills and ensuring that students understand them is critical to the growth of each individual student as well as the growth of the Australian national

economy. If not, companies that require the STEM skills may have to look to other countries to establish and grow their organisations. If schools and school districts are forward thinking and teach Australian children and young people with the jobs of the future in mind, Australia is sure to prosper from jobs and employment opportunities. In turn this will inevitably boost its economy (FYA, 2016).

STEM learning is vital for students in their day-to-day lives as they manoeuvre through the contemporary world. There is such an increase in technological development in biomedicine, microfabrication, robotics, and artificial intelligence, that each individual student's future depends on being instructed in STEM skills from a very young age. As well, students need to have the important life skills to understand and apply data, and to be able to solve complex problems. They all need to understand as well how to apply them for both now and in their future lives (Department of Education, Skills & Employment, 2021).

## 1.32 FUTURE - BIG PICTURE SPECULATIONS

A mind shift in the way curriculum is delivered needs to happen at the teacher, primary school principal, district, and government levels. Many studies support that learning is not stagnant, instead it is a dynamic process that builds on prior learning and knowledge (Baker, 2013; Belot & Webbink, 2010; Hampf, 2019; Jaume & Willen, 2019; Kufeld et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, for the past number of years, the Australian education systems have placed an emphasis on a variety of programs that have relied heavily on instructional leadership, yet the nation's educational reforms have not produced the expected results. Included in the educational reforms are:

- Primary Mathematics Specialists, which is a government sponsored professional learning program for teachers;
- Instructional Leaders in New South Wales in which specialist instructional leaders guide and help to develop teachers' skill capacity in the areas of literacy and numeracy;  and
- Learning Specialists in Victoria which is a career pathway for designated highly skilled teachers where they are appointed to help to improve the practices of teachers (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020).

These initiatives have all been well-intentioned. But according to Goss and Sonnemann (2020) they have not all been well-executed. Many of the initiatives have lacked focus and have not transferred into daily teaching practices. To date, none of the initiatives over the past few decades have been able to produce a wide-scale change on a continuous level that the nation of Australia requires, like some "high-performing systems already have, such as the Master Teacher roles that are part of Singapore's expert career track" (Goodwyn, 2016, p. 145).

As this literature review is unearthing, there is a big disconnect between theory and practice in relation to what is occurring in Queensland primary schools. The Grattan Institute (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020) surveyed 700 teachers, principals, and instructional leaders across Australia. The survey sought to discover what is the impact of instructional leaders in schools.  As can be seen by Figures 1.8 and 1.9, three-quarters of the teachers value the guidance that they had been given by instructional leaders, however, only a third of these teachers actually changed their practices in response to the guidance that they had received.

**Figure 1.8**

*How Often Teachers **Agree In Theory** That Instructional Leaders Can Improve Their Teaching Practice*

**Most teachers believe instructional leaders can help …**
Teacher responses to the statement 'instructional leaders can improve your teaching practice'



73%

| | | | 36% | 37% |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5% | 7% | 15% | | |
| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
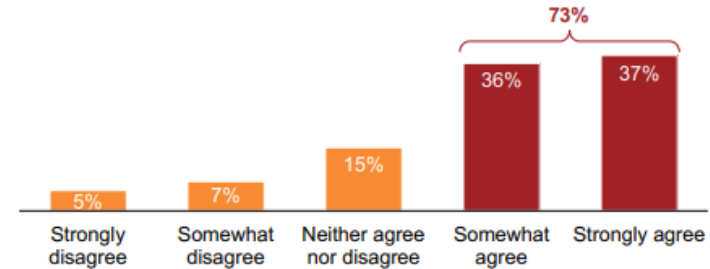
Note: Survey question (n=270): Teachers – In principle, do you agree that instructional leaders with deep pedagogical expertise can help you improve your teaching practice?
Source: 2019 Grattan survey on instructional leadership (Goss 2020).

*Note.* Goss & Sonnemann (2020, p. 15 ). *Top teachers: Sharing Expertise to improve teaching.* Grattan Institute.

**Figure 1.9**

*How Often Teachers **Actually Change Their Practice** Based on Advice From an Instructional Leader*

**… but in practice, most teachers don't change their teaching based on instructional leader advice**
Teacher responses on how often they change their teaching practice based on advice from an instructional leader



69%

| 22% | 47% | 25% | 6% |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rarely or never | Occasionally | Fairly often | Frequently |
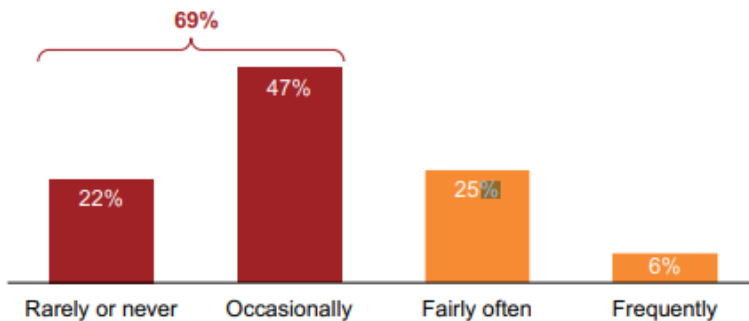
Note: Survey question (n=285): Teachers – How often have you changed your pedagogical practices based on the advice of an instructional leader?
Source: 2019 Grattan survey on instructional leadership (ibid).

*Note.* Goss & Sonnemann (2020, p. 15 ). *Top teachers: Sharing Expertise to improve teaching.* Grattan Institute.

From the Grattan Institute's surveys, it is not evident as to what is causing this disconnect between teachers being provided support from instructional leaders and them actually changing their practice. Self-identified instructional leaders did report that they were allocated too little time to do the job properly. Approximately 50% of them stated that when they began the job as an instructional leader that they did not undergo any initial training. As well, approximately 75% of them stated that they did not receive any direction from external experts. Many of the instructional leaders are generalists, so they do not have specific training as to how to teach particular subjects such as mathematics and science (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020).

The Grattan Institute is predicting that the disconnect between practice and instruction will continue, unless focused and relevant changes are made. The discourse between practice and theory has previously been noted in two recommendations in the 2018 Gonski 2.0 report. One being that teachers require better career paths and the second being to increase the effectiveness of the professional learning received by teachers (Gonski et al., 2018). The evidence produced thus far in this literature review is clearly pointing in the direction that primary education in Queensland needs to change. Where does primary education in Queensland fit into the implications for education as an investment into the future?

## 1.33 IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION AS AN INVESTMENT INTO THE FUTURE – EQUITABLE EDUCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS IN AUSTRALIA

When writing a new narrative that must include equitable education for all primary students, it is vital to listen to the stories of world-renowned educators such as Pasi Sahlberg (2019). Sahlberg (2019) has noted that school systems around the world tend to vary significantly in one area: how they deal with inequalities and diversities that accompany children to school daily. Nordic countries, for example, place great emphasis on inclusiveness and fairness in schools. Inclusion in schooling means that all children have access to learning and support that ensures they will attain essential knowledge and skills required in their education. When a large number of children are out of school or segregated in special institutions or classes, inclusiveness becomes at risk.

Fairness, as the OECD (2016a) defines it, in education refers to the strength of the relationship between children's family background and achievement in school. Fairer education systems assure that all students, regardless of their home background, individual characteristics, race or ethnicity, place of residence, or other life circumstances have similar opportunities to succeed in school as others. Other education systems that focus on inclusion and fairness are Estonia and many of the provinces in Canada, with Canada and Finland being the leaders in overall educational success (Sahlberg, 2019).

Australia was among the top-performing school systems in early PISA surveys in the 2000s. Since then, however, students' learning outcomes in Australia have dropped in PISA and other internationally comparative student assessments. ACARA (2017) and OECD (2016a) both show that based on NAPLAN results, a plateauing of students' results and research on reasons for this situation vary. These include, for example, unequal resourcing, and school choice (see Sahlberg, 2019).

In the country of Finland educators are able to formulate within schools what is important from children's perspective. Typical responses include, "everybody has the opportunity to succeed" (Sahlberg, 2017, p. 52), "all pupils have access to good learning" (p. 52), "no child is left behind" (p. 10), and "anyone can learn anything if appropriate methods of learning and supports are available" (p. 7). Very common in the Finnish schools' mission statements is a strong emphasis on equity in schooling. That is, ensuring that students' home background, life situation, or first language do not impact their learning in school. Looking to the country of Finland as an example, "school-based curricula are, therefore, an important strategy to convert system level strategies and equity policies into concrete actions and structures within schools" (Sahlberg, 2017, p. 52) and how to monitor them.

## 1.34 IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION AS AN INVESTMENT INTO THE FUTURE – ECONOMIC AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

There are many reasons as to why education is important, and Catherine Grant's (2017) report for K4D, commissioned by the UK Department for International Development and other Government departments, focused on its contribution to economic growth. Grant's report suggests that education of students need not only focus on the "quantity of schooling–the percentage of the population that completed primary, secondary, or

tertiary education" (p. 3) – but as well, it must have a critical eye to its "quality" (p. 3). Hanushek and Kimko (2000, as cited in Grant, 2017, p. 3) determined "it is not merely years of schooling but the quality of schooling . . . that has a significant relationship with economic growth". The Sustainable Development Goals note that there has been major progress in international education access, specifically at the primary school level for both boys and girls. Hanushek et al. (2010, as cited in Grant, 2017, p. 3):

> . . . review[ed] the role of education in promoting economic growth, with a particular focus on the role of educational quality. [Their review concluded] that there is strong evidence that the cognitive skills of the population – rather than mere school attainment – are powerfully related to long-run economic growth. The relationship between skills and growth proves to be very powerful in empirical applications. The effect of skills is complementary to the quality of economic institutions. Growth simulations reveal that the long-run rewards to educational quality are substantial, however, they require patience.

Focusing on human capital as driving economic growth for developing countries has in turn placed unnecessary attention on school attainment (Grant, 2017). A positive in reference to developing countries is that they have made great progress in narrowing the gap with developed countries in relation to school attainment. However, research evidence has emphasised the importance of cognitive skills as they correlate with economic growth. These research findings place greater relevance on the importance of school quality. Unfortunately, developing countries have not been as successful in closing the gaps in terms of quality of schooling when compared with developed countries. It is imperative that developing countries improve school quality, as without gains in these areas, developing countries will continue to find it difficult to improve their long run economic growth (Grant, 2017; Hanushek et al., 2010).

The Finnish government has maintained teachers' and principals' professional learning and development as one of the main policy priorities since the start of the era of stronger school autonomy in the early 1990s. In recent years, for example, the state budget has allocated over AUD40 million to teachers' professional learning and leadership development. Local municipalities (310 in total) that govern and provide most of the funding for schools also significantly invest in continuous improvement of their schools (Sahlberg, 2012).

The OECD, examining the six cycles of PISA data, concluded that the highest-performing education systems across OECD nations are those that combine quality with equity (OECD, 2012). Other research demonstrates that "investing as early as possible in high-quality education for all students and directing additional resources towards the most disadvantaged students as early as possible, is a cost-effective strategy that will produce the greatest impact on improving overall academic performance" (Sahlberg, 2012, p. 29).

What can Australia learn from those with more inclusive school systems to enhance equity and economic benefits in its primary schools? Reviews and research about the state of Australian education often refer to declining PISA scores and, as a result, a widening achievement gap between Australia and Singapore and other better performing countries, such as Finland (OECD, 2020a). Thus, further inquiry in this literature review in the following major section explores the components of a quality education and how Queensland primary schools can continue to write a new narrative to further develop improvements in order to increase student learning, decrease inequities and boost the economic benefits that are being poured into the Queensland primary educational system.

## 1.35 IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION AS AN INVESTMENT INTO THE FUTURE – SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

In recent literature, numerous writers have discussed the very need to ensure that the learning students engage in includes the development of skills in the areas of critical thinking, creativity, and emotional management. Research has demonstrated that emotions can help or hinder students' academic engagement, commitment, and overall success in schools. This is due to the fact that relationships and processing of emotions strongly affect how and what students learn. Teachers are the main emotional leaders of their students, and the foundation for promoting emotional balance within their groups is their ability to recognise, understand, and manage their emotions. The social and emotional learning approach defends that, as with academic skills, the development of social and emotional skills must be accomplished through explicit instruction (Williford & Wolcott, 2015).

It would be next to impossible to find literature on critical learning skills for the 21$^{st}$ century that did not mention the need for STEM skill development. Along with STEM development, there is also a need to support students in the rapidly changing social structures that are leading to a very unpredictable future. Educators and decision makers cannot ignore that the students attending Queensland primary schools today secure future jobs that are not even in existence yet (World Economic Forum, 2016). Schleicher (2018) concluded that "the dilemma for educators is that routine cognitive skills, the easiest to teach and easiest to test, are exactly the skills that are also easiest to digitise, automate and outsource" (pp. 231-232). The author further stated:

> . . . schooling today needs to be much more about ways of thinking (involving creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and judgement), ways of working (including communication and collaboration), tools for working (including the capacity to recognise and exploit the potential of new technologies) and about the capacity to live in a multi-faceted world as active and responsible citizens. (p. 31)

Along the same lines, Trilling and Fadel (2009) declared that two sets of core skills will need to be at the top of the list for future jobs in the 21$^{st}$ century: "the ability to quickly apply new knowledge; and knowing how to apply 21st century core skills (i.e., problem solving, communication, teamwork, use of technology, innovation, etc.)" (p. 11).

Primary schools in Queensland are therefore facing challenges in connection with social and emotional learning considerations. Schools are where children and young people spend a good portion of their days. Schools impose a huge influence on students' socialisation as well as they increase cognitive, social and, emotional issues (Durlak et al., 2011). It is imperative to create programs that nurture primary students' socio-emotional and creative skills in schools. This literature review is not attempting to argue that socio-emotional skills are not taught in Queensland primary schools, but that, as stated by Pinto and Raimundo (2016), "the challenge is to do so intentionally, effectively and positively" (p. 18). Further, Cejudo & López-Delgado, (2017) state:

> If teachers and principals accept the assumption that intentionality is necessary, then attention is called to the importance of teachers' roles in nurturing the development of socio-emotional and creative skills as well as the importance of emotion in teaching practice. Research has pointed out the close relationship between teachers' socio-emotional skills and the effectiveness and quality of the teaching-learning process, in addition to the development of students' socio-emotional skills. (p. 30)

The desire to nurture and to teach socio-emotional skills in schools has been on the increase. This is due in part to an awareness that they are fundamental for student success, not only during their school careers but later on in life. Research supports that emotions can help or hinder children's academic engagement, their

commitment, and overall school success. Relationships and how one processes emotions affect how and what they learn (Elias et al., 1997).

"Promoting the development of students' socio-emotional skills in the classroom involves teaching socio-emotional skills, giving students the opportunity to practice and improve these skills and to apply them in various everyday situations" (Weissberg et al., 2015, p. 9). Through the explicit teaching of social and emotional skills, students "apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible caring decisions" (CASEL, 2021, p. 6). Social and emotional learning (SEL) advances educational equity and excellence through genuine school-family-community partnerships. Thus, establishing learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. Social emotional learning can help address various forms of inequity and empower young primary students to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities (CASEL, 2021).

Research confirms, and parents, teachers and principals agree, that social and emotional competencies can be taught, modelled, and practiced and lead to positive primary student outcomes that are important for success in school and life. Decades of research demonstrate that there are multiple benefits to teaching, modelling, and practicing social and emotional learning with primary aged students (Williford & Wolcott, 2015).

## 1.36 WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP HEADING INTO THE FUTURE?

When writing a new narrative for 21st century Queensland primary schools heading into the future, leaders need to be ready and open to make changes in ways that they have never done before. Almost 20 years after Michael Fullan (2001) wrote the book, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, he has an updated 2020 version. Fullan believes that prior to COVID-19, things were complex. However, in this updated version of his book, he discusses that complexity of all facets that humans are dealing with have exponentially grown. Remember as well, Fullan updated this book pre-COVID. The world since COVID has only become more complex and so has society, therefore, Fullan (2020) claims leadership must become more sophisticated. What is helpful for school leadership moving into the future, is that Fullan has kept the same five components of change leadership from his 2001 book, however, he provides new insights for primary school leaders in each of the components of change leadership. The following five new insights into each of Fullan's (2020) components of change leadership have definite future implications for primary school leadership in Queensland:

**Moral purpose:** While it remains the steadfast for school leadership, moral purpose now must shift to its impact – it is more dynamic and interactive. Moral purpose is built to rely on all situations primary leaders find themselves in.

**Understanding change:** How to create unity of purpose in shifting circumstances is how to understand change in today's world. Purpose must be continually developed to fully comprehend ongoing modifications.

**Building relationships**: The new insight is all about effective collaboration. The new concept is connected to autonomy and as Fullan believes it is about building trust. He states in his book that a lot can happen rapidly when trust exists.

**Creating and sharing knowledge:** Deep learning is new to this concept. The big change for leaders, at least in the short run, is that Fullan believes that leaders have overestimated Appreciative Inquiry and

underplayed human intelligence in relation to all key school community stakeholders. Fullan believes that primary and secondary schools have not changed in over 25 years, and they must, in order to help the national and international economies flourish.

**Creating coherence:** With this concept, Fullan attests that leadership is the job of forging coherence. He points to the fact that systems must have a shared sense of purpose about work and that coherence making has to be part of everything so that success can occur.

See also: https://www.gettingsmart.com/podcast/michael-fullan-on-leading-in-a-culture-of-change/

Fullan remains optimistic that schools and school systems will see a big change in the next five years. He believes it needs to be an accelerated bottom-up evolution. He thinks the pandemic has shaken things up in ways that, in the long run, can be productive (Fullan, 2021). In Section III of this literature review, more detail into the implications for Queensland primary school leadership for the future will be addressed.

## 1.37 SUMMARY OF SECTION I

Section I – *From Where Have We Come?* – has provided an historical overview in relation to Australian schools, and more importantly, its relevance to Queensland schools. This portion of the literature review was necessary so that a consideration from the past lessons of Queensland primary schooling and the leadership of it can be further analysed to inform present and future practices (Patton, 2015). It is critical for the Queensland primary school leadership to have a mindset and be aware that mistakes made in the past can be altered in the present, if navigated appropriately (Dweck, 2016; Fullan, 2021). An historical overview was imperative to help provide for Queensland primary school leadership more clarity and conciseness in their present-day decision making as it relates to the economic, social-emotional, academic, and political processes. The past always influences what is currently happening and inspires the potential of what is yet to come (Patton, 2015; Schein & Schein, 2016). Moving forward to Section II – *Into The Future* – the essence as to how the past can inform the future for the leadership of Queensland primary schools is investigated.

## 2.1 OVERVIEW OF SECTION II – INTO THE FUTURE – ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PERFORMANCE OF A COMMUNITY/NATION

In the face of a prolonged crisis, we must redouble our mobilisation and target the right priorities, those that will allow us to truly make education a common good, a fundamental right. The first of our principles is that schools are irreplaceable, as the pandemic has shown. The second is that more than ever we need resilient and innovative school systems to face present and future shocks. The third is that no screen can ever replace a teacher. – Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General (UNESCO, 2020)

The research questions will be explored throughout this portion of the literature review in relation to leadership implications with a view towards the future and as depicted in the conceptual map (see Figure 1.2):

- Research Question 1 – In what ways does primary schooling impact the economic and social performance of a community/nation?
- Research Question 2 – What is the contribution of school leadership to the achievement of quality primary school student outcomes, academic and social?

According to the OECD (2020d), based on cross country comparisons, approximately 20 years ago the nation of Australia was one of the leaders in education. This is no longer the case. The OECD (2020a) statistics reveal that there are currently system-wide inequities in developed countries that are created due to resource gaps amongst schools in these rich nations. UNICEF (2020) has ranked the educational system in Australia to be one of the most unequal as it compares data from some of the richest countries in the world.

A United Nations Report (UNICEF, 2017) ranked Australia 39 out of 41 high- and middle-income countries in achieving quality education. From this report, it is evident that the country was falling behind in basic measures of teaching and learning. Only Romania and Turkey were ranked below Australia in education in the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report card of 2017. In a similar report card released in 2020, *Innocenti Report Card 16* (UNICEF, 2020), Australia ranked 35th out of 38 in children's mental well-being, 28th out of 38 in children's physical health, and 19th out of 38 in academic and social skills. Thirty-eight high- and middle-income countries around the world were ranked according to their children and youth testing results in the areas of academic skills – measuring proficiency in reading and mathematics; and social skills measuring feeling able to make friends easily. The academic results for both reports, 2017 and 2020, used the educational data from PISA scores (UNICEF, 2020). Based on these indicators, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway rank as the top three places to be a child among wealthy countries. Gunilla Olsson, Director of UNICEF Innocenti, said that many of the world's richest countries, which have the resources they need to provide good childhoods for all, are failing children (UNICEF, 2020).

The UNICEF's (2020) Report Card 16 found that Australia was fairing poorly in terms of child well-being compared with other rich countries. One in six children were reported to be living in poverty and Australia ranked 30th out of 38 countries for educational equality. The OECD (2020a) found that these inequalities were on the rise, including a widening gap in reading ability. In Section I of this review, it was demonstrated that the Australian Government is providing more money to education, yet the educational quality and the mental well-being and physical health of children in the nation are significantly lacking. This leaves Queensland primary schools to continue to find ways to improve the quality of education, childhood mental well-being, as well as their physical health.

Unfortunately, UNICEF has predicted that child poverty will more than likely remain above pre-COVID levels for at least another five years in high-income countries globally, a likely increase on the one in six Australian children living below the poverty line. During the first wave of the pandemic, it was reported by UNICEF (2020)

that only 2% of financial relief from government in OECD and EU countries was allocated to provide support for families raising children. It is positive to note that in UNICEF's report, Australia was recognised as a world leader in giving support to families and children, the government had invested $2.9 billion in monies to families. This equated to support for approximately 6.6 million people. Australia was also a leader in investing $8.5 million in temporary unemployment packages to workers who had lost their jobs or had been laid off due to the first wave of the pandemic.

Children and youth are not in the high-risk categories in relation to suffering the physical effects of COVID-19. However, the interrelated impacts to education, child protection and healthcare have widened the pre-existing inequality gaps. UNICEF Australia (2021) has been quite active in continually surveying young Australians throughout the pandemic. They want to discover how young people are coping with the effects of COVID-19. Unfortunately, their analysis has consistently demonstrated that there is an increase in mental health and anxiety in relation to their future stability (especially financial stability). Further, UNICEF (2020) is urging all world governments to seriously consider providing financial support in the areas of social protection to cover a wide range of needs for children and their families such as: present and future COVID-19 responses; protecting already existing child and family benefits and services so that future cuts will not result; and longer-term protection systems that reduce and prevent poverty (UNICEF Australia, 2021).

If there is a premature withdrawal of financial support that is currently helping Australian families cope, it will have lasting impacts on literacy, education, well-being, and mental health of children and young people (OECD, 2021a). UNICEF Australia (2021) is advocating that financial support for Australian families needs to be permanent and adequate. This permanent and adequate support does protect children from COVID's impact. However, it also helps to address additional pre-pandemic challenges Australia was facing. On the UNICEF (2020) Report Card 16, countries were also ranked based on their policies that support child well-being and other factors including the economy, society, and environment. Norway, Iceland, and Finland have the highest-ranking policies and context to support child well-being. On average, countries spend less than 3% of their GDP on family and child policies. When education is such a strong predictor of life outcomes, as we investigate the future, the call is for both Australian and State governments to support its children and families both economically and socially to further advance primary schooling.

## 2.2 FUTURE WORLD – DEMANDS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND MOBILITY – DESIGNING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit young businesses very hard, and it has further highlighted existing education inequalities in the Australian nation. It is encouraging that OECD (2021a) governmental initiatives are hailing a post-pandemic recovery period that will carry with it opportunities for innovation and reallocation. These changes are necessary to ensure that the future technological digitalisation and climate change targets are met in a fiscally responsible manner. Post-pandemic opportunities provide a chance to increase educational opportunities for students who are marginalised and to refocus on improving the living standards of Indigenous communities (OECD, 2021a). Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 outline the performance of Australia's economy, social inequalities, and environment prior to the COVID-19 crisis.

**Figure 2.1**

Economic Statistics
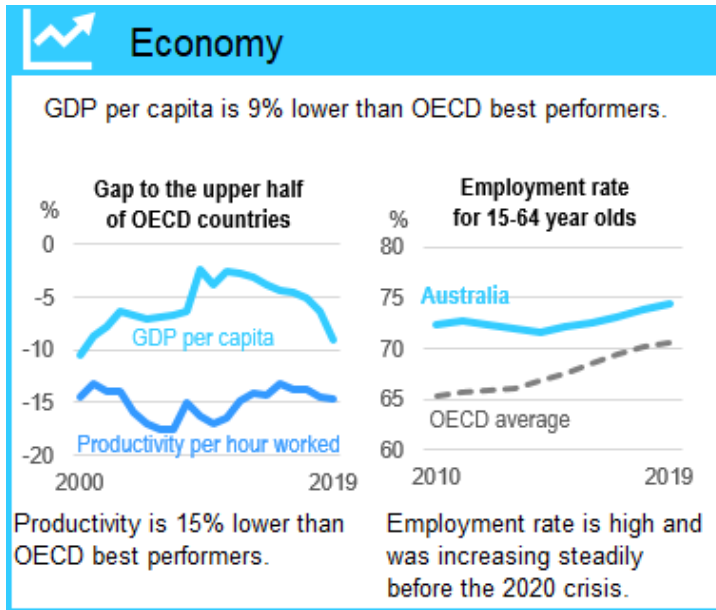


*Note.* Economy: OECD, National Accounts, Productivity and Labour Force Statistics Databases; Inequality: OECD, Income Distribution Database and World Bank, World Development Indicators Database; Environment: OECD, Environment Database and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Database. https://www.oecd.org/economy/growth/Australia-country-note-going-for-growth-2021.pdf

**Figure 2.2**

*Inequality Comparisons*
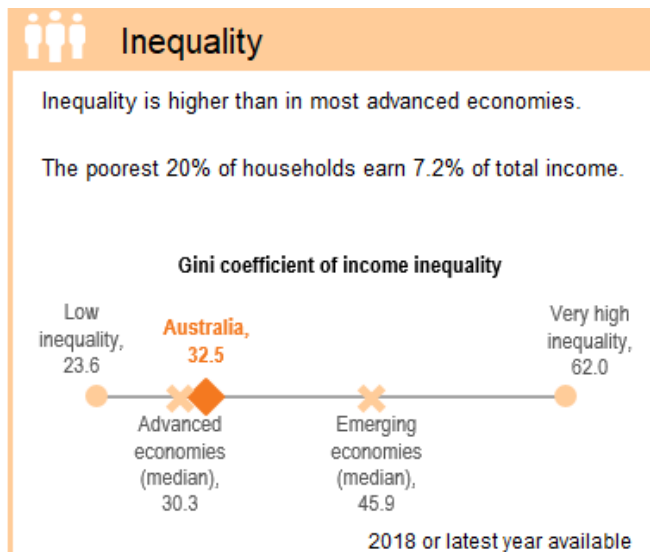


*Note.* Economy: OECD, National Accounts, Productivity and Labour Force Statistics Databases; Inequality: OECD, Income Distribution Database and World Bank, World Development Indicators Database; Environment: OECD, Environment Database and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Database. https://www.oecd.org/economy/growth/Australia-country-note-going-for-growth-2021.pdf

**Figure 2.3**

*Environmental Quality*
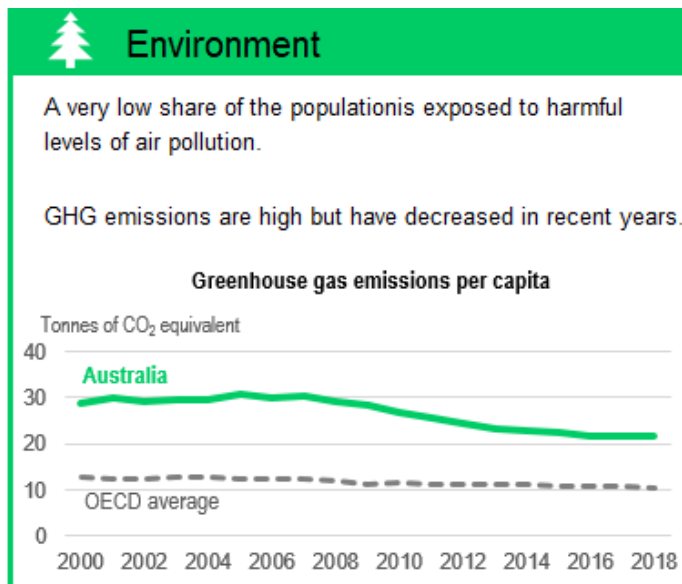


Note. Economy: OECD, National Accounts, Productivity and Labour Force Statistics Databases; Inequality: OECD, Income Distribution Database and World Bank, World Development Indicators Database; Environment: OECD, Environment Database and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Database. https://www.oecd.org/economy/growth/Australia-country-note-going-for-growth-2021.pdf

Summarising the Figures 2.1–2.3, the Australian economy prior to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that productivity is 15% lower than the OECD's best performers, and the Gross Domestic Product per capita is 9% lower than OECD's best performing countries. The employment rate for 15 to 64-year-olds is high and was increasing before the 2020 crisis. Unfortunately, the inequalities in Australia are higher than most advanced economies, and the poorest 20% of the households earn 7.2% of total income. The good news from these figures is that a very low share of the Australian population is exposed to harmful levels of air pollution. As this information was taken prior to COVID-19, looking into the future, Australia needs to use the post-pandemic time as an opportunity to address long-standing issues of societal and economic inclusiveness to further advance primary schooling.

## 2.3 THE PANDEMIC RECOVERY PERIOD – AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

According to the OECD (2021a) Economic Policy Reforms 2021: Going for Growth report, in the nation of Australia, business innovation was on a decline entering into the pandemic. Once COVID-19 hit, the employment losses were heaviest in young businesses. Looking to the future for the economy, improving business framework conditions and strengthening competition would greatly benefit innovation and productivity growth. Total gross domestic Research and Development (R & D) spending and direct government funding of business R & D have been lagging behind OECD countries. Boosting direct business R&D funding and ensuring measures which are designed to induce additional private R&D investment would elevate long-term potential growth. According to the report, the environment for innovation can be further improved by strengthening university-business linkages (OECD, 2021a).

As seen in Figure 2.4, educational outcomes from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 testing (OECD, 2020a) vary widely in Australia, compared to OECD scores, EU scores and when comparing to Canadian scores. The educational inequities displayed have a direct effect on the equality of opportunities in the labour market (OECD, 2021a). The pandemic resulted in some remote learning that has further exacerbated the existing disparities in student learning outcomes across socioeconomic groups. However, by improving the educational outcomes of the at-risk student population, there is a very good chance that the future growth of the economy will increase. The OECD supports an increase in access to quality online courses and the use of Open Educational Resources to help bolster the learning of disadvantaged students and those living in rural and remote areas of Australia. Further, OCED (2021a) recommends that to further support the impact that educational opportunities have on students from disadvantaged backgrounds, each Australian state and territory should provide to all students an increased level of information on educational opportunities, career information, educational pathways, and employment outcomes.

**Figure 2.4**

*Student Performance Is Uneven*
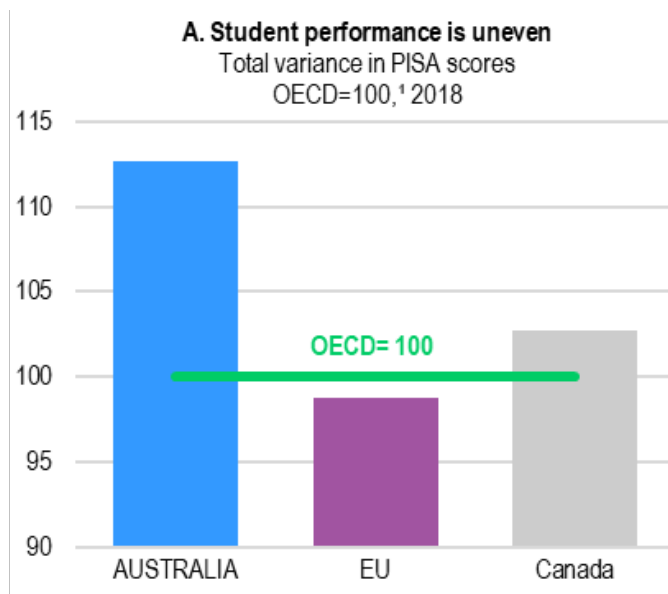


The variance components in mathematics, science and reading were estimated for all students in participating countries with data on socio-economic background and study programmes. The variance in student performance is calculated as the square of the standard deviation of PISA scores in reading, mathematics and science for the students used in the analysis.

*Note.* Panel A: OECD, PISA Database (https://www.oecd.org/economy/growth/Australia-country-note-going-for-growth-2021.pdf, p. 2.)

In addition, according to the *Going for Growth* report (OECD, 2021a), when comparing the well-being of Indigenous communities with the rest of the Australian population, there are significant gaps. These gaps are in levels of education attained, employment rates and overall longevity of life. To help lessen the divides, some strategies to consider would be to provide Indigenous communities the opportunities to play a greater role in designing and implementing policies as well as implementing evaluation strategies for policies that directly affect these communities. These strategies would further ensure more inclusion and would hopefully increase economic growth potential in rural areas that directly affect the younger Indigenous population. Figure 2.5 outlines the Australian 2019-2020 reforms completed and the recommendations moving forward into 2021 as generated in the

areas of 1) education and skills; and 2) inclusiveness between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population as a result of the *Going for Growth* report (OECD, 2021a).

**Figure 2.5**

*Australia: Summary of Going for Growth Report and Recommendations OECD*

| **Education and skills: Inequality in education and the level of skills limit the growth capacity of the economy** |
| --- |

**2019-2020 Reforms**

The recovery from COVID-19 measures ramped up spending in 2020 to boost programmes that improve the educational outcomes of disadvantaged students and school leavers.

The government has supported the delivery of 50 000 higher education short courses in 2020 to reskill and upskill workers for enhanced labour reallocation.

**2021 Recommendations**

Implement education programmes that are targeted at making up for the pandemic-induced losses in learning hours of disadvantaged students in schools and early childhood education.

Boost disadvantaged students' access to high-quality online courses and Open Educational Resources, including those that live in remote areas.

Provide better information for education choices. This should include a single platform with career information, education pathways and employment outcomes.

| **Inclusiveness: Well-being gaps between Indigenous communities and the rest of the population remain large, notably in educational attainment, life expectancy and employment rates.** |
| --- |

**2019-2020 Reforms**

The Australian Productivity Commission appointed an Indigenous Policy Evaluation Commissioner in 2020.

The Australian Productivity Commission published a draft report in 2020 detailing a whole-of-government evaluation strategy for policies related to reducing well-being gaps of Indigenous communities.

The government has committed to embedding formal partnerships and shared decision making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a priority reform as part of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

**2021 Recommendations**

Give Indigenous communities a greater role in policy design and implementation.

Introduce a whole-of-government evaluation strategy for policies affecting Indigenous communities.

Increase statistical capacity to collect evidence on Indigenous business and economic development issues.

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*Note*. Adapted from https://www.oecd.org/economy/growth/Australia-country-note-going-for-growth-2021.pdf, p. 3

## 2.4 DESIGNING PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE – WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED AND OTHERS THAT SHOULD NOT BE REPEATED?

When writing a new narrative for primary schools in Queensland, designing successful schools for the future is an important venture for decision makers. However, they need to first determine what mistakes need not be repeated. Sahlberg (2021) believes that Australia has the best schools in the world – but not for everyone. According to comparative evidence from other OECD countries, the gaps in learning from the lowest to the

highest Australian students is quite significant. For example, the learning gaps at the age of 15 equate to approximately three years of schooling (OECD, 2020a).

Reflecting on what this inequity means for parents and primary school students, Sahlberg (2021) makes two observations. First, in urban areas, finding a good affordable school and second, in order to gain admission into that school means pressure is placed on children in the early years to enhance their academic knowledge in literature, numeracy and science. Further, reported in the Gonski Institute of Education (2019) survey, this pressure has meant a reduction in the creative arts and based on parent feedback, there has been a reduction in play in primary schools. Comparing Australian schools to those of Finland, Sahlberg (2021) notes that schools in Finland are designed more for the children, than for the staff who work at them. In Finland young children begin formal school at the age of 7. There are no assessments or tests in primary school, as these often lead children into unhealthy competition, or worse still, labelling some children as failures. In primary school in Finland, there is a significant amount of time dedicated to play. The learning of the students is designed around their interests (Sahlberg, 2021). Play-based and inquiry-based learning will be further explored later in this literature review as possible ways to re-design the primary school systems in Queensland.

As has been discussed previously in this literature review, the latest OECD PISA results show a long-term decline in reading, mathematics, and science skills for Australian students. As seen in Figure 2.6, in 2018, Australian 15-year-olds performed more than a year below those in 2003 in mathematics, about a year lower in reading than those in 2000 and a year worse in science than those in 2006 (OECD, 2020a). It is important to note that PISA does not test mathematics rote learning but how well 15-year-old students can problem solve and apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. PISA also shows which countries are the highest performers and which are getting better in science, mathematics and reading. Singapore has been the highest scoring country in all areas since it joined testing in 2009.

Comparing country results (see Figure 2.6), Australian students were three years behind Singapore in mathematics and three months behind in reading. The Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang economic region (the participating regions of China) were three and a half years ahead of Australia in mathematics in 2018. Hong Kong performed at the same level as Australia in reading in 2000, but outperformed Australia in 2018 (OECD, 2020a).

**Figure 2.6**

*PISA 2018 Scores in Reading, Mathematics, and Science*



*Note.* https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-04/top-ranking-education-systems-in-world-arent-there-by-accident/11766042

Further, Australian students have demonstrated a slow and steady decline in PISA results in all three subjects – reading, mathematics and science since the year 2000 (see Figure 2.7). Reading slightly increased in 2009 and remained the same in 2012, however, overall, the PISA results for Australian 15-year-old students are not demonstrating a positive upwards trend.

**Figure 2.7**

*Australian Achievement Trends in PISA Results – Reading, Mathematics, Science (2000 – 2018)*



*Note.* https://www.acer.org/au/pisa/key-findings-2018
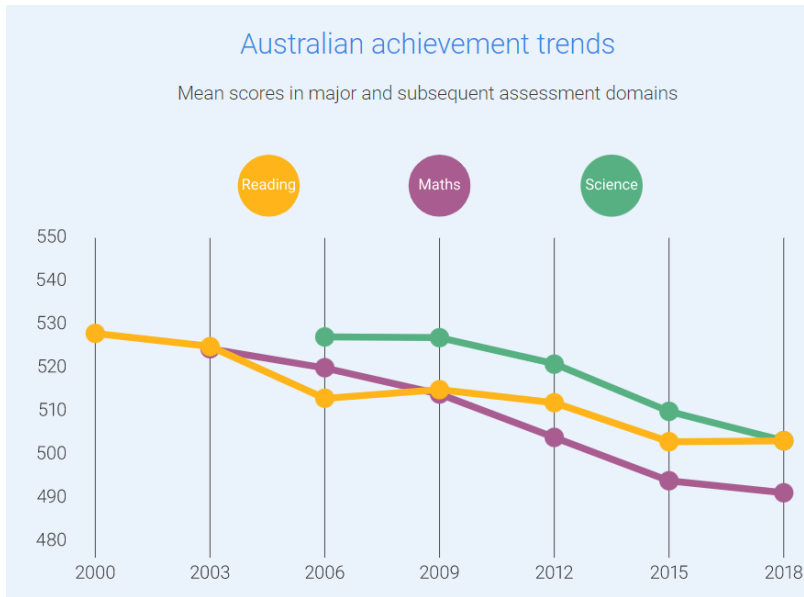
To address this decline in PISA scores, Australia has many benefits that open great opportunities to reimagine primary school education to meet the needs of the future. Australia has the oldest tradition of education that has provided successful learning opportunities to primary-aged children. Australia also has a clear common recognition in the 2019 Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration of the importance of having good education that is accessible to all children. In Australia, there are dedicated teachers and school principals across the country who are willing to go above and beyond to make sure that what was promised will happen for all children (Sahlberg, 2021).

As has been outlined numerous times already in this literature review, parents and the community are important players in determining what Queensland primary education could look like. The opinions and perspectives of parents and the community shape the way politics behind education are handled. Having open and honest conversations between parents and community members are so important if the Queensland primary school system is going to be reimagined to meet the needs of the future (Sahlberg, 2021).

As the suggestions for the new narrative in primary education are being put forward, it is obvious that there is no one right answer to what Queensland needs to do to create a great school for all primary children. Looking to the future, the focus just on basic skills it not enough. Developing students who can solve problems, be innovative, and have collaborative and creative skills will be necessary to lift the productivity of our workforce. It is quite evident from the literature thus far, that the nation of Australia has everything it needs to improve primary education in the country. This will require school leaders and policy makers to engage in better informed conversations with parents and community members (Sahlberg, 2021) to realise what the future primary schools

could be. In addition, is to look at other high performing countries such as Hong Kong and Singapore to see how they designed their education system, as their outcomes were not achieved by chance (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020). However, as a cautionary note, these initiatives need to be contextualised and relevant to the complex socio-cultural environment that is Australia.

## 2.5 EDUCATION IS NOT AN EXPENSE, RATHER AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

As the Grattan Institute's report (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020) demonstrates, high performing systems make significant investments in their teachers. They focus on the same things Australian governments do – recruiting the best, training teachers well, and giving them practical support and development. Interestingly, a 2021 study of four high performing East Asian systems – Hong Kong, Korea, Shanghai (the region of China that participated in PISA before 2015) and Singapore – showed they followed a much more intensive process of seeing these changes all the way through into the classroom (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020).

Reported by Goss and Sonnemann, in the year 2000, Hong Kong performed at the same level as Australia in reading (see also Figure 2.6). However, between 2001 and 2006, it used a series of systematic reforms to improve their outcomes. The reforms included: a re-examining of their teaching approaches to reading, and moved from introducing an "integrative perceptual approach" that integrated the way students perceive the meaning and structure of Chinese in reading, writing, and using language (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020). Also, they made an intensive effort to help teachers shift practice. These included:

- explicit training for thousands of principals and teachers in the new teaching techniques;
- schools and teachers being supported to adopt the new approach through seminars, new teaching materials, sample lesson plans, as well as on-the-job support from curriculum experts and research academics;
- teachers having good access to peer support through classroom observation and teacher networks; and
- parents being engaged to create a good home reading environment (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020).

The change in the Hong Kong methods of teaching and improving student reading should not be thought of as a case where improvement occurred due to government controls. Instead, Hong Kong, similar to Australia, provides a high level of autonomy at the school and district levels. Instead, government policies that effected the entire system allowed for schools to improve as to how reading was taught. This also resulted in significant changes to the teachers' practices.

Singapore as well focused on teacher quality to improve results on the PISA test, but more importantly to improve the learning and student achievement of its children. Singapore invests time and financial resources into recruiting teachers who are motivated and are high academic achievers. The country only accepts one in 10 applications for the teaching profession. As an incentive, the government of Singapore pays student teachers a very generous sum of money during their teacher training. This is very attractive to many, thus when recruiting, the Ministry of Education has a large pool of applicants to draw from. Goss and Sonnemann (2020) made similar recommendations for Australia's teacher recruiting strategies in The Gratton Institute Report. To also lure more capable teaching applications, Singapore reformed its teacher pay and career structures (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020), where teachers' pay is equivalent or above that of a vice-principal. See more on the impact and importance of teacher development and professional learning in the entire Gratton Institute Report (Goss & Sonnemann, 2020). Singapore has established "master teacher" positions where the teacher leaders in their expert subjects help to mentor teachers in schools (Sonnemann, 2019).

These successful countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Finland all did it by design (Sahlberg, 2021). This would suggest that Queensland needs to redesign its primary schooling system to make the necessary improvements related to their challenges. One influence that is not debatable is that outside of the family and influences from home, teachers have the most significant impact on student learning (Goss & Sonnemann, 2017; Kennedy, 2016). To attract higher achievers into the teaching profession, to provide better pay and career opportunities, Australia can look to the models used in Hong Kong and Singapore as support in relation to improving the current teacher crisis (Jensen, 2010). According to Jensen (2010) of the Gratton Institute, if the Australian governments became serious about improving quality of teacher effectiveness, this invest would do more for the Australian economy than any other reform.

## 2.6 IMPORTANCE OF VALUING AND INVESTING IN TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

The teaching profession is facing considerable challenges from more directions than one. School teachers in many parts of Australia work longer hours than before (OECD, 2020b). According to the ABS (2021), teachers are one of Australia's largest occupational groups and are responsible for educating future generations. The evidence from conducting this literature review has determined that teachers are doing more and more with less and less. The perception that teachers are well-paid, enjoy long holidays and leave work by 3:00 p.m. each day clearly does not match with reality. The research on the intensification of teachers' work has found that Australian teachers commonly work more than 50 hours per week, considered by the ABS (2021) to be very long working hours. They also face growing scrutiny over their work, the feeling of drowning under paperwork and administrivia, and managing the varied demands of parents (TALIS 2018 report) (OECD, 2020b).

Teachers are teaching primary students in their schools who have different values, expectations and needs from one another. Primary school teachers also teach students who come to school every day with a wide range of social, behavioural, psychological, and cognitive challenges that often make productive teaching and learning more difficult. Consequently, teachers are tired and even burnout to the point that many want to leave the profession to avoid further personal harm (OECD, 2020b; Sahlberg, 2021).

It is paramount for the primary educational system in Queensland to find effective ways to improve the status of teachers and the teaching profession. A suite of possible solutions needs to contain interventions that will have impact on teachers and teaching. The actions taken by school leadership, district leadership, and policy makers need to be directed more towards improving the education system and its sustainability. Sahlberg (2021) provides the following five recommendations to give this important process a place to begin: educational policies that address inequalities in education; increase the voice of teachers in the development and implementation of policies; address scheduling concerns so that there is more time in the workday for teachers to collaborate with one another; ensure that investments in technology for schools centres around pedagogical practices; and increase and build upon the confidence and trust in teachers from the primary school communities (key stakeholders).

## 2.7 TEACHER QUALITY AND RETENTION

There has been a movement across the world that is turning the attention of educational communities towards teacher quality and how it might be improved (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hattie & Anderman, 2019; Jensen, 2010). Of note is that the increased want to enhance teacher quality relates to the lessons learned from educational systems that score high on international student assessments such as Finland, Singapore, and Japan. Each of these successful educational systems has managed to create a situation where teaching is viewed by young people as an interesting career choice. In Finland, Singapore, and Japan most teachers spend their working

lives serving schools, they are not known to leave the profession (Sahlberg, 2021) unlike Australia where 30 to 50 per cent leave the profession in the first 5 years of teaching (TALIS 2018 report) (OECD, 2020b).

There is, however, an unsubstantiated belief that if schools only had quality teachers employed, that this one factor alone could increase student achievement and well-being in schools. However, this assumption neglects the major influences of family, socio-economic background, and social environments on students (Sahlberg, 2021). Of note as well with this assumption is that becoming a "quality teacher" takes about 5 to 10 years of systematic practice (Fullan, 2013; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Therefore, how would a "quality teacher" be determined during the recruitment process? It would take at least five years of consistently collecting data to determine who is a quality teacher and who is not (Sahlberg, 2021).

Information that is contrary to believing that quality teachers have a significant effect on student achievement levels is provided by the world's largest community of statisticians, the American Statistical Association (ASA). This organisation discovered some very important information on the effect teachers have on student learning in comparison to out-of-school factors. The ASA report that many studies have determined that teachers account for about 1% to 14% of the variability in student test scores. Instead, the opportunities for quality improvement of student outcomes are often found in the system-level conditions (ASA, 2014). As well, Haertel (2013) discovered through research that approximately 20% of variance in measured student achievement in school is determined by in-school factors, whereas up to 60% of student outcomes on tests are directly related to factors outside the school. The ASA (2014) is cautionary when reporting on statistics such as these, as they claim that the data do not mean that teachers have little effect on students' learning. Instead, the ASA (2014) report implies that the variation among teachers accounts for a small part of the variation in scores. The ASA claims that most of the variation in test scores is due in part to factors outside of the teachers' control, such as student and family background, poverty, curriculum, and unmeasured influences. On this many researchers and educators differ.

## 2.8 INCLUSIVE TEACHER EDUCATION – QUALITY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Having inclusive education as an essential component in the Australian teacher education program will provide students and new teachers with skills that, in the past, they did not necessarily acquire during their pre-service training. As a result of improvements in teacher education programs at universities, where inclusive education subjects are now compulsory, teaching in an inclusive environment is the professional positive of teacher practice, which may potentially improve educational outcomes for all involved (Boyle et al., 2011).

A good portion of Australian states and territories' budgets are being spent on teacher aides to provide inclusive education for all students. How best to utilise teacher aide support would be quite beneficial to include within teacher education programs (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). At present, how to effectively allocate and use resource support may not form part of teacher education programs, yet its inclusion is justified, as all teachers will work with aides at some point in their early career, as well as throughout their career. In addition, working collaboratively with a multidisciplinary team is an essential and common part of teacher practice. Therefore, embedding this component as part of teacher education programs would also serve the needs of new teachers and students (Boyle & Anderson, 2020; Boyle et al., 2011).

## 2.9 TEACHER ATTITUDES

Teacher attitudes are vital to the success of P to Year 6 students and the implementation of inclusive education in Queensland primary schools. There is a school of thought that has evolved from research showing that teachers' viewpoints in relation to students can affect how much the students learn (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

For example, if a teacher perceives that a student is "smart", research has determined that they spend more time with them, they praise them more often, and they call upon them. The data from the research have proven that these students learn more due to the positive attitudes that their teachers have towards them. They also enjoy school to a greater extent. The opposite occurs when teachers think that students are "less bright". Findings from early research conducted by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson (1968) centring on teacher attitudes towards students (a study nowadays would be highly controversial and unethical to conduct) confirmed this impact.

Additional research in the symbolic interactionist tradition in relation to teacher attitude focused on how teachers treat girls and boys. Some research studies have concluded that teachers will call upon and praise boys more often than girls, especially in the mathematics and sciences (Jones & Dindia, 2004). This very important body of research has since called upon efforts to educate teachers in relation to the ways in which they may unconsciously send these messages to boys and to girls. As well, due to this research, more awareness, and explicit strategies as to how to promote increased interest and achievement by girls in mathematics and science has come about due to these findings (Battey et al., 2007).

Moreover, it is imperative that teachers make a commitment to have a positive attitude with their students, as it clearly influences how a school creates an inclusive culture, thus translating into student outcomes. Research has proven that adequate resourcing is not sufficient. Instead, teacher attitudes are also crucial to the professional positive of inclusion (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

## 2.10 AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS

In Australia, teachers are required to register with a teacher authority in the state in which they wish to teach. In 2011 the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) published the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011). It provides a framework indicating expected levels of career practice (graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead) (AITSL, 2018). Teachers provide evidence against the standards to advance through the levels. In 2016, government officials approved the implementation of revised standards for accreditation of initial teacher preparation (AITSL, 2018). The aim of these updates is to strengthen the accreditation system by focusing more on outcomes. The higher educational institutions that are training pre-service teachers are required to demonstrate that their programs ensure upon graduation that teachers have learned the necessary knowledge and skills required to be successful in the classroom (AITSL, 2011, 2018).

Research has identified that the quality of teachers is one of the main in-school impacts on student learning (Hattie, 2009). It therefore stands to reason that in ensuring equitable education for all students in Australia, the provision of a high-quality teacher workforce is paramount (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). OECD results indicate Australia has one of the best workforces of teachers in the world. However, there are barriers related to geography, critical mass, and the metro centricity of current programs that make providing and maintaining – through initial teacher education, the provision of staff resources, support and professional development – a high quality teacher workforce in rural and remote areas problematic (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013; Lyons et al., 2006; Productivity Commission, 2012).

## 2.11 IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION AND SCHOOLS FOR STUDENTS' SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND COGNITIVE LEARNING

The importance of adequately resourcing schools to support teachers in the implementation of an inclusive environment is discussed as being second in importance to teacher attitudes to inclusion. The combination of teachers' job satisfaction and an inclusive school environment has a direct influence on a school's

ability to be effectively inclusive as it is the teacher at the ground level who must ensure inclusion is effective (Boyle et al., 2011).

The release of the OECD's (2021b) *Positive, high-achieving students? What schools and teachers can do* has reaffirmed that teachers cannot be replaced by education technologies, and that inclusive environments are paramount. The report focuses on the link between the OECD's (2020b) Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). It is based on evidence from countries which participated in the TALIS/PISA link project, covering schools that participated in both the OECD's TALIS 2018 and the PISA 2018 (OECD, 2020b). The countries involved in the project were: Australia, Ciudad Autonoma de Buenos Aires (CABA Argentina), Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Georgia, Malta, Turkey, and Vietnam (OECD, 2020a).

The OECD (2021b) report highlighted the importance of teachers and schools for students' social, emotional, and cognitive learning. One of the main reasons as to why the report is important is because it contains one of the direct statements the OECD has made to date about the importance of teachers and schools for students' social, emotional, and cognitive learning. The OECD's report rejects the argument which claims that the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that teachers can be substituted by on-line learning and it draws on a range of available research literature to reinforce its case.

The OECD (2021a) reports that the data tell exactly what the world is recognising about remote learning during this pandemic and that teachers and schools really do matter for students. The report also acknowledges that most parents have a newfound respect for what teachers do in their classrooms and even though remote learning has added in flexibility, most students realise they miss interacting with their classmates and learning in schools.

Another significant finding from this very recent report, that involved data collection from Australia, focuses on teacher job satisfaction. The OECD's report (2021b) indicated that teachers' job satisfaction and well-being are correlated to student achievement and a positive school culture and advised that, in consultation with teachers, school leaders, and education authorities, there could be a review of working conditions in order to identify areas that could be improved. New OECD (2021b) conclusions from this recent report include:

- social and economic disadvantage has a negative impact on student performance;
- boys seem to be more affected than girls by classroom disciplinary problems and school organisational issues;
- classes with students from mixed social backgrounds and abilities have an overall positive effect on student achievement; and
- additional administrative responsibilities on teachers undermine student learning.

## 2.12 STAFFING OF TEACHERS IN LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC REGIONAL, RURAL, AND REMOTE AREAS

Low socio-economic schools in regional, rural, and remote areas are some of the hardest schools to staff in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013; Green, 2008; Lyons et al., 2006). Data of the nature and exact numbers of staff shortages in regional, rural, and remote schools are difficult to determine from the literature surveyed in this review. The Staff in Australian Schools (SiAS) survey (McKenzie et al., 2014) bases the collection of its data on the number of unfilled staff positions as reported by principals at a particular time. The data provide only a snapshot of the actual conditions. In addition, the SiAS report has broader geographic definitions (metropolitan, provincial, and remote) in comparison to the Australian Statistical Geography Standard. These broader categories make comparisons with other report findings difficult. Moreover, SiAS 2013 concluded that

20% of primary and 40% of secondary principals report moderate to major difficulties in filling some staff positions. These difficulties to staff are noted as much more problematic in rural and remote areas (McKenzie et al., 2014, p. 14).

PISA also indicates that teacher shortages can be hidden through varying case scenarios such as filling positions with teachers teaching out of their main areas of expertise (OECD, 2016b; Weldon, 2018). There are issues of attracting and retaining quality staff in some rural and remote schools. However, there are some data that suggest overall, rural schools are staffed by experienced teachers (who stay in the particular geographical area for considerable periods of time). Some rural areas are perceived as very desirable places to teach. An example of this would be the schools in the wine-growing region of Clare Valley, two hours north of Adelaide. These rural regions often have well-established tourism industries, and reasonable housing costs when compared to major cities. As well, in some of these rural areas there is still quite sufficient access to a range of amenities, due often to the tourism factor. There are also schools that are more rural or remote but also close to popular natural amenities, for example, coastal fishing and surfing areas that also provide additional attractive lifestyle elements that entice teachers to move to the region. In addition to often being accepted by the community, the rural location lifestyle benefits are often some of the main reasons teachers stay (Lock et al., 2012; Lyons et al., 2006).

Many of the rural schools have staff profiles and turnover rates very similar to that of schools in larger cities (Lyons et al., 2006). But, overall, the further away from the major cities, the more difficult it becomes to attract and retain staff. These staffing issues plague many rural and remote regions in the Queensland area. Hard to staff regional, rural, and remote schools have more challenging environments both personally and professionally (Halsey, 2018). Regional, rural and remote schools overall have less educational and personal amenities, less satisfactory living environments, as well as difficulties in accessing possible support networks and professional development (Productivity Commission, 2012, p. 92). As Halsey (2018, p. 17) commented "… attracting and retaining the best teachers for regional, rural and remote schools continues to be one of the most persistent challenges on the 'education agenda'".

## 2.13 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The nation of Australia was one of the first in the world to consent to the Salamanca Statement and take on the philosophy of inclusive education for students with disabilities (Anderson & Boyle, 2019). Moving to a more inclusive framework, this ratification of the Salamanca Statement puts Australian primary schools in an acceptable position in relation to inclusive education. Historically, inclusive education was "accepted in most countries that learners with special educational needs have a right to be educated alongside their peers who do not have special needs" (Forbes, 2007, p. 66), as schools adopt a "philosophy of inclusion to address their social and moral obligation to educate all students" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 27). This fits the UNESCO Salamanca Statement's guideline 29 for curriculum flexibility which states: "Children with special needs should receive additional instructional support in the context of the regular curriculum, not a different curriculum" (UNESCO, 1994, p. 22).

Since the time of the ratification of the Salamanca Statement, the definition of inclusive education has expanded to include the education of all students. This is reflected in the most recent Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration which states that Australian governments, "must provide all young Australians with equality of opportunity that enables them to reach their potential and achieve their highest educational outcomes" (Education Council, 2019, p. 10). To date, further work is needed to ensure that all students fit into the inclusive education model in every primary classroom, across every school in Australia, and most probably Queensland. An OECD (2018a) report uncovered that Australia is 4th out of 26 OECD countries in the rankings of segregated schooling systems. As well, the student attainment gap in relation to students from disadvantaged backgrounds when compared with students from advantaged backgrounds is one of the highest in the OECD

(2018a). In Australia, in their first year of schooling, one in three students from disadvantaged backgrounds does not attain critical developmental milestones. This is in comparison to one in five students from advantaged backgrounds (Smith Family, 2016). This gap continues into adulthood. Smith Family (2016) report that fewer than three in five Australian adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, aged 24, are in full-time education, training, or work. Of Australians aged 24 who are from advantaged backgrounds, more than four in five are either in full-time education, training or employment.

There are three main areas to consider in relation to supporting inclusive education. They are educational, social, and economic reasons. This literature review will provide clear evidence that inclusive education in Australia must be justified across all three of these areas (Boyle & Anderson, 2020) as current information and research indicate that inclusive education does not help all students in the mainstream classrooms. Moreover, there are studies signalling an economic advantage for Australia to being fully inclusive. The economic advantage should not just be seen as a cost savings measure but instead as an assuredness of appropriate resource allocation to ensure effective education for all students regardless of their background or capabilities (Boyle & Anderson, 2020; Hanushek, 2020).

While there is strong evidence to support that Australian students from disadvantaged or minority backgrounds have a greater chance of being diagnosed with a disability or disorder, they are less likely to be educated within a mainstream classroom. Further, these students are at greater risk of receiving disciplinary action which includes suspensions or possibly exclusions from school (Anderson & Boyle 2019; Armstrong, 2018). As has been reported previously in this review, the impact on life outcomes, because of the educational gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students and/or those from minority groups in Australia, is significant. Educational attainment has been linked to income, social participation, and health outcomes (OECD, 2018b). Inclusive education can be fraught with difficulties, this literature review clearly shows the positive justification for inclusive educational environments (Anderson & Boyle, 2019).

## 2.14 DEFINING AS TO WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

When writing the new narrative for Queensland primary schools, it is imperative to understand that inclusive education is a firmly established and recognised part of primary education and policy in Australia. It has been for more than a quarter of a century. What comprises inclusive education has been debated both from a practical (Boyle et al., 2013; Hoskin et al., 2015; Page et al., 2019; Varcoe & Boyle, 2014) and a philosophical (Anderson & Boyle, 2020b) viewpoint. Yet, Richler (2012, p. 177) states, "Inclusive education is good education . . . the implementation of good inclusive education practice necessitates high-quality teaching approaches as well as positive social interactions that respond to the educational needs of all students". However, it should be acknowledged that there is a lack of agreement as to a definition of what constitutes inclusive education; even those in the 2016 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are open to interpretation (Graham 2020). However, without a coherent definition and a consistent approach to inclusion, the impact on the success of its implementation has been profound (Schwab et al., 2018).

Whatever the definition, Boyle and Anderson (2020) noted that inclusive education requires that all students must be educated in their local community school and teachers and staff utilise appropriate practices, pedagogies, and resources to meet their needs. Further, Topping (2012) suggested:

> . . . inclusion implies celebrating the diversity and supporting the achievement and participation of all pupils who face learning and/or behaviour challenges of any kind, in terms of socio-economic circumstances, ethnic origin, cultural heritage, religion, linguistic heritage, gender, sexual preference, and so on. (p. 13)

This shift in the understanding of inclusive education encompassing all students is a definite shift from its special education roots (Ainscow, 2020), and what is inclusive education to be more widely accepted within current literature (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). However, some researchers continue to ascertain that inclusive education is tied to special education and are adamant that inclusion needs to be considered as a continuum of support. This tie to special education is connected to special school placements, to full-time attendance in a classroom at the community school, and everything in between (Kaufman et al., 2020). While it is vital to acknowledge this perspective, it is not the lens through which inclusive education is considered within this literature review.

In Australia, inclusive education is viewed as a construct which believes that all students, regardless of their backgrounds or their abilities, must be educated together at their local community schools and therefore will result in an increase in the number of students entering into the school system in primary schools both here and world-wide (Schwab et al., 2018). This has international policy-makers wrestling with how to develop and implement inclusive educational reforms that are both successful and sustainable. Boyle and Anderson (2020) argue that most recently, on the international stage the concept of inclusive education has reached a pivotal point, as many nations are plateauing, or their school systems are becoming less inclusive, as is the case in Australia (see also, in the UK, Norwich & Black, 2015; in Australia, Anderson & Boyle, 2019). Before presenting an argument for the positives of inclusive education in Australia, it is necessary to situate the literature review within the context of the current educational climate in Australia and interrogate what is happening under the guise of inclusion.

## 2.15 COMPLEXITIES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Inclusive education has faced some unique challenges in Australia. While it is beyond the scope of this literature review to fully interrogate these challenges at an in-depth level, two are worth reviewing so that the complex nature of inclusive education within Australia is more fully understood. The first complexity relates to the governance of schooling across Australia, a complicated phenomenon (Dinham, 2007), particularly given Australia is a nation of fewer than 26 million people. Anderson and Boyle (2019) described it like this:

> Australia has three well defined, and very separate, education sectors – the government-run sector (state or public schools), and the non-government sector which comprises both independent and Catholic schools. These schools operate within each of the eight states and territories. The majority of funding for the government sector comes from the states and territories, with the Australian Government a minority public funder of this sector. The Australian Government is the major public funder for non-government schools, with state and territory governments providing minority public funding. (p. 798)

Therefore, Australia having three distinct educational jurisdictions – State, Catholic and Independent, each of these is required to interpret Australian national legislation and policy, and then respond with their own policy, funding models, and reform agendas. How to enact inclusion within their school systems is part of implementing educational policies and resource allocation for these three separate sectors. Individually these three educational sectors will interpret the Australian government policies and legislation in varied ways (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). According to Gonski et al. (2018), this three-sector educational model has proven problematic for inclusive education, as what constitutes an educational need differs between states and sectors, as do the models of response and funding. Despite a review that recommended an Australian national, needs-based funding approach to resourcing education, which encompasses inclusive education (Gonski et al., 2018), the three-sector model has remained for the most part unchanged. In essence, a student in Australia can be recognised as having a specific educational need in one state or jurisdiction and receive support to access their local school, yet, if they were to move across a border into another state or to a school in a different sector, their educational support may change, which could translate into them no longer receiving any educational support at all (Boyle & Anderson, 2014).

The second complexity surrounding inclusive education in Australia concerns the principles of neoliberalism that have directed reforms made in education by several recent elected governments (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). Everyday educational language is now encompassing terms like standardisation, measurement, and market choice. Neoliberalism has ushered in an Australian standardised national curriculum, nation-wide testing, and a tool to compare schools. Each of these pieces of reform has presented its own set of challenges for inclusive education, given the counterintuitive nature of social justice and neoliberalism (Anderson & Boyle, 2019). Artiles (2003) concluded that within any standardised curriculum there will be "winners and losers and it is those from disadvantaged and/or minority groups who are most commonly the losers" (p. 166). As Anderson and Boyle (2019) argued, "students whose experiences align with the curriculum will be the 'winners', and those students who do not fit within the context of the curriculum will be the 'losers'" (p. 801).

Simultaneously as the national curriculum and NAPLAN were being developed, so was a website known as My School. The whole idea behind the My School website was to provide parents/carers with a choice as to where to send their children to school. My School provides to the public both academic and demographic data on every individual school in Australia (Hardy & Boyle, 2011). The Prime Ministers at the time of its inception were Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd and they supported the idealism that parents/carers can selectively choose a school for their children to attend based on results from the national testing program, on peer group, or both (Rowe & Lubienski, 2017). Unfortunately, this idea of choice is not equitable, as the premise of it assumed two things, that is, first that every parent/carer finds themselves in an identical position to be able to make a choice about the quality of their child's schooling (Hutchings, 2017) and second, that all parents/carers have the financial means to act on their decision. These two assumptions are not the case in Australia, or in any other country in the world (Anderson & Boyle, 2020a; Rowe & Lubienski, 2017). As a result of these assumptions, some claim, "the disadvantaged are being segregated into struggling schools so that the burden of lifting up the most disadvantaged is not evenly spread across schools, sectors, and locations" (Bonnor, 2019, p. 2). The Grattan Institute noted that, while increased competition was beneficial for some sectors, education was not one of them (Jensen, 2013), yet this notion retains its place within Australia's current educational environment (Bonnor, 2019).

Acknowledging and understanding these two major challenges that face successful inclusive educational practice in Australia is imperative. Without this knowledge and awareness, Boyle and Anderson (2020) believe it is very easy to blame the increasing rates of segregation and exclusion on inclusion. It is evident from this brief overview that inclusive education in Australia has not been permitted to thrive to its full potential (Bonnor, 2019; Boyle & Anderson, 2020). Despite this, educators, researchers, and organisations globally continue to advocate for inclusive education to be the premise of education for all students, and there is much evidence to suggest this stance is justified. Australia, as stated in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Education Council, 2019), has a responsibility to provide an equitable and quality education to all students. The principles of inclusive education afford an opportunity to achieve this, and justification for this approach can be considered from an educational, social, and economic position (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

## 2.16 EDUCATIONAL REASONS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

An optimum learning environment benefits all students, however, understanding what this should or could look like has been the focus of much research globally, and still a consensus as to what constitutes a "good education", an "inclusive education", for all students, has not been reached (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). It must be acknowledged that this is not an easy task, particularly within the current culture, which has seen the growth in reliance on evidence-based solutions to solve the "problem" of inclusive education (Boyle et al., 2020). Slee (2018) suggested that the situation may be exacerbated by the fact that many schools, systems, and governments put on a good outward impression of being inclusive, when the actuality is very different, and this is the case across much

of Australia (Graham, 2020). It is difficult to claim an education system is working for everyone when 17% of all Australian students, who come from predominantly disadvantaged and/or minority groups, finish their schooling without achieving a basic level of educational skill (OECD, 2015b). This statistic has short-term and long-term repercussions for the educational system, the economy, the threads of Australian society, and the health care system. It is evident that there is still work to be done in primary schooling and in all schooling sectors across Australia (Boyle & Anderson, 2020; Boyle et al., 2011).

It should be noted that research conducted by Mitchell (2020) and Topping (2012) found that students from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds gain in academic achievement when placed in inclusive school settings. In addition, De Bruin (2020) has provided evidence from Australian schools that signals inclusive environments enable many educational benefits across the domains of language, literacy, and numeracy, as well as increased cognitive skill development for all students. Further, another argument that is often used against inclusion is that students from disadvantaged and minority groups will encroach upon the learning of the other students by taking up more teaching time and using a greater number of resources (Webster & Blatchford, 2019). Yet, research both within Australia as well as other parts of the world disproves this notion (Ruijs, 2017; Topping, 2012). If a teacher employs pedagogies that are diverse and engaging, using varying modalities, the learning of a wide group of students will be enhanced (De Bruin, 2020). Even though individual primary students have varying skills and capabilities, and therefore they will require supports to be successful in accessing the curriculum, it is validated through research that the heterogeneity of the inclusive classroom benefits all students academically (Szumski et al., 2017).

## 2.17 INFLUENCE OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Loreman et al.'s (2010) research discovered that strong teaching pedagogies and practices found in Australian schools were some of the key factors in being able to predict student achievement. Yet, teachers who are able to adapt their own teaching practices in an inclusive setting must be appropriately facilitated and resourced to enable quality teaching in inclusive environments. In Australia schools, this success is connected to high-quality teacher training as well as the need to improve upon student teachers' understanding, abilities, and skills for teaching varying learning abilities amongst students. Several Australian studies of pre-service teachers stipulate that this group is supportive of inclusion, however, they have commented that they do not have adequate training and experience to teach in inclusive environments. These new in-service teachers find inclusive settings very challenging (Costello & Boyle, 2013; Hoskin et al., 2015). Ongoing professional learning opportunities for pre-service and new teachers are as essential as sound pedagogical practices (Loreman et al., 2011). Boyle et al. (2011) described this as the "professional positive of inclusive practice" (p. 73).

A teacher needs to know themselves as a learner so that they connect to their students' learning needs, thus embracing inclusive education. Adult learning that happens in a school organisation needs to be directly linked to the needs of the student (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013b). Student learning is the catalyst for teacher learning and should mould the required material of the professional inquiry (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b). Focusing on student learning makes teachers' professional learning more relevant and relatable. When teachers' professional inquiry is rooted in the experiences in the classroom, student thinking and learning inform and shape professional explorations, which, in turn, shape learning. Through the process of teachers knowing themselves as learners helps them to inform their learning and makes collaborative processes effective (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013c).

When a collaborative culture of teachers working in a team learning environment is promoted and built on respect, this is when conversations amongst colleagues become opportunities to tap into the richness of the collective knowledge. Teachers are also then able to further draw upon and be supported by the experiences of

colleagues for inclusive education to be further fostered. As educators persist in questioning what works and what does not work, as they investigate the "why" behind results and reflect on potential changes to practice, and as they engage in the creative interaction between the professional teacher educator and the students' needs (Hannay et al., 2010), the learning experience furthers engagement in inclusive education.

## 2.18 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND IDENTITY IN RURAL SETTINGS AS IT INFLUENCES INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Professional learning in a rural school plays an integral part in the development of leaders in education. Some of the recent programs targeting leadership in education have not been tailored to the issues and experiences of rural educators. Issues experienced by rural educators can be similar, yet some are significantly different from educators in urban settings. Watterston's (2015) extensive survey of the programs available to equip aspiring principals affirms that there is professional learning being offered to those educators in rural environments. New and improved models of professional learning are being offered such as online programs and the utilisation of professional online learning networks using social media platforms. These new professional learning modes have increased interactive, connected learning spaces for rural educators. Unfortunately, there is little data being made available as to whether any of these professional learning models have increased opportunities in rural schools leading to real change in career promotions, preparation, and support in leadership roles.

In the research conducted by Watterston (2015), principals acknowledged that the expectations of a principal of a small rural school are the same as the expectations of a principal in a large urban school. It is often a lack of time, resources, and the issues of geographical distances that have made it difficult for rural teachers and principals to connect, to access professional learning and therefore build leadership capacity (Stack et al., 2011). The research in this arena with which the rural participants shared their leadership experiences affirmed the need for mentoring, coaching, and professional networks in rural communities. Principals reported that the rural location impacts their ability to improve, build teacher capacity, and that the rural location impedes staff having the opportunities to participate in professional learning. Principals in rural schools reported that they and their staff travel long distances every day on country roads into work. Principals of rural settings acknowledged that there is a lot of beauty in the natural environment, and there are a lot of open spaces, however, trade off is, isolation. Principals in rural locations also commented that their internet reception is not very good, and due to the lack of sufficient internet services, they are often unable to connect with a professional learning network online at home or at school (see Halsey, 2018). The ways in which these leaders from rural schools reported on their own professional learning experiences suggest that being a teacher and being a formal leader in a rural school impacts how professional identity is shaped (Stack et al., 2011; Watterston, 2015).

In her writings, Bradbeer (2019) argued that leadership and professional learning are influenced by the context – rural context. The richness and complexity of educational leadership stories in rural schools definitely demonstrate that they are doing leadership differently from their urban counterparts. Rural educational leaders are defying the norms and writing a new narrative of "what works" in rural settings by challenging the current models for leadership and professional learning. The research suggests that Australian educators are responding to an imminent leadership crisis, however, the what works strategies do not adequately prepare and train leaders for the complexities of different contexts. Development of leadership capacity of principals wanting to work in a rural school will require effective use of the data already collected on educational leadership in rural contexts and further feedback from key stakeholders. Key questions for future consideration include: How does leadership in rural schools assess the challenges and issues facing them in ways that allow meaningful, measurable change to occur? How is educational research promoted with a rural focus? How do key stakeholders connect leadership in rural schools with each other and offer innovative and contextually relevant professional learning? Leadership

development opportunities relevant to their context are lacking. The challenges are to better understand how the rural context influences leadership practices and how to support current and future leaders in their rural school context (Bradbeer, 2019; Halsey, 2018).

## 2.19 INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS

There are broken pieces of the educational system from the old narrative in Queensland primary education that this literature review is trying to examine so that a new narrative can be written. This new narrative will hopefully avoid past mistakes. One part of the system that is broken is the educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Australia, as they have lower school attendance, poor health, poverty, and disadvantage. The system is failing to address many of these issues as, according to Lewis (2019), it is currently unqualified to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture or seek out the voices of these communities in the education of their children. There are a number of schools, community groups and organisations who challenge the current system to ensure culture is at the centre of any First Nation People's education. These programs as Lewis (2019) describes, challenge the mainstream ideas and concepts as to what education is supposed to look like. These are programs that often defy what the highly Westernised education system deems appropriate. Unfortunately, programs like these do not tend to attract huge amounts of funding. However, the results they are achieving demonstrate the significant role schools have in making a difference in students' lives and the lives of their communities.

The success of Indigenous programs comes from establishing strong relationships between students, families, and community members. Establishing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires unique thinking and trust in the people involved in the program and sharing the responsibility with those outside the school community. To build these relationships, it requires a lot of time and effort. To do so, students and staff need to attend First Nations People's community events (Lewis, 2019).

There remain challenges when working with First Nations people. If the system is to be flipped in favour of Australia's First Nations population, Lewis (2019) believes that power structures and inequities in Australia need to be challenged. Lewis believes that the Australian education system must value, listen to, and include their experiences, voices, and ways of knowing into the educational system. As well, an increased effort in the integration of opportunities for First Nations students throughout the Australian educational system needs to occur.

## 2.20 SOCIAL REASONS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusion is about changing attitudes for the better, by educating all students together (Schwab, 2017). As established by repeated reports by the OECD (2010, 2020d) and UNICEF (2020), student engagement in schooling is a meaningful predictor of future engagement in society. Further Graham (2020) found that positive social interactions at primary school directly influence social participation of students as adults. Bills and Howard (2017) report that there are some groups of Australian primary students for whom the present manner of schooling is not working and for these students, more than often, they experience segregation due to behavioural issues. Primary students who have become disinterested in school often have issues with transitioning to further education and employment opportunities (Mays et al., 2020). Exclusion practices reinforce patterns of prestige and privilege (Mac Ruairc, 2013) and perpetuate the oppression of excluded groups (Freire, 2005). As De Bruin (2020) observed, the social benefits of inclusive education "do not arise from merely being in the same school or classroom, but rather it is the nature of the contact that makes an impact" (p. 65). In addition, Lauchlan and Boyle (2020) indicate inclusive practices must be school wide and initiated by teachers and principals.

Schwab et al. (2020) observed that attitudes of students requiring additional support is under researched. Only a small number of studies, for example Kvalsund and Bele (2010); and Markusson (2004) have focused on schooling. However, these studies have not clearly articulated the level of support within what could be described as truly inclusive environments (Hardcastle et al., 2018). In this new narrative, it is the primary students who need to be given a voice and their stories understood.

Anderson and Boyle (2020b) argued that another social influence in relation to the education of primary students is that of their parents or carers. Parents/carers often find obtaining suitable support within schools a challenge. These authors indicate parents/carers need to continue to advocate for inclusive education with the policy makers and the leaders within the educational systems.

## 2.21 POSITIVES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Inclusion in Australian primary schools can have many positive outcomes, beginning with students of all abilities growing socially in a mainstream environment. Children learn to increase their tolerance and understanding of individual differences, and their respect for others. With inclusion, students with special needs build essential skills that help them to work independently and be exposed to a language-rich environment that will enable their cognitive development (Boyle et al., 2011). However, students are not the only benefactors of an inclusive classroom; teachers also benefit professionally. The opportunity to work with a diverse group of students who challenge and sharpen teaching skills should be seen as a "professional positive so that both students and the teacher grow as reflective learners" (McCormack et al., 2006, as cited in Boyle et al., 2011, p. 73 ). It is, therefore, important to alter instructional tone and utilise a range of learning preferences to meet the learning needs of students. Boyle and Lauchlan (2010) indicated in their study that if primary school teachers provide verbal instructions on top of those presented visually there is a significant increase in the accuracy of the tasks completed. This illustrates that it is good professional practice to alter the teaching approach to suit the inevitable variations on the modality of learning. Facilitating the learning of all students in the class is the professional positive of inclusive practice.

## 2.22 WHOLE SCHOOL-WIDE APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Part of a whole school approach to inclusion in Australian primary schools is promoting the learning of students with special needs by differentiating the curriculum. The high expectations educators hold for students with special learning needs stretch their learning and increase their academic ability (Salend, 2005). Mitchell (2008) found that "learners with special needs will gain academically, as well as an appreciation of the diversity of their society [and] a greater recognition of social justice and equality" (p. 27). In schools where inclusive education is promoted, there is an awareness of students' cultural backgrounds, special educational needs, gifts, and talents. Teachers working in these schools are more apt to structure teaching and learning experiences to support students' engagement and motivation to learn (Knowles, 2006). It is paramount to educate pre-service teachers in the craft of adapting the curriculum to meet their students' needs while teaching. This will enhance the learning opportunities for students to strive for greater academic achievement.

Consideration should be extended to improving teacher capacity by also enhancing the training and development of school leadership. Research has demonstrated that the quality of instruction is the most important predictor of student outcomes (Loreman et al., 2005; Mitchell, 2008). A study conducted in an Australian primary school by Toland and Boyle (2008) discovered that students' reading and spelling were significantly improved by retraining teachers utilising inexpensive and straightforward interventions. The research further uncovered that the expectations that teachers hold in relation to their students coupled with quality of instruction positively influences the achievement of students with special needs.

Research has demonstrated that when students with learning needs are integrated into regular classrooms these students have "more durable networks of friends than students in segregated settings" (Loreman et al., 2005, p. 12). In addition, in his study, Spence (2009) discovered that students with Down's syndrome flourished from the positive social interaction provided in a regular school setting, which included making friendships and socialising with other students. Loreman et al. (2005) encourages that "social competence and communication skills of children with diverse abilities are improved in inclusive settings" (p. 11). However, students who have disabilities do not have an easy time making and maintaining peer friendships. In studies it is noted that students with special needs do experience negative socialising with their peers. These students often experience difficulties relating to their classmates, have fewer genuine friendships, and sadly suffer rejection and bulling from peers (Spence, 2009).

A positive aspect of inclusive education is Australian primary educators' use of differentiated learning for students with special needs. Jones (2005) discovered that "for successful inclusion to take place, teachers must be skilled in the strategies and procedures of differentiation" (p. 85). Mitchell's (2008) study supports Jones' research as it provided evidence that when teachers were asked about their inclusive education strategies, many of them believed that their strategies "actually contributed to improved overall educational achievement" (p. 37). This is vital as inclusive education may be implemented without considering the most appropriate instruction that learners with special educational needs must receive from their teachers (Mitchell, 2008). As increased inclusive practices are implemented in Australian primary schools, teachers need to consistently rethink differentiation strategies that meet students' changing needs to guarantee the professional positive of appropriate teaching practice (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2010).

## 2.23 SUPPORTING TEACHERS WITH INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

On the surface there can appear to be adequate support for primary classroom teachers implementing inclusion programs in schools (Boyle et al., 2013; Spence, 2009). School staff are usually supported through education departments, learning support units and various state programs and resources. Valeo (2008) claimed that the process for implementing full inclusion in schools can at times lead to confusion and frustration. Part of the reasons for this confusion and frustration is because often not all stakeholders are involved in the implementation of full inclusion at their site. Implementation of full inclusion should include consultations with the parents/carers, teachers, principals, teacher's aides, support staff and, most importantly, the students. The Department of Education and Training in Western Australia, which formed the Disabilities Advisory Panel (Western Australia Department of Education, 2001) used the consultative approach as they implemented full inclusion at their school sites.

> A Disabilities Advisory Panel is a small group of people with specialist expertise who are appointed to advise the Director-General on the educational provision for students with disabilities or comment on whether an exclusion order is warranted for a disruptive student with a disability. (p. 3)

Schools are required to interpret information from Australian legislation at both the Commonwealth and the State level to adapt to their school culture. As legislation affecting schools becomes more complex, teachers are under greater scrutiny to achieve outcomes from their students, especially those with learning difficulties (Elkins, 2009). Being provided with support to utilise various teaching and learning strategies in the classroom suitable for children with additional support needs enhances the learning of all students, promoting the professional positive that is the result of differentiated teaching. Australian research by Jackson (2008) suggested that the impact on the other children in the school is predominantly positive or neutral academically or socially. In addition, attitudes are beginning to change from segregation to inclusion (Jackson, 2008).

Providing resources and support is vital as primary children learn differently, and therefore teachers need to utilise fully a differentiated approach, which includes a variety of strategies to adapt lessons and effectively plan to cater for all students' learning abilities. Cognitive strategies implemented in the classroom are designed to promote independent student thinking. Through independent learning, students increase their self-awareness and self-advocacy (Friend & Bursuck, 2009), with teachers playing a crucial role in developing and facilitating individual tasks, enabling students to be engaged at a cognitive level, which encourages intellectual advancement. These approaches can ensure that tasks are appropriate as a differentiated curriculum takes cognisance of the individual learning levels of all students in the class. Teachers can anticipate having higher numbers of students with support needs in primary classes now more than they would have even 10 years ago, mainly due to the move away from separate schooling (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

Teachers have a growing responsibility to ensure success for their students, involving the transferral of skills that enable students to think independently. Professional teacher development, when facilitated effectively, can allow the new teaching professional to experience the positive aspects of inclusion (Boyle & Anderson, 2020; Boyle et al., 2011). Teachers are encouraged to develop their own repertoire by learning to use a variety of strategies that have positive outcomes for all learners, not just those with particular learning needs or physical disabilities. By using the three important pedagogic inclusive strategies of direct instruction, cognitive strategies, and co-operative learning, teachers are better able to implement inclusive practices effectively in the classroom (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). Through on-going professional development, teachers can further their skills in incorporating various teaching strategies for all students in the class. Teachers need to know how to effectively implement these learning strategies catering to those students with learning difficulties to ensure that these students' needs are addressed. In addition, teacher training education that provides early career teachers with the skills is essential for a modern inclusive environment (Boyle & Anderson, 2020; Boyle et al., 2011).

## 2.24 ECONOMIC REASONS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

While undergoing the writing of this new narrative for primary schooling in Queensland, it is imperative that the full economic case for inclusive education be presented. There are two distinct, but equally important aspects that must be considered, that is, the cost of inclusive education when compared to the current structure of educating students with additional educational needs, and the cost of post-school outcomes for the primary students with exceptionalities. Up to date and accurate data connected to the cost of educating students with varying education needs in inclusive settings, when comparing the costs to educating them in segregated settings is not prevalent in Australia. Therefore, Australian governments and policy makers need to rely on international data in relation to these costs to help support the fully inclusive classroom model (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

There has only been a small number of studies that have analysed the cost of inclusive education in comparison to segregated educational models. These studies have concluded that inclusive education is either more cost effective, or similar in cost equivalency when educating students with special needs (Odom et al., 2001). Notwithstanding that, fundamentally there are numerous educational funding models across the globe, which causes this type of a study to be more complex in nature (European Agency, 2016). In Australia having three educational sectors, determining data that compare the costs of inclusion versus segregation also makes it more difficult. Moreover, it still is possible to figure out the comparison costs of inclusion versus segregation in Australia (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

Synergies Economic Consulting (2011) produced a report for the Autism Early Intervention Outcomes Unit (AEIOU). The report presented their findings on the cost of educating Autism Spectrum Disorder students (ASD) in the State of Queensland. When the consulting firm compared their data with corresponding data from Queensland (Department of Education, Employment and Work Relations, 2011), there were significant

conclusions that emerged in relation to a cost analysis of inclusion versus segregation models for students with special needs. When the report was conducted, the average cost of educating students without a disability in Queensland state schools was approximately AUD 10,000 per student. The cost of educating a student with ASD within a mainstream community school was about two and half times AUD 10,000. Whereas the cost of educating a student in a Queensland state special school setting was around four times the amount of the students without a specialised exceptionality. Educating students who were housed in detention centres was almost five times higher than this figure of AUD 10,000. Of significant note is that students who receive their education in a special school setting or a detention centre may have different educational needs in comparison to those students with ASD who are educated in a Queensland state mainstream school. Notwithstanding, it is very significant to note the cost differential between inclusive and segregated settings in Queensland. This cost analysis cannot be ignored. These financial data also support the dispelling of myths that inclusive education is the more expensive option when compared to segregated settings (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). Further research is needed in this area.

Organisations such as the World Bank (Hoff & Pandey, 2004) and the OECD (2010, 2020a) have for many years advocated for inclusive education globally that will result in increased equity within the educational realm. "This is because educational inequality is bad for the economy and the high economic cost becomes starkly evident when considered from the perspective of those for whom the education system fails" (ACOSS & UNSW, 2018, p. 14). The data are very clear on the relationship between students who disengage and do not experience success at school, are at a higher risk when they reach adulthood to have lower incomes, poorer housing (Topping, 2012), higher mental health rates as well as additional health issues which lead to lower life expectancies (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). These students who disengage from school also have an increased chance of substance abuse, engaging in illegal behaviour, and potentially ending up in the justice system (Gamble et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2012). Huge ethical concerns are related to these issues as are the high economic and social costs to nations (OECD, 2010, 2015b).

Educational systems that are open to meeting the needs of students within inclusive school settings have the potential to stop the current cycles and to reduce or eliminate the inequality gaps that currently exist (Snow & Powell, 2012). Whether educational systems want to consider equality and inclusion issues from the viewpoint of the cost of education, or from the cost to society in the long-term, the economic evidence is highly in favour for inclusive education. Systems and schools need to be flexible and responsive to the needs of all students so that they are efficient in their operational costs as well as supportive in terms of the delivery of education to all students from disadvantaged and/or minority groups (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

## 2.25 FUNDING/RESOURCING – ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF INCLUSION

Strategies employed by teachers and educational leaders ensure the best quality of life for all learners, not only students with disabilities (Mitchell, 2008). Politically, "inclusive education is more economically viable, given the expense involved in transporting and accommodating learners in special schools, especially in rural areas" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 27). It provides all students with accessibility to educational resources to increase their learning opportunities. As Loreman et al. (2005) found:

> All students benefit from increased funds in the classroom, to enhance the learning of both children with diverse abilities and their peers. Opportunities include guest speakers, experiences outside of the school, or classroom-based resources chosen for the child with diverse abilities that are also made available for the use of all children. (p. 13)

Another factor to consider is how the funds are spent and who is accountable for the expenditure being effectively utilised. Primary students not only benefit from extra funds provided, but from opportunities to learn

additional skills that students with special learning needs bring into the classroom, for example Braille or sign language (Loreman et al., 2005). More importantly, students without disabilities "can learn to value and respect children with diverse abilities in inclusive classrooms . . . see past the disability . . . and the associated social stigmas" (Loreman et al., 2005, p. 14). This illustrates that students without disabilities can benefit from inclusion practices as much as students with special learning needs can, as "inclusive schools value the learning of all students" (Forbes, 2007, p. 68).

It is also worth highlighting in this literature review the issue around labelling of students in special education. In certain states in Australia, resources are allocated to schools only for students who have been diagnosed with a label, for example autistic, or ADHD. There are certainly many concerns surrounding the labelling of a child, and who actually benefits from this label? Is it the child, the parent, or the school (Lauchlan & Boyle, 2007)? As Boyle et al. (2011) substantiate, the connection between resourcing for inclusion and attitudes towards inclusion also translate into how effective the resourcing for inclusion is implemented. For instance, staff who do not have positive attitudes towards inclusion, their application of the resources provided to support the students with learning needs may be less than adequate. Boyle et al. (2011) also argued that insufficient resourcing can be complimented by positive attitudes of staff. Even if the resourcing is not adequate, the use of resources by staff who are professional and positive towards inclusive education will more than likely be utilised in a more effective manner.

## 2.26 AN INCREASINGLY UNEQUAL AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

There is much work to be done to increase Australia as an equal society. In a 2018 OECD report, Australia was identified as being fourth out of 36 OECD countries in rankings that compared segregated educational systems and has one of the highest educational attainment gaps between students from advantaged backgrounds and disadvantaged backgrounds in comparison to the 36 OECD countries (OECD, 2018a). Evidence provided signals that one in three Australian students from a disadvantaged environment is not meeting key milestones in their first year of schooling when compared to their advantaged classmates, where only one in five do not meet these developmental milestones (Smith Family, 2016). This gap continues into adulthood where by 24 years of age, fewer than three in five adults from disadvantaged backgrounds are participating in full-time education, training, or work, whereas for adults from advantaged backgrounds this figure is greater than four in five (Smith Family, 2016). Also, students from disadvantaged or minority group backgrounds have a greater likelihood of being diagnosed with a disability or disorder and educated within a segregated environment (Anderson & Boyle, 2019), and/or have been involved with disciplinary action such as suspension or exclusion (Armstrong, 2018). Therefore, it is not surprising that in Australia, the educational gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students is significant and education evidence points to the impact on life outcomes as a result. Educational attainment is heavily connected to household income, social participation and health outcomes/life expectancy (OECD, 2018a).

The Children's Report, released in 2018 by the Australian Child Rights Taskforce, and submitted to the United Nations Children's Committee, contained the voices of children and findings from consultations with 527 children and young people in 30 remote, regional, and urban locations across Australia (UNICEF Australia, 2018). The report had 190 recommendations, as it determined that Australia is not making sufficient progress in policies and programs to support children, particularly disadvantaged children. The over-arching findings of The Children's Report shows a bleak picture in that the nation of Australia is failing in its systems designed to protect children who are in crisis. There are over five million children in Australia, thus the Australian Government needs to ensure that the decisions that are made, are made with them in mind. Also, the decisions that are being made on their

behalf should provide processes for the children to provide their voices, as they are significant citizens as well as stakeholders (UNICEF Australia, 2018).

The Children's Report (UNICEF Australia, 2018) does show that a good majority of children in Australia do have a good quality of life. However, for those students less fortunate, the report indicates the extent of the gap for a lifetime is troublesome. By signing the UN Children's Convention almost 30 years ago, Australia agreed to minimum standards for its children, however most improvements have been isolated and very minimal. In addition, since the year 2000, the academic performance in all school sectors across Australia has continued on a downward trend. According to UNICEF's Report Card 16, the nation of Australia ranks in the bottom third of OECD countries on educational equality across early, primary, and secondary educational sectors (UNICEF, 2020). A recent report on child poverty (ACOSS & UNSW, 2020) indicates that about one in six children in Australia live in poverty. These students have poorer educational outcomes and experience more social exclusion, with both increasing with the degree of disadvantages – caring adult, disability, Indigenous and students who have a language other than English background (see also Redmond et al., 2022). Redmond et al.'s (2022) study captured the voices of students who reported that they had less support from their teachers. The researchers report that such challenges faced by children in poverty evidence poor educational outcomes, however they reflect that what is "surprising is how badly Australia's education system is failing to achieve a key objective: to support all children to reach their full educational potential" (The Conversation, 2022, n.p.).

While writing this new narrative, it is very evident that the Australian nation has at its fingertips enormous amounts of research, evidence, recommendations, and policy but real action is the response that is missing. A very clear national, action-oriented agenda for primary school children and young people in Australia needs to be at the forefront of the government's strategy. Of concern from The Children's Report are the voices of children who expressed feeling "invisible", "irrelevant", and "worthless" (UNICEF, 2018, p. 6).

## 2.27 BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

When inclusive schools value the learning of all students, it is believed that "everyone wins" (Loreman et al., 2005, p. 11). Yet despite the positive aspects of inclusion, the Australian education system is not without its flaws. Inclusion is not implemented consistently by states and territories, or by all schools and educators. Lindsay (2007) suggested that full inclusion is rarely implemented at the school level and can be a mishmash of various approaches and concepts, which may have good intentions but are rarely cohesive enough to benefit the teacher at the class level.

Every school has a different policy and attitudes towards inclusion, and "how impairments are classified, treated and interpreted is socially constructed" (Rietveld, 2008, p. 1). Further, Jindal-Snape and Miler (2010) considered this creates difficulties that students encounter when they move from school to school and suggest that many students experience considerable educational and social difficulties due to the poor planning of this transition. Boyle et al. (2011) provided an example of the inconsistencies of inclusion between schools:

> If a primary student who has been accustomed to overlays in primary school is then not provided the same opportunities in secondary school, they might experience a dip in reading attainment and an overall lowering of self-competence thereby affecting his/her willingness to attempt further work and by the compulsory year-by-year changes to the stage of his/her schooling. (p. 2)

Brodin (2010) added that though "opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in school on equal conditions as others are often stressed . . . reality shows that many children with disabilities are still segregated" (p. 99). Therefore, though inclusion is found to be implemented within Australian primary schools,

the inconsistencies between the levels of effort each school takes to accommodate learners' needs can have negative effects on children's learning (Salend, 2005).

## 2.28 CURRENT INITIATIVES IN AUSTRALIA AND QUEENSLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS THE BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

There has been significant legalisation and policy initiatives by the Australian and State Governments in response to the call for more inclusive education.

**Australian Governments Goals for Education**:

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education declaration (Education Council, 2019) – an agreement between education ministers that is aimed at encouraging and supporting every student to be achieving their best, no matter what their learning challenges. All governments have agreed to address the following goals:

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity – by providing all young Australians access to high quality education that is inclusive and free from any form of discrimination; empower learners to overcome barriers; ensure that learning is built on and includes relevant cultural knowledges

Goal 2: All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of society

Goals 3: Commitment to action – working with the education community and in partnership with young Australians, their families and the broader community to achieve the educational goals for young Australians

Goal 4: Building foundational skills through the primary years – It is important that primary school continues to understand, provide the right environment for, and respond to the needs of young learners to discover, explore, play, create and express themselves. Building upon a strong foundation from early childhood learning, primary school is critical to further develop foundational skills which form the basis for ongoing learning throughout school and beyond

Goal 5: Enhancing middle year development

Goal 6: Supporting senior years of schooling

Goal 7: Embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions

Goal 8: Delivering world-class curriculum

Goal 9: Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their potential – cultures, knowledge and experiences are fundamental to Australia's social, economic and cultural wellbeing

Goal 10: Supporting all young students at risk of educational disadvantage – provide all young Australians with equality of opportunity that enables them to reach their potential and achieve their highest educational outcomes.

Goal 11: Strengthening accountability and transparency with strong meaningful measures – the provision of good quality data and information is important for educators and their students, parents and families, the community and governments. Australian Governments commit to continuing to provide public reporting that:

- focuses on improving performance and student growth and outcomes for all students
- provides parents with information on their child's performance, progress and outcomes

- is locally, nationally, and internationally relevant
- is accessible, timely, consistent and comparable

Goal 12: Achieving the educational goals for young Australians – Australian Governments will collectively invest in national reforms to give all young Australians equal access and opportunity to become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community

This literature review now addresses the Commonwealth responses that have impact on the Queensland Government and Queensland's specific responses to these issues.

**The Australian Government**

The main initiatives include:

- School Assessment – specifically NAPLAN

- Direct and indirect funding to schools

- Australian Curriculum

- Indigenous education target – closing the gap (needs-based funding for schools)

- Disability support programs (standards, funding, and accountability)

- National school reform agreement (policy agreements and reporting)

- Advancing national education priorities (early childhood education and care; school education, higher and international education)

These initiatives have a direct impact on State education systems and Independent schools which require all schools to respond. There are three specific initiatives worthy of note:

1. **MySchool and National Testing** – collection of all years 3, 5, 7 and 9 school students' performance in Literacy and Numeracy. My school reports on each school profile including performance on NAPLAN results. Parents are provided with individual student results. (https://www.myschool.edu.au/)

2. **National Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD)** is an Australian Government initiative (https://www.nccd.edu.au/; n.p.)

Based on the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) (Australian Government, n.d.b) that provides protection against discrimination based on disability. A subordinate legalisation, The Disability Standards for Education 2005. These standards clarify and elaborate the legal obligations of education providers towards students with disability under the DDA. The NCCD collects data on an annual basis about Australian school students who are receiving adjustments because of disability. Schools are required to:

- ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability

- make or provide "reasonable adjustments" for students where necessary to enable their access and participation

- provide reasonable adjustments in consultation with the student and/or their associates; for most students, this means their parents, guardians, or carers.

- provide professional learning to staff related to the NCCD obligations. Schools have to collect and provide evidence of how they are catering for individual needs of a student with a disability.

From 2018, the student with disability loading (financial) provided by the Australian Government is being based on the NCCD; schools will continue to manage their total resources to meet the learning needs of their students.

3. **Closing the Gap –** national policy and needs based funding to support the educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is a national agreement developed and negotiated in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (Australian Government, n.d.a)

**Queensland Government**

**The Overarching vision for education is :** *Every student succeeding: Empowering confident and creative lifelong learners through a student-centred approach to learning an wellbeing* (Department of Education, 2021, p. 1).

Strategies to enhance Inclusion and Diversity across the education system include:

- Empower every student to actively engage in learning of the Australian Curriculum and Queensland senior pathways and achieve ongoing improvement each year.

- Nurture student wellbeing so they are safe, valued and respected.

- Engage learners through personalised, collaborative, and integrated digital learning experiences.

- Support schools to continually improve and make positive, evidence-informed decisions that support equitable learning opportunities for all students.

- Engage families to play an active role in their child's learning and wellbeing.

- Support culturally responsive learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through co-design with Indigenous students and communities.

- Work with communities and across government to reduce vulnerability and strengthen outcomes for all students.

- Support positive transitions from early education to school and further education, training, and employment pathways. (p. 1)

[Developing] an inclusive culture allows us to perform better, attract and retain the workforce we need, and deliver services that support the communities we serve. In the Department of Education, we believe that each of us, regardless of our position, has a role to play in building workplaces that embrace and value diversity. (Department of Education, 2022a, para. 1)

**Closing the Gap: Queensland Government Role**

The Queensland Government is working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through their representatives, at the national, state and local level, to ensure a focus on achieving long-term social and economic outcomes for Queensland's First Nations peoples. Underpinned by the Path to Treaty and Local Thriving Communities reforms, the Queensland Government is committed to reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, working to address historical and ongoing economic and social injustices, and recognising First Nations peoples' sovereignty and right to self-determination.

These structural reforms include:

- progressing the Path to Treaty and Local Thriving Communities

- establishing the Queensland First Children and Families Board

- developing Queensland's Framework for Action – Reshaping our approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence

- developing the First Nations health equity reform agenda.

(Queensland Government, 2021, para. 11)

**Disability Service Plan**

"Our plan provides clear direction to ensure that Queenslanders with disability succeed. We all contribute to creating work, service delivery and learning environments that deliver the benefits diversity brings" (Department of Education, n.d., para. 3).

**Ongoing Challenges**

Whilst relevant governments have put in place policy, strategic priorities (either stated in policy and/or focused funding) that address the issues raised in this report, these initiatives need to be reflected in "on the ground" implementation.

Various research and reports still raise concerns about implementation. Boyle and Anderson (2020) suggest the Australian Government can begin and/or continue to address the following concerns in relation to inclusive education:

- adopt inclusion policies from other nations to improve the practice of inclusion in primary schools;

- refine inclusion policies and legislation to ensure inclusion in primary schools;

- provide more resources for programs and human resource needs (i.e., teacher aides);

- give Indigenous communities a greater role in inclusion policy design and implementation; and

- introduce an evaluation strategy for inclusion policies affecting Indigenous communities (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

And although Australian primary schools will differ somewhat in their commitment to inclusive education, the positive aspects can include:

- an adapted curriculum to encourage academic improvement and social experience; and

- new opportunities for peers to interact in an inclusive environment, which is to be the norm in primary schooling, although the evidence in this literature review is mixed (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

The Australian Government to continue to:

- continually report on Closing the Gap outcomes;
- provide funding and supportive resources for NCCD reporting and to grow the provision of NCCD resources (Education Services Australia, 2021);
- review the adequacy and relevance of the National Curriculum;
- continue ongoing dialogue with State and Territory Education Ministers and the advisory authority, Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA, n.d.); and
- ensure adequate funding is available to support these programs.

In Queensland Primary Schools, implementation of policy needs leaders and educators at Systems, Regional and School level to:

- continue to be committed to inclusion;
- support teachers and staff with this critical issue, especially providing professional development related to differentiation of classroom instruction to meet diverse needs;

- prioritise programs/panels/strategies across the school to focus on providing the best possible educational outcomes for students with additional needs;

- ensure that resources are utilised appropriately to benefit the needs of the students and increase student outcomes – socially-emotionally and academically;

- review early years initiatives to ensure age appropriate pedagogy is a reality – especially reflecting the challenges outlined in the report and in particular those presented by Sahlberg;

- encourage research into and dissemination of successful implementation practices.

And further, coordinate and liaise with the entire school community – health professionals, learning support personnel and classroom teachers – to make these programs work for the advantage of students who would otherwise miss out on an inclusive education and who may be subjected to the social and educational beliefs regarding segregated schooling (Boyle & Anderson, 2020).

Inclusive education requires the support of the entire school community, led by the principal (Boyle & Anderson, 2020). It takes a community to raise a child, as well as to help them be continuously engaged in learning.

## 2.29 ENGAGEMENT IN EQUITABLE LEARNING

Discussing equity in relation to primary class size, resource allocation for primary schools in comparison to high schools, professional learning of teachers and principals, and to ensure the well-being of students are some of the key focuses of this literature review. As evidenced from this literature review, it is imperative to engage students early on in their school careers to encourage the love of learning so that invariably long-term academic engagement occurs – thus leading to positive correlations of social and economic advantages for a country such as Australia. People are born with unique genetic structures, meaning they are initially better than others at different things. However, people with a growth mindset believe that they can always improve, catch up, or even surpass others' natural talents. This is where primary teachers and principals play a crucial role in shaping a student's confidence and outlook on the learning process, in the early years. It is crucial that primary teachers and principals who understand "growth mindset" do everything in their power to unlock that learning (Dweck, 2015).

As has been demonstrated already throughout this literature review, students arrive at primary school with varying backgrounds and experiences, and thus equality and engagement in the learning process is essential. Sahlberg (2021) is a firm supporter in strengthening equity in education as a strategy because this is what is occurring in most current successful educational systems. Sahlberg ascribes that the measures required must include high-quality early childhood education and primary education for all students. To provide essential components for an equitable school system, additional preventive support for children and families in relation to their health and wellbeing is imperative. School leaders need to ensure that the funding is directed to these children and families, with the school systems to provide individualised help to all children, to further support teacher collaboration and professionalism and to propel school improvement.

As has been previously discussed in this literature review, Sahlberg (2021) states that the nation of Australia has much to learn from neighbouring nations as to how to build more of an equitable and inclusive educational system. He believes that the Australian education systems must be much better in learning how to become more equitable. Staying with the status quo and the same policies currently in place will continue to put Australia in a situation in which the educational system is very low ranking in comparison to other first world counties (Sahlberg, 2020, 2021). Sahlberg believes that Australia must adopt educational policies that are founded

on coherent evidence-based research, instead of continuing to use the current broken interventions that are clearly not working.

## 2.30 STUDENT – SOCIAL BELONGING AND WELL-BEING

Children who have a strong sense of belonging to school tend to have higher academic achievement. As school is such a major part of most children's lives, it is reasonable to suppose that aspects such as school belonging also contribute to life satisfaction. Indeed, the PISA study shows that, in most countries, school belonging is positively associated with academic achievement and with life satisfaction (UNICEF, 2020, p. 26).

The risks from COVID do not have to become the reality, if governments take decisive action now to protect children's belongingness, and well-being. The UNICEF (2020) report card, which is an annual ranking of international countries, has placed Australia 32nd out of 41 OECD and EU countries that measured pre-COVID data on children's mental and physical health and academic and social skillsets. The Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway rank as the top three places to be a child among wealthy countries, whereas New Zealand placed 35th and the United States 36th.

The report card 16 analysed features of childhood such as suicide, obesity, and low social and academic skills. When compared to 41 wealthy countries, Australia ranked in the following areas (UNICEF, 2020):

- **Suicide rate** per 100,000 adolescents aged 15–19 years – Australia is **37th** at 9.7; Greece lowest at 1.7 (p. 13)
- **Mortality rate** per 1,000 children aged 5–14 years – Australia is **22nd** at 0.84; Luxembourg lowest at 0.36 (p. 14)
- **Obesity**: Percentage of young people aged 5–19 years who were overweight – Australia **33rd** with 34%; Japan has the lowest rate at 14% (p. 15)
- **Basic proficiency in reading and mathematics** – percentage of children aged 15 years – Australia **21st** out of 39 (64%); Estonia has the best achievement at 79% ( p. 16).
- **Early childhood learning** – percentage with experience of organised learning one year before starting school – at 86.4%, Australia is well below average (94.7%), ranking **38th** out of 41; Austria performs best (100%), UK second best (99.9%) (p. 39)
- **Weeks of paid parental leave available in full rate equivalent** – Australia (8.6 weeks) ranks **37th** well below the average of 36 weeks; Romania ranks 1st (97.1), Japan 2nd (66.1) (p. 35)
- **League table of conditions (policies and context) for child well-being** – Australia ranks in the middle third at **18th** out of 41 countries; Norway is 1st, New Zealand 20th, UK 27th and USA 29th (p. 53).

The Worlds of Influence report  (UNICEF, 2020) made recommendations to the countries who participated by suggesting that they further invest in quality mental health services for children and adolescents. This was an area where Australia ranked low amongst other wealthy nations, in 35th place. In addition, the report recommends that countries act very quickly to reduce the gap in income inequality and poverty. This action would hopefully ensure that all children, regardless of background, would have equal access to required resources. The ongoing research through UNICEF has shown that mental health and wellbeing are critical concerns for young children and young people, particularly over this challenging time period of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF, 2020). In support of report card 16, UNICEF Australia (2021) has requested that the Australian Government:

- take action in protecting childhood poverty by providing social protection measures;
- eliminate barriers especially for disadvantaged families to receive quality and affordable early learning and care;

- remain steadfast in the investment approaches to improving mental health and wellbeing for children and adolescents;
- recognise children and adolescents have a voice as key participants in creating opportunities for them to be involved in decision making at varying levels.

UNICEF Australia (2021) believes that for families to be able to raise a happy and healthy "next-generation", they need more support from governments and workplaces, as an investment in children is a direct investment in the future of Australia. The Worlds of Influence report highlights that the nation of Australia entered 2020 with an uneven performance in ensuring children's belonging and wellbeing. As the nation continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and focuses on the national recovery, it is imperative that the new narrative needs to include the continual investment in children's wellbeing and address the shortcomings in this Worlds of Influence report, so that all children and young people in Australia achieve their full potential (UNICEF Australia, 2021).

## 2.31 STUDENT MOTIVATION

According to Carol Dweck (2016), "a growth mindset is when people believe that their abilities can be developed" (p. 6). As Dweck points out, while Edison was a highly intelligent and talented individual, he was not born a success. He did not develop the light bulb in one day, or even on his own, rather it took a long, slow process of curiosity, dedication, and hard work. Dweck (2016) believes that it is not intelligence, talent or education that sets successful people apart, instead it is their mindset, or the way that they approach life's challenges. As Olson (1997) points out, motivation is probably the most important factor that educators can target in order to improve learning.

Motivation is defined as "the act or process of motivating through a stimulus, or influence; incentive; drive" that causes a person or student to act (Merriam-Webster, 1997). A number of cross-disciplinary spheres have tried to explain and define motivation in relation to human beings. Certain theories claim that people or students are motivated by extrinsic rewards in the form of material goods, or an increase in power, prestige, recognition, or enriched work environment. Every theory of course has truth as to what motivates human beings, but no single theory captures the entire concept of motivation. The reason being is that people are complex with complex needs and wants (Williams & Williams, 2011).

How to motivate students within the classroom is essential to determine quality education and its effects. Students are often motivated by their schoolwork when they listen, start to work on tasks right away, ask questions, provide answers, and are generally happy and willing to learn (Palmer, 2007). In essence if students are not motivated to learn, very little learning takes place. According to Williams and Williams (2011), there are five essential conditions that motivate students to learn, they are:

1. student – needs to value education, be interested, and have access to education;
2. teacher – needs to be well-trained, focus and evaluate the processes, be engaging, inspire students, and respond to the needs of the students;
3. content – must be accurate, timely, stimulating, and pertinent to the student's current and future needs;
4. process – needs to be innovative, creative, linked to the curriculum and the student's life, as well as encouraging and beneficial; and
5. learning environment – must be safe, easily accessible, upbeat, encouraging, and individualised.

Student motivation is at its optimal levels when students are provided the regular exposure to a number of these motivating experiences. Every student should experience numerous sources of motivation in their learning experiences (Debnath, 2005; D'Souza & Maheshwari, 2010; Palmer, 2007).

## 2.32 COMMUNITY – BLURRING BOUNDARIES – SCHOOLS ARE THE FIRST PORT OF CALL FOR FAMILIES

The ongoing documentation supporting this literature review acknowledges that school communities must continue to commit to a collaborative, pivotal role in response to a changing world if they are to support the unleashing of the learning potential in their staff, and students (Conway & Andrews, 2016, 2019). This commitment is imperative for the social-emotional, economic, political, and academic well-being of students, teachers, and formal educational leaders that comprise the internal and external school communities (Fullan, 2021). It is crucial that the new narrative in Queensland primary schools is written by formal and informal school leaders who are community minded (Conway & Andrews, 2016), inclusive of regional, rural, and remote schools. Remembering, it takes a community to raise a child, and evidence continues to mount in this direction. The community becomes more complicated due to isolation issues the more remote it is in Queensland. Primary principals cannot do it alone, they require both formal and informal leaders alongside of them.

From active case studies conducted in Sydney Catholic Australian schools, Conway and Andrews (2016) queried members of several school communities to seek further refinement as to their definition of what is a learning community. Here are some of the participant responses.

 As a learning community, we:

- work collaboratively to create authentic learning spaces and experiences

- encourage risk-taking and develop resilience

- value and share the life experiences of the community

- assess, acknowledge, and support differences in learning styles and needs

- promote active involvement in lifelong learning

- are committed to keeping up-to-date with current research initiatives in education. (Conway & Andrews, 2016, pp. 129-130)

Furman (2003) extends the idea of educational community to encompass the ethic of community to examine the ethical frames typically used in education. Moral purpose defines "ethic of community as the moral responsibility to engage in communal processes" (Furman, 2003, p. 1). As teachers and educational leaders engage in and with the moral purposes of their work, they will address the numerous challenges of daily life and work in schools. More importantly, the ethic of community centres the "community" not the individuals, as the primary collective of moral agency in schools.

As Harris and Jones (2020) noted that with the onslaught and continuation of the COVID-19 crisis, the school community has become the hub of activity, it has not been the school district, or school system, but instead the schools have had their feet on the ground taking care of the day-to-day necessities. As Netolicky (2020) noted: "In a time of crisis, leaders must act swiftly and with foresight but also with careful consideration of options, consequences and side effects of actions taken" (p. 392). This is certainly true, but no one can predict what might be the best solutions, the best actions, the side effects of any actions taken in this crisis. As noted by Harris and Jones (2020):

Communities are a key resource for school leaders, as they host a wealth of additional expertise, knowledge, and local capacity. Forging stronger links with parent/community groups to support families, young people and children is now a necessity to deal with the many issues that COVID19 has generated particularly for vulnerable, marginalised, or isolated young people. (p. 246)

## 2.33 STRENGTHENING THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Strengthening school communities by continuing the existing relationships between principals, teachers, school staff, students, and families through the emphasis on the community, schools need to be a priority in this pandemic and post-pandemic era. School communities must be learning organisations, according to Senge (1990, 2006). "Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs" (Senge 1990, p. 139). Senge, defining mastery as a special kind of proficiency, like a calling in life, believes that all teachers and principals need to have personal mastery that continually clarifies and deepens their personal vision, focuses their energies, develops patience, and sees reality objectively.

When there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-too-familiar vision statement), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to. But many leaders have personal visions that never get translated into shared visions that galvanise a school community. The leader requires discipline for translating vision into shared vision – not a "cookbook" but a set of principles and guiding practices. The practice of shared vision involves the skills of unearthing shared pictures of the future that foster genuine commitment and enrolment rather than compliance. In mastering this discipline, Senge (1990, 2006) believes that leaders learn the counter-productiveness of trying to dictate a vision, no matter how heartfelt. Visions spread because of a reinforcing process. Increased clarity, enthusiasm and commitment rub off on others in the school community. "As people talk, the vision grows clearer. As it gets clearer, enthusiasm for its benefits grow" (Senge, 1990, p. 227).

Peter Senge (1990), many years ago, argued that learning organisations need to view leadership with a new lens. This author indicated that the traditional definition of leaders:

> . . . as special people who set the direction, make key decisions, and energize the troops as deriving from a deeply individualistic and non-systemic worldview . . . is based on assumptions of people's powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forces of change, deficits which can be remedied only by a few great leaders. (Senge, 1990, p. 340)

Senge et al. (2010, 2012), in challenging this traditional view of leadership, created a new view of leadership for a learning organisation, a school community, and adopted the earlier definition:

> . . . leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for building organizations [school communities] where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models – that is they are responsible for learning. (Senge, 1990, p. 340)

Senge et al. (2012) called for schools to embrace new organisations and new leadership forms, however, they noted that learning organisations will only remain a "good idea" until people take a stand for building such organisations – which are the school communities. Taking this stand is the first leadership act, the start of inspiring – literally "... [to breathe life into] the vision of the learning organisation" (Senge, 1990, p. 340). In the new narrative of primary schooling, leaders need to work with whole school communities as the school communities move forward into the future. Senge's words still resonate into the future.

## 2.34 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS – PRESSURES, CHALLENGES, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/CITIZENSHIP – ARGUMENT FOR LARGE SCALE TESTING

> At this pivotal moment, I am calling on all countries (to) use the recovery to narrow education divides, expand digital connectivity and reimagine education. – Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General (UNESCO, 2021a, n.p.)

Ensuring an investigation into the economic and social outcomes for students in attendance at Queensland primary schools must be top priority for all key stakeholders, in particular district and school leadership. This critical opportunity that is facing school leaders will help to avoid looking backwards and staying stuck in a traditional learning model. The traditional system was not and is not working for the vast majority of students. System and school level leaders must ensure that a "loss of learning" mindset is not a permanent fixture in the school system (Fullan, 2021). The schools and their leaders owe this to their most precious resource, the students who walk through their doors every single day.

To enhance this literature search on the economic and social outcomes for students, a reliance on the OECD documentation was examined. OECD is in a unique position to inform this project as it is a forum where governments from many countries work together to address the economic, social, and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is at the forefront of efforts to understand and to help governments respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy, and the challenges faced by educational endeavours. The Organisation provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice, and work to coordinate domestic and international policies. The OECD member countries include, but are not exclusive to, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In addition, the Commission of the European Communities takes part in the work of the OECD (OECD, 2020a).

## 2.35 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES – SOCIAL CAPITAL MODEL

Does capital at home matter more than capital at school? Social capital theory implies purposeful investment on the part of the actors, which would include parents, schools, neighbours, etc. Considering children's academic development, Coleman (1988) argued that the mere presence of parental stores of knowledge is insufficient to ensure transmission of that knowledge to children. Instead, parents must make specific choices to invest in their children's development and engage in interactions with a specific child to create the bonds along which information can pass. Families who invest expect to see higher levels of academic achievement in their children; they undertake these investments with the expectation that strong academic achievement during childhood will translate into higher levels of education and occupational attainment in later years, thus promoting upward mobility in our stratification system. For this reason, family social capital investment has intergenerational consequences.

According to Dufur et al. (2013), the creation of social capital is not limited to the family. Social capital associated with schools refers to investments between students and schools that can facilitate educational outcomes. These bonds can reflect community ties, but typically refer to the relationships that parents and children form with schoolteachers and personnel. For example, arguments regarding the superiority of Catholic schools are based on the notion that the religious ties that link many attendees, their families, and their teachers promote common norms useful in supporting academic achievement (Coleman, 1988, 1990; Morgan & Todd, 2009). In addition, attending Catholic schools may promote the formation of social capital through social closure; parents are more likely to have relationships with other parents whose children also attend the school. Because

parents and schools share the responsibility of educating children, both bonding and bridging social capital may be important in promoting academic achievement (Dufur et al., 2013).

According to Dufur et al. (2013), there are theoretical reasons to distinguish between the capital created in the family and that created at school. The ties created between parents and children are strong, the result of repeated and frequent interactions; because the parent–child bond is one of the most intimate relationships in early life, it is expected the social capital created in families to exert a heavy influence on child academic outcomes, even into adolescence. The ways parents choose to invest in their connections with their children, then, can have powerful and long-lasting effects.

Lareau (2011) argues that middle class and working class or disadvantaged children experience "unequal childhoods" as a function of differing socialisation strategies at home. Further, Lareau claims, middle class /middle income parents create a full schedule of activities for their children to encourage academic development through intense parent–child interaction and activities coordinated with schools. In contrast, working class/low income parents schedule far fewer activities and instead view child development as accomplishment of natural growth. They are less likely to actively play with their children, leaving offspring more time to spend in free play. They also talk with their children less (Hart & Risley, 1995). The next section of this literature review will discuss the importance of play-based learning to promote equality amongst all students. Still, while parental influences remain strong throughout the teen years (Amato & Booth, 2000), relationships with people outside the family circle become increasingly important as children age.

Dufur et al. (2013) expect that students who make additional investments in social capital at school by participating in activities that introduce closer relationships to peers, teachers, and other parents would see returns to that investment in the form of greater achievement. In addition, parents who become involved in their child's school or who get to know other parents are investing in a set of weak ties (Granovetter, 1983) or in bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000) that provide broader access to social resources promoting academic achievement than parents who rely only on the strong ties of close-knit family and neighbourhood circles. Lareau (2011) adds to this argument when she noted that working-class parents are less effective in dealing with schools than middle-class parents because they are not as assertive in their children's education in making requests of teachers and other school personnel.

Further, Heckman (2008) argued that ability gaps across children develop early in their lives, and that the family environments of young children are major predictors of later success. He also argued that early interventions, including those within families, are more efficacious in promoting positive school outcomes, while later interventions such as improved pupil–teacher ratios have weaker economic returns. Similarly, Grubb (2009) argues that school factors vary in their effects on student learning and favours early intervention policies that bolster both families and schools to promote student academic outcomes.

Several analyses that have attempted to model children's social capital guide this current investigation in the literature review. Parcel and Dufur (2001) argue that capital at home and at school may operate in parallel ways, demonstrating that both are helpful in promoting reading and mathematics achievement among 5–13-year-old children. They found that capital acquired in families sometimes interacts with capital acquired at school to produce desired outcomes; for example, more positive school social environments help blunt the negative effects of very high maternal work hours. Similarly, Crosnoe et al. (2004) use data from the National Survey of Adolescent Health to argue that social capital may be housed in both the family and the school and that those institutions and the capital they create may be intertwined to facilitate academic achievement. Their findings provide additional evidence for the idea that family and school capital work both independently and together to effect child outcomes. Finally, Hoffmann (2013) finds that high-quality schools partly compensate for poor parental

attachment and low parental involvement in school in preventing juvenile delinquency, especially for low-achieving youths.

However, what these studies could not demonstrate is the extent to which a given indicator of capital may actually reflect capital from more than one context. For example, when a parent participates in school organisations, does this reflect family capital? Or does it reflect the creation and strengthening of capital at school, given that the associations parents are building are derived from the school context? Or does it reflect both forms of capital, with the potential that such involvement could provide two pathways of influence to promote child achievement (Dufur et al., 2013)?

## 2.36 CURRICULUM DESIGN

Capacity building is essential to the process of school and system improvements. Crowther and Associates' (2011) definition of capacity building is an "intentional process of mobilizing a school's resources in order to enhance priority outcomes—and sustain those improved outcomes" (p. 20). Fullan (2005) acknowledged that capacity building is a central component of the strategy for large scale reform. Further, Hopkins and Jackson (2003) claim that "without a clear focus on 'capacity', a school will be unable to sustain continuous improvement efforts or to manage change effectively" (p. 87).

Solid pedagogical models and sound curriculum planning are imperative components of building school capacity and sustaining continuous school improvement efforts. Part of being a classroom teacher and a schoolteacher is to have a sound understanding of pedagogical design and curriculum design and how the two interconnect (Conway & Andrews, 2016). Each subject area has its very own roadmap, and as a primary teacher it is extremely important to know all the curriculum documents that will be taught.

Teaching philosophies and what is good pedagogy shift and change over time. As section II of the literature review will attest, the fundamentals of what good pedagogy methods consist of need to remain. Ensuring that the most effective pedagogical principles are utilised in the classroom can be challenging. However, primary teachers and administrators who understand the importance of employing the appropriate approaches and strategies of pedagogy can employ effective instructional methods to differentiate for the needs of all learners, thus providing an inclusive classroom and school. This literature review is based on the belief that all great teachers of history, from Plato and Socrates to Confucius, understood the principles of good teaching, and they used specific pedagogies to address their audiences, as do the current educators in the Queensland primary schools.

## 2.37 POSSIBILITIES FOR THE CURRICULUM MOVING FORWARD

The inception and implementation of the Australian Curriculum has not been without controversy. Many iterations continue to lead to open debate, perspectives and positioning (Yates, 2018). Reid (2011) pointed to the significance of place and space and recommended that the Australian Curriculum be less prescriptive in nature and not emphasise sameness. She was concerned that the Australian Curriculum did not pay attention to the "particularities of the place where they [teachers and pupils] are teaching, learning and living" (p. 22). Roberts (2013) suggested that the Australian Curriculum endorses a move "towards an impersonal and placeless curriculum" (p. 90). Reid also suggested that:

> . . . separation of curriculum and pedagogy works against place-conscious teaching in that it places knowledge on one pedestal and teaching upon another while suggesting that knowledge is fixed and uncontestable and teaching [is] a set of skills that can be enacted regardless of context. (p. 89)

Roberts (2013) and Reid (2011) also advocate for adopting a fundamental premise of place-based learning, which prioritises the lives of children and young people. Ensuring "place-consciousness" is embedded within the first goal of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019) that declares, "The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity" (Education Council, 2019, p. 4) and the second interconnected goal is that "All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, active and informed members of the community" (p. 4). Achieving these education goals is the responsibility of Australian governments and the education community in partnership with young Australians, their families and carers, and the broader community. Through this declaration, the Australian Government must provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on geographic location or socio-economic realities (Roberts, 2013).

## 2.38 PLAY-BASED LEARNING

Play nourishes every aspect of children's development—it forms the foundation of intellectual, social, physical, and emotional skills necessary for success in school and in life. Play "paves the way for learning". (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006, p. 2)

Play enables children to explore, and make meaning of their world and provides space for them to deepen their understanding and further their learning. In a Kindergarten classroom, the educators adopt an inquiry stance along with the children, and a culture of inquiry characterises the learning environment (Government of Ontario, 2012-22, Section 1.2).

Learning focused on inquiry and the underpinning processes and skills are central to science and technology. For example, as noted in the curriculum policy document for each discipline in the Ontario curriculum, inquiry is "at the heart of learning in all subject areas". Educators in Ontario use their professional knowledge and skills to co-construct inquiry with the children – that is, to support children's learning through play, using an inquiry approach (Government of Ontario, 2016, p. 18). It has long been acknowledged that there is a strong link between play and learning for young children, especially in the areas of problem solving, language acquisition, literacy, and mathematics, as well as the development of social, physical, and emotional skills (Fullan, 2013; NAEYC, 2009; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014).

Young children, ages 5 and 6 years old, actively explore their environment and the world around them through play. When children are exploring ideas and language, manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with various materials, they are engaged in learning through play. Play, therefore, has an important role in learning and can be used to further children's learning in all areas of the two-year Kindergarten program in the province of Ontario, Canada (Government of Ontario, 2016). Trawick-Smith and Dziurgot (2010) claim that to be effective, educators depend on their nuanced understanding of the many ways in which children develop and how children's grasp of concepts is revealed through play. Kindergarten classrooms (5 years of age) in Ontario, Canada, "make use of play and embed opportunities for learning through play in the physical environment" (Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning, 2007, p. 15). Children, through deliberately designed learning experiences, explore and investigate, problem solve, and discover creative solutions as well as share their learning with others.

Further, Vygotsky (1978) connects socio-dramatic play ("pretend" play) to children's developing self-regulation. During socio-dramatic play, children naturally engage in learning that is in their "zone of proximal development" – in other words, learning that is at the "edge" of their capacities. Evidence may be seen in various play contexts in the classroom. Also, in socio-dramatic play, language becomes a self-regulatory tool. Children's private speech, or self-talk, is a mode through which they shift from external regulation (e.g., regulation guided by a family member or educator) to internal regulation (e.g., self-regulation) (Pascal, 2009; Shanker, 2013).

It seems now that learning through play is becoming a new normal in post-pandemic educational recovery. It is indeed the easiest and most economic way to help all children learn the "21st century skills" that all schools are required to focus on now. Communication, creativity, collaboration, and problem solving are just some of the competences that children develop when they actively engage in play with one another (Sahlberg, 2021). Further, Sahlberg (2021) claims that regular play, especially free outdoor play, has a wide range of benefits to children's wellbeing and learning.

Drawing on the work of Sahlberg (2019, 2021), it is time now to take play more seriously in Australia. He believes that the nation should adopt the principle "work hard, play harder" in- and out-of-school. If Australia can learn, as the province of Ontario, Canada has, that by embracing the role of play, it can better mitigate the losses and harm children may have experienced while living through the most recent pandemic period. Schools have an important role, but parents/carers can do even more. The key solution is simple, let the children play (Sahlberg, 2019, 2021).

## 2.39 INQUIRY BASED LEARNING

Inquiry-based learning for all primary schools across Queensland is an initiative that the policy makers and educational leaders must acknowledge is needed, and are encouraged to implement promptly, based on the relevant research found in this literature review. The essence of inquiry "requires more than simply answering questions or getting a right answer. It espouses investigation, exploration, search, quest, research, pursuit, and study. It is enhanced by involvement with a community of learners, each learning from the other in social interaction" (Kuhlthau et al., 2007, p. 2). It is a constructivist approach where the overall goal for students is to make meaning, where students are actively engaged in the learning process to solve problems and create new meaning. There are many models but the most recent adaption is Problem or Project-based learning (PBL).

Further, Fullan and Scott (2014) have proposed new pedagogies for deep learning, that is, "powerful new learning modes steeped in real world problem solving now made more telling through recent, rapid developments in the use of technology for interactive learning" (p. 3). Deep learning consists of "Six Cs of Deep Learning" where learning is both an individual and a collective phenomenon. Further, they claim that "this new learning combats the boredom of traditional schooling and post-secondary education (both students and teachers are bored), and replaces it with learning environments based on four new criteria in combination: [engaging and relevant; uses readily accessible information; uses technologies; is creative]" (pp. 5-6). At the heart of the 6C's (a mixture of academic and personal/interpersonal qualities) is a pedagogy based essentially on inquiry learning process that is both individual and collaborative. Fullan and Scott, along with many others, e.g., Fielding (2012); Natural Curiosity (2011); Ontario Ministry of Education (2013a); Pink (2006, 2009); and Scardamalia (2002) claim there is a need to build these social and cognitive skills in students today to prepare them for "tomorrow".

A common concern among educators new to inquiry is how to teach with an inquiry approach when there are so many curriculum expectations to address. However, within the Australian Curriculum, inquiry learning skills are expected outcomes (Lupton, 2012, 2013, 2014). In the new narrative, primary school educators, using inquiry-based learning will be able to give reason to value, and use and develop skills, such as reading and writing.

## 2.40 CURRICULUM INNOVATION RELATED TO COMMUNITY

Every student lives within other communities: a family, a cultural community, a social community, and perhaps in an international community as well (Fullan & Scott, 2014). These communities are support structures that lend strength to the education of each student. Sometimes, these communities can be outside educators' personal comfort zones – languages that are not understood, social networks that teachers and principals may not

be familiar with, or norms that the school staff may not understand or find difficult. It is particularly important, at these times, that stepping out of an educator's comfort zone can help. How teachers and principals interact with others, such as students and their parents/carers, matters.

The dimensions of student identity are complex and far-ranging. They might include: ethnicity, gender, friendship circles, race, talents, language(s), social media involvement, expectations of self, aspirations, beliefs, spiritual beliefs, socio-economic status, degree of self-awareness, passions and interests, and sense of self-efficacy. In fact, it is a combination of all of the pertinent factors that form the unique person in the classroom (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011).There is a rich repertoire of possibilities for inclusion, for drawing each individual into the classroom. Through feedback and conversation about different aspects of students' lives, teachers and principals facilitate personal investment in learning. It is imperative that teachers know each of their student's strengths, needs and interests. This enables them to help make relevant and authentic student connections to learning. Knowing a student's career aspirations, what they are curious about in a subject area, or what they get excited about after school can be built into lessons as a bridge of relevance between what matters to a student and the curriculum concepts and content (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011).

Student voices are significant to the learning process, as it helps the teacher to know what is going on inside their world. Disengagement was once thought to be a function of low literacy performance, and conversely, that high literacy scores would indicate higher levels of engagement. We now know that this is not the case (Rogers, 2000). Rather, "learning, development and identity formation . . . are interactive and shape each other as they evolve" (ACPA & NASPA, 2004, p. 10). In addition, parent/carer engagement is important for building a strong school community. It is essential that parents/carers are actively invited and supported to become partners in their children's education. If this occurs on a regular basis, students are more likely to experience school as a part of community and become more engaged in their learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a).

It is essential to build a school community around the culture of the community itself, and not the other way around (Lawford, 2015). Bartholomaeus (2013) advocated for place-based literacy learning for English with school students to promote school community. She provided two examples of work produced in Aboriginal communities, one from an urban environment and another of creating biographies of local people. Decisions about the timing of school terms and holidays may also take into account local matters. For example, the Australian Northern Territory has historically had a four-week break in the middle of the year during the "Top End" dry season, as this connected with cultural movements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and aligned with a cooler season in central Australia. A new policy has been advanced which is contrary to place-based principles, and the break will be shortened to three weeks on the rationale that a shorter break will not disrupt students' academic learning (Lawford, 2015). However, in keeping with a place-based learning ethos, Gunbalanya community will be permitted to start early during the wet season when it is often cut off (Trevaskis, 2012). What then for the new narrative of primary schooling if we are to build a school community around the culture of the community itself?

## 2.41 SCHOOL-WIDE PEDAGOGY

The literature found in this review signals that the new narrative for Queensland primary schools consider the local school community and the needs of all its stakeholders – staff, students, parents/carers, and key community personnel. The Leadership Research International (LRI) group conducted a joint research project with Sydney Catholic Schools Eastern Region and reported on schools that had actively engaged with the whole school improvement project (IDEAS), designed, implemented, and researched by members of the LRI group from the University of Southern Queensland. This project, IDEAS, is designed to enable school leaders to manage developmental processes in their schools with a view to enhancing and sustaining success—in teacher professionalism, in community support, and in student achievement (http://ideas.usq.edu.au/). Conway and

Andrews (2019) report how other Australian schools that have also engaged in the IDEAS project are changing their approaches to leading the teaching and learning in their diverse and multi-characteristic contexts. Experiences of these Australian schools demonstrate that the development of a school-wide approach to pedagogy and its implementation needs to be firmly embedded in the leadership of learning. Drawing on research conducted in the Sydney Catholic Education Office system in Australia (Conway & Andrews, 2019; Crowther et al., 2012), there is evidence of relationship between the development and implementation of a school-wide approach to pedagogy and student achievement. There is also evidence to support leadership that is based on a mutualistic relationship between teacher leaders and their principal. The research conducted by the LRI highlights the power of teacher leaders taking responsibility for pedagogical development and implementation. In addition, the LRI research illustrates the power of mutualistic relationships (parallel leadership) when the principal takes responsibility for unleashing and trusting the creative expertise of teacher leaders in line with the role of strategic leadership and management (Conway & Andrews, 2016).

In implementing IDEAS, members of the LRI group work with the school's professional community to illuminate the work of teachers and assist teachers and school administrators in the clarification of direction, the collaboration of shared pedagogy and the alignment of infrastructure. Initially, the work of IDEAS was informed by the research of others (e.g., Cooperrider & Whitney, 1996; Crevola & Hill, 1998; Drucker, 1946; Hord, 1997; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Senge et al., 1994; Zuber-Skerritt, 1990) and built on by members of the LRI. This research included studies in Australian schools in Southern Queensland (Crowther et al., 2002); in designated low SES "failing" schools in Victoria (Andrews & USQ-LRI Research Team, 2009); in the Sydney Catholic Education Office system (Andrews et al., 2012); and in Singapore (Chew & Andrews, 2010). Also informing the project were studies from doctoral students attached to the LRI (Abawi, 2012; Conway, 2008; Dawson, 2010; Jeyaraj, 2011; Lewis, 2003; A. Morgan, 2008). This research has developed a body of knowledge about leadership for sustainable school improvement, as recognised by Hargreaves (in Crowther & Associates, 2011) in his comment, "this is the third book arising from the IDEAS Project and the body of knowledge that has accumulated from its experience and achievements" (p. xv).

IDEAS is centred around the creation of a shared approach to teaching and learning, that is, Schoolwide Pedagogy (SWP©) in which teachers, alongside principals, are the central players, and teacher leadership is key to the creation and implementation of SWP©. There are several components that underpin a theoretical understanding of the IDEAS project. These include: a process for improvement; an organisational framework; an understanding of teachers' work; and a leadership construct. The organisational (Research-Based) framework (RBF) includes five fundamental sets of variables that contribute to alignment within a school community. The five sets of variables are:

- Strategic foundations: leadership and strategic management capability;

- Cohesive community: internal and external stakeholder support;

- Generative resource design: includes curricula, spatial arrangements, technologies, marketing, quality assurance strategies;

- Schoolwide pedagogy: pedagogical practices; and

- Holistic professional learning: professional learning and mechanisms.

(https://lri.usq.edu.au)

When these five sets of variables are developed, and are in alignment with each other, a school's potential to enhance its outcomes is maximised (Crowther & Associates, 2011). The focus or purpose centring organisational and cognitive alignment is the integral relationship between the Vision and Values (Strategic Foundations) brought alive through the creation and implementation of SWP© (Crowther et al., 2009; Jeyaraj, 2011; Newmann

& Wehlage, 1995). The Vision-SWP© link provides focus for collaborative action, resource allocation and holistic professional learning (Andrews & Lewis, 2002, 2004, 2007; Louis et al., 1996). Participating IDEAS project schools use the RBF at a number of junctures during their IDEAS project journeys, commencing with a systematic approach to organisational diagnosis using the IDEAS Diagnostic Inventory (DISA) at the Discovery phase of the process (Conway & Andrews, 2016). Distinctive in this approach to building capacity for improvement by enhancing teacher quality is that the process is driven from successful practices extending within the school's professional community that are value added to over time.

## 2.42 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES/CULTURES – NEW SCHOOL STRUCTURES/POSSIBILITIES

Owens and Valesky (2015) wrote:

Attention has been devoted increasingly to strategies for improving the performance of organizations not by changing their structures as a way of inducing more effective organizational behavior, but by dealing with participants in ways that bring about desirable changes in the structure . . . [and] . . . in the character and quality of the social environment in which people work. (p. 98)

This has led to increasing interest in exploring schools as open social systems, where schools are viewed as unique entities – the context in which human interaction occurs. Therefore, an organisation "is an integrated system of interdependent structures and functions. . . . is constituted of groups . . . consisting of persons who must work in harmony . . . and know what others are doing" (p. 98). As Senge (2000) reminded us, the world in which we live is complex as it is a world dominated by change and ambiguity. As a result, schools work in complex environments (both internally and externally) where phenomena cannot be ascribed to any single causative factor. Schools need to be nimble, open, learning-oriented structures, and organisational performance needs to be confident and competent. Open systems are therefore considered to be complex where an understanding of individual parts of the whole system is essential. Further, systems need to adapt individual and collective behaviour to be able to respond to changing events (Conway & Andrews, 2019). These systems are referred to by Owens and Valesky (2015) as Complex Adaptive Systems.

The effectiveness of organisations requires flexible structures; lateral and vertical communication; and expert power (rather than hierarchical power) as the dominant base of influence where emphasis on exchanges of information and trusting relationships are more important than giving directions. As environmental conditions change, the school needs to adapt by responding with appropriate structures and administrative responses. Internal and external demands on schools are frequent and varied, as is the complex nature of many problems that arise for which there is no known solution. These internal and external demands also impact the relationships across the school (Bryk & Schneider,2002; Conway & Andrews, 2019; Owens & Valesky, 2015).

These issues or problems are what Weick (1976) called "wicked" or Schön (1987) called "messy" and require the school to adapt to the changing nature of the environment. This adaptation requires new ways of thinking (Senge, 2000) in a world that is dominated by change and ambiguity, and as such, schools need to be nimble – to be quick learners (Conway & Andrews, 2019). Two issues arise out of this complexity, the importance of context and the nature of leadership. The way schools address these approaches and issues is discussed in detail in Duignan's (2012) book, *Educational Leadership*. Duignan makes the following observations (drawn from his work and the work of 25 other researchers):

- Many of the internal challenges facing educational leaders can be defined as tensions that involve situations where values and ethics are contested – "contestable values dualities, or ethical dilemmas" (p. 59).
- The tensions are usually among or between people based on differences in values, interests and preferences, "rarely can issues involving complex human behaviour . . . be reduced or resolved by

logical and linear management processes . . . the leader [needs] to have a large measure of emotional intelligence" (p. 59).

- Many of the tensions relate to student discipline, staff relationships and teacher competence.
- One of the most consistent tensions is deciding whether to support decisions promoting the good of the group or the rights of the individual. No matter what the decision, leaders often agonise over the impact of their decisions on the individual (p. 61), for example, in the case of ineffective staff, long and loyal service is acknowledged and often the individual is considered before that of the needs of the student body.
- Educational leaders need frames of reference and decision guidelines for making choices in situations that present ethical positions (p. 77).
- There is a special need for leaders to call on their core values and moral purpose when leading in complex and dynamic situations (p. 92) and this need to be clearly articulated and authentically applied.
- A method as proposed should be followed in ethical decision-making processes (p. 108).

However, adding to complexity, the solution in one school may not apply to another. All schools are not the same (Harris & Jones, 2018; Leithwood, 2010) as each school serves a unique community (teachers, parents, students) with their own values, beliefs, goals, concerns, and in "many subtle ways . . . teachers, administrators and students accommodate to the rules, regulations and discipline of the school" (Harris & Jones, 2018, p. 100). Effectiveness of leadership style depends on appropriateness in terms of critical contingencies in a given situation (Owens & Valesky, 2011, 2015). Further, the effectiveness of leadership style depends on the power of the leader; the quality of relationships between leader and others; clarity of structures of the task; degree of cooperation required to implement the decision; level of skill and motivation of people; and agreement of outcomes (goals). Contingency enables a leader to deal with motivation, decision making, organisational change, organisational culture, and conflict management (Conway & Andrews, 2019).

## 2.43 NEW SCHOOL STRUCTURES – DECENTRALISATION (COMMUNITY SCHOOLS)

As Eric Hanushek (2020) indicates, the only way for a nation such as Australia to achieve economic growth, in the long term, is to improve the quality of schools by establishing clear developmental goals and indicators of measured skills, factoring in standardised measurable assessments such as PISA and NAPLAN. However, Hanushek (2020) has substantial research to support that there is no single policy that has brought about gains in inclusive growth, and not one standardised test has been able to solve the issues surrounding student performance and quality school outcomes. Whilst certain standardised measures are essential, there is a need for local approaches informed by regular monitoring of student performance that needs to be in place as well. Further, nations and regions must set goals for quality schools and student improvement, yet these goals cannot be accomplished without substantially larger resources than are currently available (Hanushek, 2020).

Fullan (2021) advocates for a new "systemness" solution. He places the responsibility for system change equally at each of the three levels of the system – local, middle (regional), and central (policy level). He claims, "systemness (wholeness) is to systemic what coherence is to alignment" (p. 33). Fullan (2021) outlines six descriptive concepts as essential for the systemness driver. These are:

Driver 1: at all levels of the system, the people believe they are in fact, "the system" itself. The people who make up the system have a responsibility to interact with, learn from, and contribute to a continually evolving system.

Driver 2: the system is a meta-driver, meaning it is above the local, middle, and central levels, and it is intended to learn from the interactions between and among the right drivers (well-being and learning; social intelligence; equality investments; and systemness).

Driver 3: the system to consist of three levels: local, middle and central or in other terms, micro, meso, and macro.

Driver 4; whoever is at each level in the system is equally autonomous, interdependent, and responsible for what happens. All personnel at each level have responsibilities within their subsystem, and across the entire system.

Driver 5: it is imperative to appoint people to move towards the right drivers. It is the responsibility of leaders and all employees to do so in order that system change happens from the top, the bottom, and the middle. Without change occurring at all levels of the organisation, Fullan believes the system will begin to crumble.

Driver 6: learning within and across levels of the system teaches everyone how the system's constituent parts interrelate and work over time, as well as how they can be improved. Learning is an essential component to the health and sustainability of any organisation.

According to Fullan (2021), *The Right Drivers* for whole system success are located under the Human Paradigm: wellbeing and learning; social intelligence; equality investments; and systemness (p. 5). Additional details of Fullan's model, *The Right Drivers,* are presented throughout the literature review.

## 2.44 THE RURAL CONTEXT IN RELATION TO SCHOOL/ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

The rural context in Australia remains difficult to define (Halfacree, 1993). Terms such as rural, regional, country, remote, and isolated are all used to describe the experience of Australian educators, but each has different connotations. From conjuring up a deficit view of the rural, each term hints at the impact of isolation, access, limited population sizes and reinforces common perception of rural as a binary term (Schulte & Walker-Gibbs, 2016). However, the notion of rurality is fundamental to shaping identity and developing a place-based consciousness in the school structures of Queensland, Australia's primary schools, as well as with its school leaders and teachers (Gruenewald, 2003; Halsey, 2011; Perumal, 2015; Starr & White, 2008). Halsey's (2017) Independent review into regional and remote education referenced colloquial terms such as "the bush", " the outback" and defines rural context as: "to all schools and services which are not located in the major cities of Australia. The word rural when used by itself includes regional and remote" (p.13).

Historically, little attention has been paid to Australian rural education and leadership, but more recently there has been emerging interest in the intersection between the rural context, teacher identity, and school leadership, often with reference to gender (Blackmore, 2015; Pini et al., 2014, White & Corbett, 2014). In this portion of the literature review, the term rural will be used to refer to a space and place that is a significant distance from an urban centre, as such adopting Halsey's definition.

Interest around contexts for leadership has previously included organisational and environmental settings (Hallinger, 2018). The more nuanced features of the rural are now gaining scholarly attention where context matters (Bush, 2018). The Australian Department of Education and Training commissioned an Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (Halsey, 2017, 2018) to consider the challenges and barriers to student learning outcomes.

Being a leader in a rural school is distinctly different from that of a leader in an urban setting. Spurred on by education reform and the drive for school improvement, leadership in Australia has been the focus of programs promoted by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership, and the new national principal certification (Halsey, 2017). But as Watterston (2015) reported, fundamental to addressing the need for quality leadership is research and investment in the identifications of leaders, rigorous selection processes for programs, collaboration and partnership between sectors, and an evidence base to target areas of need.

Leadership in schools has preoccupied researchers and has been dominated by different approaches, styles, and models that demonstrate effective leadership (Bush & Glover, 2003). Trait-based, distributed, situational, instructional, and transformational theories of how to lead have all gained some degree of traction. Simkins (2005) argued that there is both a traditional and an emerging conception of leadership, and this perspective is helpful if Australians are to make sense of leadership in rural settings. The rapid growth of a "what-works" approach fails to address a broader need for a theoretical framework in educational leadership (Moller, 2017). The diversity inherent in the research includes everything from Gronn's (1999) thesis on the formation of leaders, to the practice of leadership in schools in the work of Leithwood et al. (1999).

An alternative approach to leadership in education starts to uncover some of the inherent ambiguities and this can be seen in the work emerging from Thompson (2017) and Gunter (2001). These researchers challenge the dominant thinking that leadership can be prescribed and replicated and argue for a more disruptive, dialogic approach. There is limited space in this literature review to elaborate on the various iterations of these debates in leadership. A checklist approach might appear to be a practical and attractive option for school leadership in theory and practice, but it is not mindful of context. There is a notable absence of engagement with rural space. Principals, both men and women, in small schools often juggle classroom responsibilities with administrative demands, without the support of permanent staff or assistants (Halsey, 2018). As Halsey noted, attracting and retaining both teachers and school leaders in rural schools is a major challenge and has resulted in many forms of incentives provided to attract and retain them in rural schools.

Some teachers are appointed to leadership roles in a rural context as part of a career pathway to moving into a new leadership role in an urban school – "you go to the bush to prove yourself as an educational leader to earn the right to be considered for an urban principalship" (Halsey, 2017, p. 28). One research participant, a leading teacher, spoke at length about the exhaustive support she had to offer a young man in his early thirties who had landed the principal role via an alternative teaching preparation program. In contrast, others have moved from urban to rural schools, pre-empting retirement. Leadership in rural schools has specific needs that often remain ignored by traditional professional learning offerings (Halsey,2018). Further, Halsey (2017) called for:

> . . . specialised education and preparation of principals and leaders via post graduate programs which result in a deep understanding and appreciation of regional, rural and remote contexts and develop the knowledge, skills and relationships for effective, efficient and pro-active leadership. (p. 27)

## 2.45 ORGANISATIONAL SCHOOL CULTURES

Organisational theorists continually write about the importance of environments that support and encourage innovative and creative cultures. Such environments in schools develop supportive trusting relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) that enable the professional community to flourish. One can argue then that a culture of trust is imperative if the Australian school system is to enhance school outcomes for all students. Sahlberg (2019) claims that it is the broader Australian culture that has caused the demise of the school system's academic standards. Does this mean that Queensland primary schools should not bother with working to lift the quality of teaching and the quality of its schools? Society's problems, issues, norms, and values are the collective responsibility of the Australian nation. All Australians, inclusive of educators, are responsible for what society is like, and for raising and educating the next generation (Fullan, 2021; Schein & Schein, 2016). Sahlberg (2019) firmly affirmed that it is no coincidence that there is a correlation between a decline in trust in western society and a decline in Australian educational standards. According to the OECD (2020b), trust in government is deteriorating in many of the OECD countries. Only 40% of citizens, on average, trust their government.

Some years ago, the link between trust and student outcomes was made in a longitudinal study in the United States of America. In their seminal work, *Trust in Schools*, Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that it is trust that makes a significant difference to student learning and outcomes, not policy, curriculum, standardisation, or accountability. Their study found that where there were strong positive trust reports in a school, the students were three times more likely to be improving in reading and mathematics compared with schools where there were reports of weak trust. In fact, Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that schools with low levels of trust (amongst their faculty, between teachers and students, teachers, and parents), had virtually no chance of showing improvement in either reading or mathematics. This finding was further supported by Louis (2007) who found that the existence of relational trust was a determining factor in enhancing student outcomes. This is a profound finding. So how is it that this simple social phenomenon called "trust" – that only exists when people are in supportive relationships – can have such a profound effect on learning?

Bennis and Nanus (1985) considered trust to be the lubricant that makes it possible for organisations to work. When trust is low or missing in schools, staff may be evasive, dishonest, and inconsiderate in their communications. When teachers or students feel unsafe, energy that could be devoted to teaching and learning is diverted to self-preservation. In the absence of trust, people are increasingly unwilling to take risks and demand greater protections to defend their interests (Tyler & Kramer, 1996). Further, issues are seldom discussed and never resolved, a school cannot improve and grow into the rich, nurturing micro-society needed by children and adults alike, and people are likely to say only those things they expect others want to hear (Lovell & Wiles, 1983).

A low-trust culture invariably can be the result of, or results in, a withdrawal of the leader to a traditional hierarchical and authoritarian form of leadership (Duignan, 2006). Without trust, leaders lose credibility (Reina & Reina, 2006). This loss poses difficulty to leaders as they seek to call people to respond to their responsibilities. The painful alternative is to be punitive, seeking to control people through manipulation or coercion. This, in turn, can become an endless cycle of distrust, broken only by the removal of the leader.

Conversely, the reward of a trusting school environment is immeasurable (Blasé & Blasé, 2001). Sergiovanni (2005) espoused the importance and value of trust in school leadership, particularly in relation to school improvement agendas. He stated that school leaders should be trustworthy, and the building of trust is an organisational quality. Once trust exists, it becomes the norm that sets the standard for how teachers behave toward each other and their students. Once part of the culture of the school, trust works "to liberate people to be their best, to give others their best, and to take risks, . . . All of these behaviours help schools to become better places for students" (Sergiovanni, 2005, p. 90). Sergiovanni (2005) believed that trust is so important in a school that it is vital to first build trust before anything else, even before a leader develops a vision. To build trust after setting a vision and developing strategy is nowhere near as effective. The responsibility of the creation of a vision to bring about school improvement rests on the shoulders of effective school leaders (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Mahoney 1990). When staff members view their leader as trustworthy, the vision, when well communicated, becomes collective and inspires and creates commitment on behalf of the school members to take the necessary risks and innovative steps required to see their school improve.

D. H. Hargreaves (2006) supported Sergiovanni's (2005) assertions, suggesting that to embrace new and exciting ways of operating, schools need to develop and maintain professional cultures of trust, cooperation, and responsibility. He identified trust as one of three key human resources in educational change; the other two were confidence and emotion. There is a level of predictability for people when others react and behave in a trusting way; assumptions of acting in good faith abound. D. H. Hargreaves (2006) concluded that trust improves schools, increases achievement, and boosts energy and morale.

Trust not only plays an important role in taking schools toward strategic improvement, but also in the development, and capacity building of teachers. Blasé & Blasé (2001) investigated the construct of shared governance – the development of cooperative relationships in order to reach collaboratively agreed goals. While Blasé and Blasé did not set about to examine trust, one of the key conclusions they drew was that in a shared governance context, a key challenge of the principal was to build a trusting environment. They suggested that principals can do this by encouraging openness, facilitating effective communication, and modelling understanding. Their data indicated that principals build trust by working to create school cultures free of intimidation, fear, coercion, and criticism. They claimed that the effect of a high-trust environment is likely to manifest in motivated, satisfied, and confident teachers. Due to an atmosphere of trust, teachers are more likely to work harder, be optimistic, and feel a sense of professionalism. Conway and Andrews (2016) found trusting relationship can be built by engaging the whole school community in processes of school improvement.

So, if trust is the key resource for school improvement, the resource that unlocks the potential of every teacher and student, how is it achieved? Investigating how to achieve a culture of trust in schools is critical to staff morale, job satisfaction and student outcomes. There are 10 essential leadership practices that Sahlberg (2019) attests to building trust and trusting cultures. These are posited to support turning around Queensland primary schools:

1. Admit your mistakes: Leaders are not infallible;
2. Offer trust: No one likes to be micro-managed;
3. Actively listen;
4. Provide affirmation;
5. Be consultative in decision making;
6. Be visible;
7. Keep a consistent demeanour;
8. Coach and mentor staff;
9. Offer care and concern;
10. Keep confidences.

Each of the 10 practices can be learned and developed by any leader regardless of their personality and position. Further, leaders in today's schools not only build trusting relationships and supportive cultures but build the leadership capabilities of others and engage in inclusive practices that build the capacity in others to enact innovative practices and grow and create innovative solutions to often "messy", complex problems (Conway & Andrews, 2016; Crowther & Associates, 2011; Crowther et al. 2009; Schein & Schein, 2016). In moving forward in the new narrative, primary school principals could take on the Leadership Challenge (Kouzes & Posner, 2017) by Modelling the Way, Inspiring a shared vision, Challenging the process, Enabling others to act and Encouraging the heart.

## 2.46 SUMMARY OF SECTION II

Reflecting on Section II, *Into The Future*, the essence was to determine how the past can inform the future for the leadership of Queensland primary schools. According to the OECD (2020c), Australia was one of the leading education nations in the world just two decades ago. However, as this section has revealed, despite frequent school reforms, performance has not been improving in comparison to other developed (and comparable) countries. This section has outlined that the inspiration for education reforms in Australia has often come from initiatives in the United States or Britain. However, the literature review is calling upon the leadership

in Queensland primary schools to provide "home grown" solutions that will be effective now and in the future. Making informed social, economic, and educational changes based on what is good for the population of Queensland primary schools is what the leaders need to do to move educational performance reforms in the right direction. What was discovered in Section II is that the real power of effective leadership is maximising other people's potential. The final section will outline the present and future narrative by exploring the current debate as to what effective school leadership is, how quality primary school leadership is measured, and the required leadership capacities for a principal to lead the new narrative in Queensland primary schools.

## 3.1 OVERVIEW OF SECTION III – LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

In today's world, very little is predictable. The pandemic that began in 2020 collided with the globe's social, economic, political, health care, and schooling systems resulting in the on-going composition of new norms and new narratives. More than ever, the acknowledgement by educational community leaders has reflected the urgent need for change so that schools are able to face the on-going complexities as well as opportunities in the 21st century (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020).

The research questions to be explored throughout this portion of the literature review in relation to leadership implications as depicted in the conceptual map (see Figure 1.2) are:

- Research Question 1 – In what ways does primary schooling impact the economic and social performance of a community/nation?
- Research Question 2 – What is the contribution of school leadership to the achievement of quality primary school student outcomes, academic and social?

This third section of the review will also consider literature and research associated with the present and future leadership narrative by investigating the current debate on what is effective school leadership. Additionally, to be examined is how quality is measured in terms of leadership as it relates to primary school student outcomes, both academic and social. Finally, it is an exploration into possibilities for future leaders, through a literature search into the potentials that lie ahead for forthcoming school leadership. Of key focus is the highly successful leadership required in Queensland primary schools to support a "learning for life" mindset, not a "learning loss" mindset.

Three theoretical perspectives on primary education have been explored throughout this literature review and they continue to be woven throughout Section III. According to the University of Minnesota (2021) these social perspectives are:

- Functionalism – education socialises children and supports their entry into the wider society as adults

- Conflict theory – education reinforces inequality usually as the result of differing resourcing and conditions of varying school types and contexts

- Symbolic interactionism – social interaction in schools affects the relational nature of education and teachers' expectations of students' abilities impact student potential achievement.

  (https://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/chapter/11-2-sociological-perspectives-on-education/)

In addition, the definition and positioning of primary education from an economic perspective has also been investigated in Sections I and II of this literature review. The economic message in relation to primary education is clear and is best explained by a quote from Laozi, an ancient Chinese philosopher, "Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime" (https://quotepark.com/quotes/1781207-laozi-give-a-man-a-fish-and-you-feed-him-for-a-day-teac/).

According to Patrinos (2016b), schooling matters for economic development:

There are more children in school today than ever before. For example, in 1950 the average level of schooling in Africa was less than two years. It is more than five years today. In East Asia and the Pacific, the schooling of the population went from two to seven years between 1950 and 2010. This is more than a

200 percent increase! Globally, average years of schooling are now projected to rise to 10 years by 2050. This is larger than a five-fold increase within a century and a half. Yet, there are still 124 million children and adolescents not in school. Also, more than 250 million school children cannot read, even after several years of schooling. (para. 3-4)

It is imperative that primary school leaders in Queensland understand and acknowledge the pivotal role of education in economic development both globally and nationally. Education is an investment (Schultz, 1978). Furthermore, based on propositions underpinning Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), investment in education results in a positive and long-term economic advantage. More recently, Heckman (2006) adds to this viewpoint from a neurological science perspective claiming that investment in education at an early age provides for a greater return on economic development.

## 3.2 EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: THE CURRENT DEBATE

Section III is mostly focused on Research Question 2, while also continuing to interconnect important facets from Research Question 1. Looking through a lens as to what is effective and successful primary school leadership, the words "effective" and "successful" are often used to describe school leadership with little consideration as to the actual implications of this language on leaders themselves. What exactly is the definition of an effective, successful school leader? What sets them apart from other school leaders? What are the capabilities that people look for and admire in effective leadership? Kouzes and Posner (2017) found that when they interviewed thousands of executives for their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, and asked the question, "What values do you look for and admire in your leader?", responses ranged with 225 different characteristics, traits and values given. Among these, in over 50% of the time, four characteristics stood out: honesty, forward-thinking, competent, and inspiring. Through six editions of their book, these four characteristics remained in the lead. Honesty was always at the top of the scale. Alongside honesty are traits such as being principled and ethical. Based on their decades of research, Kouzes and Posner believed that people want leaders that have integrity and are credible, this to them defines effective leadership: "If you don't believe the messenger, you won't believe the message" (p. 2).

A large-scale research project, The International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP), was conducted focused on the leadership of principals in successful schools across seven countries. Findings from this project resulted in a plethora of publications as reported by Gurr (2015). Building on Gurr et al.'s (2007, 2010) earlier works of the ISSPP, findings were that the work of school leaders is described as engaging within the school context to influence student and school outcomes through interventions in teaching and learning, school capacity building, and the wider context. The qualities a leader brings to their role, a "portfolio approach" to using leadership ideas, constructing networks, collaborations and partnerships, and utilising accountability and evaluation for evidence-informed improvement, are important additional elements.

Furthermore, Munby and Fullan (2016) firmly believed in system-wide effective school collaboration. They see leadership as focused not just on the formal leader, but as well on the informal leaders – students, teachers, and staff. They stated that the solution for school collaboration is to network at the local, regional, and national levels whilst respecting the autonomy of schools and their leaders. They asserted that these connections need to come together in "focused cooperation, leading to improved outcomes and strong collective accountability for achieving these outcomes" (p. 5). They listed eight critical success factors for effective system-wide school collaboration. This review will focus on five of the eight:

- 1. . . . the purpose of collaboration must be to improve outcomes.
- 2. . . . every partnership must be founded on clearly articulated shared moral purpose.

- 6. The partnership must grow over time: it should have a plan to move from collaboration to co-responsibility to a position of shared professional accountability.

- 7. The partnership must not be bound by the commitment of individuals: it should go beyond relationships between school leaders to engage with students, teachers, families, and communities.

- 8. Partnerships should not be isolated but, in a spirit of reciprocity, should welcome scrutiny and support from other partnerships as their contribution to a connected local, regional and national system. (pp. 5-6)

## 3.3 MEASURING QUALITY: DEFINING QUALITY AND HOW IT IS MEASURED

Currently, expectations of school leaders are higher than ever before. Principals are not just seen as educational leaders, knowledgeable about teaching and learning, they are also expected to know how to work with data, be the instructional leaders, make funding decisions, engage with their wider community, support children with a range of special needs, and navigate a complex operational environment. With increased local decision making and authority, school leaders in Queensland primary schools are also called upon to implement new reforms involving change, financial and people management skills.

However, Sahlberg (2021) observes that "[t]he culture of schools in Australia is much more about conformity where schools often are compliant rather than creative in responding to sudden changes in their environments" (p. 15). This was highlighted by Sahlberg's focus on the comparison of schools' performances with one another (for example, NAPLAN), that teachers were more concerned about students' well-being and health than their learning progress, and that "[t]he COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and often amplified the existing inequalities in education systems across the world" (p. 16).

Drawing on the OECD (2020d) report, Sahlberg (2021) noted, "education systems that are built on trust-based professionalism, that have flexibility and autonomy to adapt curriculum to local needs and strengths, that can adjust teaching and learning to changing circumstances, and that rely less on externally measured standards" (p. 16) will be better able to ensure more equitable outcomes for students and their families. In so doing he suggests that educational leaders consider the following three principles:

- *Addressing inequalities early*. One of the most powerful ways to strengthen equity in education is to avoid inequalities in early childhood and primary education.

- *Trusting teachers as professionals*. . . . Schools can better include policies and action into their work when teachers and principals are treated as trusted professionals in deciding what is best for all children.

- *Building self-directedness*. . . . Self-directedness strengthens student engagement, brings about authentic learning and helps schools respond better to emerging inequalities. (p. 17)

In summary, it is timely to acknowledge the importance of government leaders, educational leaders, and parents to unify around the challenge posited by these principles.

## 3.4 HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

The query into what highly successful leadership for the future in Queensland's primary schools entails is a complex undertaking, as literature and research are merely making speculations based on historical and present knowledge. Even though the nation of Australia did not suffer as greatly as much of the rest of the world during the pandemic, there are still educational lessons and long-lasting shifts that have occurred on a global scale. If

there is anything that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught the world, it is that change is often unpredictable, it is complex, and it happens at a rapid pace (Zhao, 2020). This uncertainty as to leadership in the future mirrors the world that currently exists, where there is so much ambivalence swirling about. Leadership and those concerned with it have two choices, they can remain stuck in the past or present ways of being, or they can take hold of lessons learned and forge ahead with a new "tool kit" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020; Harris & Jones, 2020; Mintz, 2020). The main equipment required for this new tool kit needs to be the knowledge and wisdom attained as a result of this pandemic, and the desire to make the primary schools in Queensland the best that they can be (UNESCO, 2020). A futuristic alternative vision for school leadership in Queensland primary schools is much needed to advance the sustainable achievement of quality student outcomes academically, socially, emotionally, and economically in nature (Grissom et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2020). The evidence from the first two sections of this literature review is all pointing in the direction of the future leadership narrative as being one that is growth-minded, adaptable, flexible, agile, and equitable.

This section of the literature review will build upon the previous two, as well as continue to construct a solid foundational approach for a new, futuristic leadership story in Queensland's primary schools by recognising that inquiry into the current status quo must occur, so that educational leaders can appropriately alter practices to provide equitable, social, and economical agile processes required for the emerging educational frontier (Schleicher, 2018). The realisation that people enact the reality of their everyday world of work invokes a powerful way of thinking about highly successful leadership for the future. It means that educational leaders must attempt to understand that the people who make up their school communities are all learners who are in an ongoing, proactive process of reality construction. This brings the whole circumstance of creating the future school leadership narrative alive as an active, living phenomenon through which people jointly create and re-create the worlds in which they live (G. Morgan, 2006). The educational leader of the future must grasp hold of their current realities by recognising antiquated industrial age thinking through transforming their collective visions into ones that are adaptable and open to modernisation (Conway & Andrews, 2016). It is imperative that the 21$^{st}$ century learner has direct access to school leadership that is not looking in the rear-view mirror, but instead is future-focused.

As the literature and research are directing throughout this review, it is essential that today's school leaders respond to a world that is changing in complex ways (Harris & Jones, 2020; Rincon-Gallardo, 2020). Currently there is an acceptance in the education community that the need to change is not just something to consider, but is essential, so that schools and their communities are more effectively able to face the challenges that lie ahead (Fullan, 2018; Kaser & Halbert, 2017; Milligan et al., 2020; Schleicher, 2018). As discussed previously in this review, schools were and arguably still are, a product of the industrial age, where standardisation is the prevailing norm, and school leaders are driven to compliance by command and control systems at the district and ministerial levels (Schleicher, 2018). The Australian Government is seeming to provide more money for education, yet standardised tests such as NAPLAN and PISA are indicating that the additional spending is not equating to acceptable increases in student achievement levels in the nation of Australia (OECD, 2020a). So, what is going wrong? What needs to change? What part do educational leaders play in these complex issues of creating and sustaining quality schools?

## 3.5 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPE AND THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Eric Hanushek (2020) indicated in some of his most recent research that the only path forward for a nation such as Australia to achieve economic growth, in the long run, is to improve the quality of schools. He believes the most important step for improvement is to establish clear developmental goals and indicators of measured skills, factoring in standardised measurable assessments such as PISA and NAPLAN. Through universal

achievement of basic skills, inclusive growth is made possible which, in turn, has enormous potential in addressing issues of poverty and inadequate healthcare and promotes the new technologies necessary to improve the sustainability and growth. Moreover, Hanushek (2020) in his latest research findings after the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, supports that there is no single policy that has brought about these economic gains, and not one standardised test has been able to solve the issues surrounding student performance and quality school outcomes. Instead, reflecting on the economic downturns caused by the recent pandemic, Hanushek acknowledged there are local approaches informed by regular monitoring of student performance that need to be in place as well. Thus, focusing attention on the community school is an essential piece that cannot be overlooked. Claims by Harris and Jones (2020) aligned with Hanushek's (2020) conclusions as they focus on the local community being a fundamental focal point for future schooling.

Specifically, Hanushek (2020) indicated that certain standardised measures are essential, however they are not sufficient in and of themselves. Nations and regions must set goals for quality schools and student improvement, yet these goals cannot be accomplished without substantially larger resources than are currently available to schools, in order to support the establishment of the overarching vision which is the need to establish a focus for increased economic and social sustainable growth in the nation of Australia, all the while channelling increased resource allocation to the local school communities (Fullan, 2021; Harris & Jones, 2020). Reflecting on Hanushek's recent publication prompts the question: what role do the current and future leaders of Queensland primary schools have in supporting and planning for local approaches to quality schooling and student improvement in relation to socio-economic development and growth?

## 3.6 FUTURISTIC LEADERS IN AUSTRALIA

Guided by this literature review, the narrative of primary school life in Australia and the issues with which primary schools contend is somewhat static. However, the literature review is uncovering that the writing of a new narrative needs to instead focus on the manner in which primary school leadership will problem solve and deal with these re-occurring issues and challenges such as: larger class sizes; continued pressure for data driven systems based on test scores; an uneven playing field related to the students who are entering primary schools; social and economic inequities of families; social and economic inequities of primary school resources; diversity of school populations; and regional, rural, and remote challenges such as difficulties in staffing. School leaders need to responsibly commit to playing a pivotal role in relation to a changing world, so that they enable the unleashing of the learning potential in themselves, their staff, and students to improve the quality of schools (Conway & Andrews, 2016). As was interrogated in the first two sections of this review, leadership commitment is imperative for the social-emotional, economic, political, and academic well-being of students, the primary school communities, and the Australian nation. How do the futuristic leaders in the nation of Australia co-create this futuristic story?

It is vital that the new narrative is written by school leaders who have growth-mindsets, and who have the awareness and understanding that they cannot tackle these issues alone – they need their school community to come alongside of them (Conway & Andrews, 2016; Harris & Jones, 2020; Sergiovanni, 1996; Smylie et al., 2020). It is imperative that literature and research are continually sought out as evidence to support or dispel hunches. Evidence-seeking can be painful, but it is essential if the leaders of tomorrow are to move forward (Timperley et al., 2014). Carol Dweck's (2006, 2016) research on fixed and growth mindsets is paramount for future-oriented leaders. According to Dweck, leaders who believe their talents can be developed – through hard work, good strategies, and input from others – have a growth mindset. They tend to achieve more than those with a more fixed mindset who believe their talents are innate gifts. People with growth mindsets worry less about looking smart and they put more energy into learning. When entire school communities embrace a growth mindset, the staff, students, parents, and

key stakeholders feel far more empowered and committed. Dweck suggested that these leaders will also receive greater organisational support for collaboration and innovation. Specifically, Dweck (2016) reported that leaders who primarily have fixed-mindsets cheat and deceive more often, presumably to gain an advantage in the talent race. A fixed mindset is highly dysfunctional for the organisation and for all parties involved. Dweck (2016) noted that everyone is a mixture of fixed and growth mindsets, and that mixture continually evolves with experience as well as choice.

> A "pure" growth mindset doesn't exist, and everyone seeking after it, must acknowledge this reality in order to attain the benefits they seek. Fixed mindsets are no longer going to cut it in this complex world, where change is happening at a pace that at times seems faster than light. (p. 2)

An emphasis on creating and sustaining growth mindsets is critical for the primary school leader of the future.

While all people have the capacity to learn, the structures in which they function are often not conducive to reflection and engagement. Furthermore, people may lack the tools and guiding ideas to make sense of the situations they face. Organisations that are continually expanding their capacity to create their future require a fundamental shift of mind among their members.

## 3.7 LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES ENCASED IN THOUGHTS, WORDS AND ACTIONS

The literature review will now explore research to support the proposal of leadership capabilities that are essential for the 21$^{st}$ century leaders as they courageously write a new narrative for Queensland primary schools, to effect a stronger Australian nation in the future. According to Robinson (2020), courage is something that all effective leaders require. Effective leaders need courage to be able to overcome barriers that prevent them from reaching organisational goals. Courage is essential as creating a vision and achieving goals within a school often involves taking strategic, financial, and interpersonal risks (Mumford et al., 2014). An unfortunate result from the COVID-19 pandemic has been the creation of some unhealthy fears for people both personally and professionally (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Currently, many educational leaders are left grappling with how to overcome unhealthy fears to stay the course and lead sustainable, and collaborative school improvements (Harris, 2020; WHO, 2020). As Walton (1986) reminded us so many years ago, courage is a desirable character trait, reflecting a disposition to respond to fear in ways that are intended to overcome the emotional and physical dangers that would otherwise block the pursuit of important commitments.

Robinson (2020) is quick to acknowledge that courage often does not feature as a required role of a leader, as does the leadership of improvement, which is so prominent in the literature and practices of today. Courage appears not to have been recognised in official specifications of the educational leader's role, or in the personal qualities desired of role holders (AITSL, 2014; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Yet, school leaders do need courage if they are to tackle the tasks in front of them and the tasks that lie ahead (Robinson, 2020).

If courage is important for sustainable educational leadership, how do primary school leaders write a new story in a world that now has an unhealthy balance of fear, where some might react by "shrinking back" and "avoiding risks"? Evidence and research have supported that leaders need to lead with courage (Mumford et al., 2014; Robinson, 2020; Sosik et al., 2012). Reported by Grissom et al. (2021), they are charged with: maintaining an astute awareness of the pressures and associated implications of class sizes; competing for attaining high test scores; ensuring equity and inclusive education for all; working in varying locations of school – urban, regional, rural, or remote; working with resources available to the school; upholding the overall social and academic achievement of the student population; providing learning opportunities for teachers and principals; and regarding the effects that these factors have on the entire school community.

The narrative of primary school life in Australia seems to be remaining the same in terms of the issues with which primary schools need to contend. However, it is the manner in which primary school leadership will problem solve and deal with these issues that seems to be the core essence of the new narrative. A narrative always begins in the "thought life" of individuals. As Dweck (2006, 2016) so readily acknowledged, people have a choice whether they want to evolve by developing a greater growth mindset or remain, for the most part, with a fixed mindset.

This review responds to the research and acknowledges that educational leaders have a choice as to how they will lead their school communities into the future (Azorin, 2020; Zhao, 2020). If a leader is open to continually developing more of a positive growth mindset, their thought life will flourish with growth-oriented words. Leading with a growth mindset is leading in an ethical manner (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Leaders who utilise a moral compass help navigate what is right, and doing what is right, despite the barriers that seem to be blocking the visionary view of the other side. It is forging a path to a land that is yet to be discovered, all the while believing that it exists, because many of the signs – research, literature, experience – are pointing in that direction (Bauman, 2021).

Building on Dweck's research (2006, 2016), the emphasis is on the connection between the power of one's thought life and recognising that there are pre-existing patterned schemas in the minds of leaders, in relation to "what is leadership" and "how does one lead" in this complex world (Koppel & Berntsen, 2013; Padesky, 1994). Schemas play a role in the learning process, and they influence what leaders will pay attention to, and how quickly they learn. If a leader is learning new information, and it does not fit in with their pre-existing schema, they may distort or alter the new information to make it pertinent with what they already know. This explains why some leaders may unconsciously cling onto their existing ways of leading, even in the face of contradictory information, such as how to best lead during a pandemic (Koppel & Berntsen, 2013; Padesky, 1994). There was no pre-existing schema for leaders as to how to lead during COVID-19. Leadership in schools has forever changed due to COVID-19, and it must change, as the models from which they were operating in the past have altered, or become obsolete (Harris & Jones, 2020; Zhao, 2020).

The literature is demonstrating the necessity to understand that a leader's thought life evolves into their word life and the power of how their word life evolves into the observable actions in their work life. Thoughts and words hold power, and they are actioned in the ways in which leaders go about their day-to-day work life (Bauman, 2021). Dweck (2006, 2016) stated that what people believe, they will achieve. Peter Senge (1990, 2006) believed that leaders' mental models are active as they shape how they act. Transforming thoughts into words and actions, at times for a leader, takes courage. It is not easy being a leader, and often leaders give in to doubt and criticism and take the travelled road, the one where there is already pre-existing schema, instead of the road less travelled. Breaking out of a "mould" by being open-minded as to how to transform one's thoughts, words, and actions takes courageous bravery of heart and mind (Brown, 2018; Koppel & Berntsen, 2013). Forging new paths, because it is the "right thing" to do, is for the strong-minded, ethical leader (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

Creating new schematic patterns in one's mind requires a safe-place, where one can practice, receive encouragement and feedback all the while taking risks and focusing attention on the ethical approaches to leadership that are paramount when leading and fostering a school community (Brown, 2018). Chris Argyris and Donald Schon (1974, 1978) believed that as individuals interact with one another, they design their behaviour and maintain theories for doing so. Argyris (1982) asserted that leaders' actions are not always congruent with their espoused theories (what they say), that leaders behave congruently with their mental models (theories in use). There is a big difference between a school leader who believes that they need to gauge the impact of their leadership practices on student and teacher learning, and a school leader who believes that their main role is to be a transformer, a believer in values and a co-leader with teachers and staff (Hattie & Smith, 2021). While all leaders

have the capacity to learn, the structures in which they function are often not conducive to reflection and engagement. In much of Senge's (1990, 2006) work, he acknowledged that if schools are to continually expand their capacity to create their future, there is heightened need for a shift of mind amongst leaders, teachers, and staff members.

Evolving from the analysis and synthesis of the first two sections of this literature review, and the unfolding of further evidence in this section, it is established that courageous, successful school leaders who are open to a shift of mind inevitably motivate themselves and others to collective actions and embrace the following 12 School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities:

- **Visionary**
- **Relational Collaborator**
- **Cultural Capacity Builder**
- **Creative Innovator**
- **Competent Carer**
- **Adapter**
- **Agile Creator**
- **Emotionally Intelligent Influencer**
- **Entrepreneur**
- **Equitable and Inclusive Attender**
- **Advocate**
- **Life-long Learner**

For the purposes of this literature review, a distinction between leadership capability and leadership competency is claimed: a leadership capability is defined as a leader having the power or ability to do something, whereas, a leadership competency is defined as a leader having the ability to do something successfully or efficiently.

The current stage of this review synthesises existing literature and combines it with new literature to create a conceptual model as to how Queensland primary schools are led into the future, focusing on leading for improvement, and that all necessary matters are taken into consideration, such as: test scores; class sizes; student achievement and well-being; equity and inclusion; metropolitan, regional, rural, or remote school locations; access to resources; teaching assignments; teacher qualifications and training; equity and inclusive school organisations; internal and external school communities; principal leadership capabilities and preparedness; and principal qualifications and training.

The 12 School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities depicted in Figure 3.1 are a futuristic vision for Queensland primary school leadership, centred around the "school community" and encased in courageous "mindsets" – fixed and growth, or a combination of the two. As Simon Sinek (2019) claimed, a "Just Cause" is a specific vision about the future that does not yet exist, a future state so appealing that people are willing to make sacrifices in order to advance the vision. This is the notion of the literature review's Just Cause for a future school community, where Queensland primary school leaders and teachers co-create learning environments in which students "want to come to learn, want to invest in learning, enjoy the mastery of learning, and are invited to reinvest in learning" (Hattie & Smith, 2021, p. 132 ), building a stronger Australian nation.

Figure 3.1

*Twelve School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities*



## 3.8 SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Of paramount consideration from this literature review is the re-occurring theme that local schools need to focus on a specific vision relevant to the context of their school communities – both internal and external (Harris, 2020; Harris & Jones, 2020; Wiesenfeld, 1996). Leaders breathe life into visions by articulating a clear possibility of what their schools could become (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). In the not so distant past and arguably still existing today, a very big emphasis in education in Australia was on the larger (macro) school system (Fullan, 2011), and the importance of national standardised tests and a national standardised curriculum to further

increase accountability in schools (Fernandes, 2019; Love, 2004). As has been demonstrated by the literature, class sizes in Queensland primary schools are above the OECD average, and the number of schools is increasing throughout the state of Queensland (ABS, 2021). Even though the pandemic was not as widespread in Australia, it is notable that with COVID-19, the crisis has created a shift in the mindsets and thinking of well-known researchers and educational leaders both nationally and internationally (Hanushek, 2020; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020; OECD, 2020b; Sahlberg, 2021).

The context of school communities is often described in different ways. Conway and Andrews (2016) refer to context as being multi-faceted: ". . . contexts have four domains (leadership, culture, political and structural). In addition, contexts have an inner context (organisational structure, resources, capabilities, culture, and politics) and outer context (social systems, environmental context, laws, policy, regulations)" (p. 23). Further, due to the multi-faceted nature of school contexts, promoting and sustaining quality schools requires school leaders who can provide hope and connection to learning by learning to connect with the external and internal communities (Harris & Jones, 2020). Harris and Jones referred to communities as "a key resource for school leaders, as they host a wealth of additional expertise, knowledge, and local capacity" (p. 246).

Most contemporary definitions of community proceed from psychologist Seymour Sarason's (1974) description of community as a sense of relatedness born of shared understanding and values. This sense comes from "an acknowledgement of interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them" (p. 157). In a strong community, Sarason maintained that this sense is a quality of social relationship strongly woven into the simple realities of everyday living. Similarly, in education, the concept of community has been defined by Sergiovanni (1996) as a collection:

> . . . of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bound by a set of shared ideas and ideals. This bonding and binding is tight enough to transform them from a collection of "I's" into a collective "we". As "we", members are parts of a tightly knit web of meaningful relationships. This "we" usually shares a common place and over time comes to share community sentiments and traditions that are sustaining. (p. 48)

Smylie et al. (2020) elaborated that "schools become communities when they are organized around a particular set of ideas and ideals, values and norms understood and shared by students, staff, and parents" (p. 75). These authors believe that:

> . . . schools also become communities when they engage members in common activities to achieve collective purposes, in particular, student learning and development, academic success, and well-being. Further, schools become communities as they support a system of strong, positive social relationships that meets members' needs, that fosters a sense of belonging and a sense of *we*, and that promotes shared responsibility for oneself, other members, and the community as a whole. (p. 75)

A cautionary note from community psychologist Wiesenfeld (1996) challenged the implications of exclusivity and homogeneity of community, and that an assumption of a "unitary we" can be problematic. Wiesenfeld believed that "the collective nature of community is built upon individual members' needs, their social relationships, networking, and the exchange of material, social, and emotional resources" (p. 340). In Wiesenfeld's (1996) concept of community, the psychologist acknowledges the need to "network" and exchange material, social, and emotional resources. This is a critical component often neglected by school leaders. Effective school leaders need to "look beyond" their four walls to the broader community context. This awareness of the need to network is incumbent upon the educational leader, as community partners are the experts to access for supports, additional resources, professional learning opportunities, and potential business partnerships (Scott & Webber,

2015). Leaders need to find ways that involve the development of a collective vision of its members, and focus the school community to be involved in achieving the aspirations reflected in the vision (Hord, 1997, 2004; Le Fevre et al., 2020).

Producing greater connections with families, external partners, and the entire school community comes with challenges, so a well thought out localised structure needs to be in place (People for Education, 2021). Sergiovanni (1994) suggested that there is "no recipe for building a school community. . . . There is no list available to follow, and there is no package for trainers to deliver" (p. 218). Peter Block (2018), an expert on community, believed that community building is always "a custom job. . . . born of local people, with unique gifts, deciding what to create together in this place" (p. 5).

As community is an effective way to think about schools as caring places for students, cultivation as a metaphor for leadership is an effective way to think about developing and nurturing leadership of a caring school community. The school leaders of today and tomorrow need to be able to manage crisis, uncertainty, and complexity with a "designer toolkit" crafted uniquely to meet the needs of their distinct school community (Bauman, 2021). In this next section, 12 School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities are outlined as a culminating reflective portion of this literature review for Queensland primary school leaders and their system support personnel to consider.

## 3.9 TWELVE SCHOOL COMMUNITY-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

### 3.9.1 VISIONARY

The first school community-oriented leadership capability this review explores is being a **visionary**. It is critical for an educational leader who wants to meet the individual as well as the collective needs, that they are a visionary leader, ensuring that every partnership is founded on a clearly articulated shared vision (Munby & Fullan, 2016). Kouzes and Posner (2011) believed that leaders are:

> . . . driven by their clear image of possibility and what their organization could become. Leaders inspire a shared vision by envisioning the future and enlisting others in a common vision. Leaders gaze across the horizon of time, imagining the attractive opportunities that are in store when they and their constituents arrive at a distant destination. Leaders passionately believe that they can make a difference. They have a desire to make something better than it is today, change the way things are, and create something that no one else has ever produced. (pp. 2-3)

Kouzes and Posner (2011, 2017) emphasised that visions seen only by educational leaders are insufficient to create an organised movement or a significant change. They believed that a person without followers is not a leader, and people will not follow until they accept a vision as their own. Leaders cannot command commitment; they can only inspire it. What may begin as "my" vision emerges as "our" vision. Kouzes and Posner (2017) suggested that "[t]o enlist [teachers and school staff] in a vision, leaders must get to know them and learn to speak their language. People must believe that leaders understand their needs and have their interests at heart" (p. 3).

Schleicher (2018) promoted an alternative vision for schooling for the 21st century school. This foundational vision is constructed by listening to and valuing the expertise of teachers alongside school leaders. In their school wide approach to leading pedagogical enhancement, members of the Leadership Research International (LRI) team (https://lri.usq.edu.au) provide substantial evidence to support a visionary form of school leadership that is based on a mutualistic relationship between teacher leaders and the principal. Parallel leadership "illustrates the power of mutualistic relationships when the principal takes responsibility for unleashing and

trusting the creative expertise of teacher leaders in line with the role of strategic leadership and management" (Conway & Andrews, 2016, p. 115).

The LRI's findings related to principal leadership refer to a model that was designed as a result of a joint research project between the Sydney Catholic Schools Eastern Region and the Leadership Research International (LRI) team (Conway & Andrews, 2019). The findings from the joint research project provided an opportunity to present a model entitled "Theorising the Effective Leader in Action". Conway and Andrews claim that the principal's visionary commitment to action is essential as principals lead the dynamics of inter-connected relationships in the school community, especially amongst staff. The complex human relationships include the "collection of individuals"; the "interaction of the mix" of individuals; and the "facilitation of collaborative leadership" in schools (p. 56).

Effective visionary principal leaders know they cannot do it alone, that leadership is a team effort. Through the enactment of a vision, caring leaders enable others to act by fostering collaboration and strengthening others. Working collaboratively as a team, building trust and empowering others to action are essential to building everyone's capacity and to building and maintaining relationships (Smylie et al., 2020).

### 3.9.2 RELATIONAL COLLABORATOR

A school leader as a **relational collaborator** as examined in this literature review, is a critical capability for primary school leaders and focuses on the importance of  the development of relationships and collaboration as key priorities to running a successful school community.  Through empowering others and enabling capacity-building in a school, as a relational collaborator, the final outcomes can often even exceed a principal's own expectations. In becoming a relational collaborator, relationships are critical to establishing collective action towards common goals: "Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow" (Kouzes & Posner, 2011, p. 1). Sometimes the relationship with an educational leader is one-to-one and other times it is with many. Regardless of the number of relationships, to emerge, grow, and thrive in these disquieting times, it is imperative that school leaders master the dynamics of a collaborative relationship. School leaders must have the desire to learn how to mobilise others who are also willing to struggle for shared aspirations and goals (Kouzes & Posner, 2011, 2017).

Kouzes and Posner (2011, 2017) envisioned leadership between a leader and a follower. Robinson (2017) believed that to be a relational collaborative leader, one must build trust and get the work done. It is about doing both of those things simultaneously, and it is this integration that is captured here in this literature review. Experienced school leaders know how to build relationships; "what they find far more difficult is building and maintaining relationships of trust while addressing the difficult issues that are central to leading improvement" (p. 4). Bryk and Schneider (2002) demonstrated a casual relationship between the degree of trust among members of a school community and the degree of improvement to student outcomes.  Robinson (2017) stated that if educational leaders are to be helped with developing trust and relational collaboration they need support to solve problems in ways that build trust and collaboration.

Relational leadership is both a relational and an ethical process where people work together to achieve a shared goal (Komives et al., 2013). It is vision driven rather than position driven and its ultimate goal is to unite school staff in achieving a shared vision rather than providing titles and creating a hierarchy of positions (Komives et al., 2013). Allowing for relational leadership to drive the organisation fosters a distributive and parallel leadership approach to positive cultural changes. It is through building positive relationships within a collaborative school organisation that teachers and principals can create a school culture that supports student achievement and sustained school improvement (Bauman, 2015).

In her review of two phases of education reform strategies in Ontario over the past two decades, Campbell (2021) delineated the importance of working partnerships in the approaches to educational system reform developed and implemented, province-wide. Specifically, she clarified that partnership working between the government, the education sector, and related stakeholders in schools and systems has been a mainstay of policy development and implementation and is one of the key reasons the jurisdiction is recognised globally as a high-performing education system with below-average inequities for students from lower socio-economic status backgrounds and for immigrant students. Interestingly, Campbell shared that the initial focus on working in partnership amongst stakeholders with priority goals to improve student achievement (period from 2003-2013) has been followed by a shift to a new collaborative professionalism with a widening priority focus on equity and well-being (period from 2014-2018). The steadfast attention of educational leaders in schools and systems on the importance of productive working relationships and partnership building speaks to the merit of connectivity and genuine collaboration, particularly in times of anxiety and instability. The co-establishment of priorities and co-construction of initiatives, including the development of shared understandings and the implementation of common strategies amongst all stakeholders, creates synergies that ensure the conditions for healthy, vibrant organisations to emerge (Buffone, 2021).

### 3.9.3 CULTURAL CAPACITY BUILDER

**Cultural capacity builder**, as this review demonstrates, is a focal competency for Queensland primary school leaders. The culture and history of the education system in most developed countries, including Australia, have fostered a workforce that functions in fragmented units so successfully that staff at the same school, teaching the same year level, may not collaborate in any way. This approach is not going to create synergy or tap into the collective intelligence of the workforce (Conway, 2008). This way of thinking creates a system where teachers can be quite insular in their world view and focused only on their own classroom instead of on the school community as a whole (Seashore Louis & Lee, 2016). Primary school leaders need to adopt a "systems thinking" approach to their educational communities to then help teachers and other staff understand that they are members of a larger interdependent system (Senge et al., 2012).

Interdependence within the school community needs to be established not just across departmental boundaries, but also between individuals within the system to create much needed synergy. Collaborative individualism is an ideology said to be spreading since the onset of networked organisations and is central to their success. It stresses the need for individuals to work together towards a common vision. Collaborative individuals are said by Limerick et al. (1998, pp. 120-131) to be: autonomous, proactive (they initiate synergies), empathetic, intuitive and creative, transforming, politically skilled (to maintain trust), mature (understand one's own strengths and weaknesses), lifestreaming (successfully balance work and home), and networking.

Interdependence is a concept that lies at the heart of Senge's (1990, 2006) *Systems Thinking*. This is one of the five disciplines that this writer asserted are needed to be successful in the 21st century school community and equates to having a holistic or "big picture" view of the world and the contribution that a principal and teachers make to the school community and/or whole system.

In the literature, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of an interrelationship between culture and structure as it pertains to leading within a school community. Structure and culture have a symbiotic relationship that is intentionally declared (Boleman & Deal, 2018). It is paramount to consider both when analysing the most appropriate path to take when wanting to build capacity within a school organisation. Culture and cultural change are two of the most widely written about concepts in educational literature, however, as a leader, proceeding with caution is essential when trying to change the culture of a school community in order to build capacity for the future (Basov et al., 2017; Seashore Louis & Lee, 2016).

The progressive development of an educational community's culture over time involves the principal and the teachers confronting a sequence of shared underlying assumptions that arise as the school community takes shape (Schein & Schein, 2016). Schein and Schein emphasise that "the underlying assumptions, which are typically unconscious, actually determine how group members perceive, think and feel" (p. 3). When a school community decides that changes are necessary and the members first come together, the most fundamental issue facing it as a whole is, "What are we really here for? What is our task?" (Schein & Schein, 2016, p. 65). If members of the school community have different assumptions about the vision, goals, and nature of work activity and its relative importance to other activities, those differences lead to frustration and communication breakdown.

Schein and Schein (2016) believed it critical that every member of a school community is aware of cultural positioning. Further, Le Fevre et al. (2020) posited, "A key aspect of understanding cultural positioning as a leader in a learning environment is questioning one's own assumptions and having the willingness to work towards understanding the position, experiences, and views of others" (p. 25 ).

A school culture needs to be a collaborative, group effort; a collective effort as opposed to an individual one (Prokopchuk, 2016). The language that is used when discussing the culture of the school community and working with others is critical to helping make the appropriate and timely changes required. Bauman (2015) implied that a shift in language from using "ME" to using the collective "WE" takes time to occur within the school community as the teachers and principals work at developing trusting relationships with each other. The language used is paramount to the communication strategies that are developed by the school leader (Grissom et al., 2021).

When school activities and curriculum are built around communication strategies that nurture an overall school image through the integration of educational and community values, they both align and energise the lives and learning of students and staff within the school community (Leithwood et al., 2004; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). This sense of energy needs to be present in schools and staff need to agree and want to align with the school community's vision, beliefs, and values as well as positively promote them. This will enhance the school community culture (Grissom et al., 2021).

By enhancing the school community culture, its members are collectively working towards an evolution of an organisation of excellence (Fullan, 2018). Capacity building is essential for ongoing improvements (Conway & Andrews, 2016). Through their research, Crowther and Associates' (2011) definition of capacity building is an "intentional process of mobilizing a school's resources in order to enhance priority outcomes – and sustain those improved outcomes" (p. 20). Fullan (2005) acknowledged that capacity building is a central component of the strategy for large scale reform. Further, Hopkins and Jackson (2003) stated that "without a clear focus on 'capacity', a school will be unable to sustain continuous improvement efforts or to manage change effectively" (p. 87). Capacity building for ongoing improvement and learning requires a focus in the area of intellectual, organisational, and relational capital.

### 3.9.4 CREATIVE INNOVATOR

Being a **creative innovator** is an essential capability for the 21st century educational leader as schools need leaders who create conditions where "curiosity is encouraged, developed and sustained, which is essential to opening up thinking, changing practice, and creating dramatically more innovative approaches to learning, teaching and leadership" (Kaser & Halbert, 2017, p. 9). Kaser and Halbert encouraged school leaders to use inquiry design, meaning applying their own design sense to discover strategies for change. School leaders with a growth mindset towards creativity and innovation will meet with more success as they try to change the necessary conditions (Dweck, 2006, 2016). Yet, how can school leaders of the future be creatively innovative, when they are conditioned to rely on command and control systems?

It is imperative to have an organisational culture that supports "doing things differently". As was outlined in a previous capability, structure and culture have a symbiotic relationship and it is paramount to consider both when analysing the best path to take while introducing creative and innovative learning methods within a school community (Letty et al., 2018). The challenge of primary school leaders is to harness creativity to do new things and to do things differently, yet the "desire" to do things differently must proceed the "doing" (Arena et al., 2017). An organisational culture that challenges principals and teachers to do things in new and unique ways has been purported as more crucial to success than other variables such as technological or economic factors (Schein & Schein, 2016). To crystallise a growth learning mindset, a culture needs to have established a tolerance for failure, treachery, risk-seeking, reinvestment in the community, enthusiasm for change, obsession with the service, collaboration, and variety (Arena et al., 2017; Letty et al., 2018; Schein & Schein, 2016). A school community's culture that will sustain innovative practices is one that engenders change, learning, creativity, sharing, and trust in a "no blame" environment. Trust is the essential ingredient to support the risk-taking that is needed for creatively innovative continuous improvement (Seashore Louis & Lee, 2016). Creating and sustaining this culture is one of the most difficult challenges facing principals and teachers within the school community (Schein & Schein, 2016).

The contention is that culture is one factor that can contribute towards successful innovation and improvement in a school community. The key message that Schein and Schein (2016) touted is to be cautious and patient, when wanting to make changes. Leaders need to carefully diagnose the unique culture and sub-cultures of the school community. Literature directs to proceed with caution as what works in one context may have disastrous consequences in another (Leithwood et al., 2004; Schein & Schein, 2016). Managing change in a culture towards creative and innovative learning practices for a school leader is extremely complex. Rather than "changing" culture towards creativity and innovation, "creating or building" a new culture from the structures that are already in existence is possibly the wise approach for a school leader (Schein & Schein, 2016).

### 3.9.5 COMPETENT CARER

Smylie et al.'s (2020) work on Caring School Leadership is foundational to demonstrating the importance of a primary school leader as a **competent carer**. Being an educational leader who cares, is not "adding a responsibility" to their already packed job description or workload. Instead, all actions and interactions can be viewed through a lens of caring: "Caring is a quality of a relationship – the matter, manner, and motivation of personal and professional action and interaction" (p. 18). Further, Caldwell and Dixon (2010) referred to the importance of leaders enabling others to be compassionate, accepting, healing, and forgiving carers. Caring leadership by a school principal can elevate student and teacher participation in decision making, and thus can become a practice that holds prospect for developing and promoting caring among others in the school community. It is difficult to imagine the commitment and engagement of teachers in cultivating caring school communities for students if they do not feel part of the school community and if they do not feel cared for themselves, especially by principals and other school leaders. It is vital for principals to apply caring principles to their relationships with teachers and staff (Smylie et al., 2020). As Noddings (2013) inferred, caring occurs through social relationships that are enacted in interpersonal contexts based on honesty and trust, and are continuous.

Organisational contexts can also enable caring. In particular, relevant to caring in schools, are structures that create opportunities for students, teachers, principals, other staff, and community members to interact and learn about each other; to develop long-term, deep, and trusting relationships; and to engage in caring action and interaction (Louis et al., 2016). In addition, a school's organisational culture (which was discussed earlier in the third leadership capability) – that is, its system of orientation, taken-for-granted assumptions, and values, as well as the symbols, rituals, and routines by which they are communicated – can set expectations for caring and establish a foundation for mutual accountability in caring (Schein & Schein, 2016).

Smylie et al. (2020) stated that the enactment of caring school leadership is principled practice. They mean three things by this:

First, caring school leadership is propelled by principles of and positive virtues and mindsets that orient the nature of one's relationships with others. These are principles that center leadership on meeting the needs and concerns of others, toward betterment of others, and toward the fulfillment of others' human potential . . . Secondly, caring school leadership is also principled practice as a moral and ethical endeavor that resides within the norms, expectations, and boundaries of profession. Caring school leadership evokes both general and professional orientations towards others as human beings and how leaders see themselves in professional roles working on behalf of fellow human beings . . . The third way of thinking about caring school leadership as principled practice follows from an understanding of the situations and dynamic nature of leadership. . . . leadership practices must continually change. . . . leadership practices that are similarly effective in different situations and settings can look very different. (pp. 41-42)

As a competent carer, an educational leader must understand that caring does not always function in a straightforward or positive manner, even when it is enacted with the best intentions. Boundaries need to be negotiated. Relationships need to be monitored and managed. For an educational leader, often it is difficult to strike the appropriate point between professional under attachment and caring too little and over attachment and caring too much (Kroth & Keeler, 2009). As a primary school leader, being a competent carer is essential, as some forms of caring can be perceived and/or intended to be superficial or biased (Bloom, 2018). If not kept in check, caring relationships can develop inappropriate dependencies, co-dependencies, and transference (Peterson, 1994; Swain & French, 1998).

## 3.9.6 ADAPTER

As is evidenced by the literature review, the school leaders of today need to respond with flexibility and adaptability to the unique learning needs of all community members. Thus, the sixth leadership capability to be explored is the importance of a Queensland primary school leader to be an **adapter**. Communities are becoming the key resource centres for school leaders, as experts from the field have the knowledge, experience, and local capacity to support the entire school community. Evolving from this COVID-19 crisis is the acknowledgement that distributive, and adaptive leadership are the "glue" leaders require to connect this crisis response at every level, ensuring involvement of all key stakeholders (Harris & Jones, 2020). Copeland (2003) described Distributive Leadership as:

A set of functions or qualities shared across a much broader segment of the school community that encompasses teachers and other professionals and community members both internal and external to the school. Such an approach imposes the need for school communities to create and sustain broadly distributed leadership, systems, processes, and capacities. (p. 376)

Harris (2008) further suggested that "distributive leadership is an inclusive model of leadership practice which is lateral, networked and fluid" (p. 30). School leaders of the future need to encourage distributed leadership in their informal leaders in their internal and external communities to help tackle challenges and opportunities together, as they enable collaboration, agency and influence decision making in relation to teaching and learning in their schools. Formal educational leaders cannot do it alone, they must distribute and demonstrate Adaptive Leadership in order to survive the waves of complexities. Adaptive Leadership is defined as "the practice of mobilising people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 34). Like never before, adaptive leaders are called to build capacity and relationships so that people feel empowered to take risks, try out new

things and see how they go, then learn from what happened, and possibly try something new (Heifetz et al., 2009).

It is as if Heifetz et al. (2009) had a glimpse into 2020 and 2021 when the concept of Adaptive Leadership was created, as in today's world, very little is predictable, and so to survive, an educational leader must be adaptable. The pandemic that began in 2020 collided with the globe's social, economic, health care, and schooling systems resulting in the on-going composition of new norms and new narratives (Fullan, 2021). More than ever, the acknowledgement by our educational community leaders has reflected the urgent need for change so that schools are able to face the on-going complexities as well as opportunities in the 21st century (Australian Research Council, 2020). The principal of the future must transform their collective visions so that they are adaptable, collaborative, and open to modernisation. It is imperative that the 21st century learner has direct access to school leadership that is not looking in the rear-view mirror, but instead is future-focused. As research and practice maintain, principals cannot write their stories in isolation, the essential underpinnings must be supported from a thriving collaborative community (Bauman, 2021).

### 3.9.7 AGILE CREATOR

If there was ever a time in the history of educational leadership that capability number seven, **Agile Creator**, was needed, it is right now! As David Turner (2021) clearly outlines, the issue confronting the educational world of today is that when the challenges become very complex, as they did during the pandemic, often educational leaders become stuck, and they do not act, as they do not know how to develop a plan to "get unstuck". Unfortunately, what often happens is that the school community and/or the educational system remains stagnant and does not move. Morrison et al. (2019) believed that educators, "know that change is needed, but they are left with only a vague hope that someone else, in the future, can create the change that is needed" (p. 121).

The remarkable nature of periods of uncertainty – much like the one taking place at this very point in time during the pandemic – has emphasised the actuality of living in a world of "inbetweenity" – a time between times – where one era is ending and the next has not yet fully emerged (Buffone, 2021). According to Gamwell and Daly (2017), during these very times, the status quo no longer works, and yet, there is no clear path ahead. In such an era of continual flux, responses are creating more variation than ever before seen in schools and school systems, resulting in complexities of widening inequities.

The agility of primary school leadership is required to navigate the current state of complexity. Buffone (2021) asserts that there are five interrelated factors that are worthy of consideration in the context of leading through the pandemic disruption. They are as follows.

- **Prioritization of strategic objectives in balanced measure:** . . . leaders of school systems today must be prepared to "plan for the unplanned", pivoting as needed based upon evolving circumstances by altering, for example, duties, expectations, procedures, calendars, schedules, and operational practices.

- **Connectivity through relationships and partnership building:** . . .important practices that leaders can put into place include: acknowledging the current reality; creating scheduled opportunities for check-ins and face-to-face time; maximizing training opportunities appropriate to the current context; and, leveraging mindfulness and meditation practices.

- **Proactivity for effective change management:** . . . For an educational leader, this ability requires a thorough understanding of the organization, as well as the internal and external forces and pressures that surround it.

- **Ingenuity in optimization of resources over time:** There are several changes that will persist in schools and systems, post-pandemic. . . . Human resource practices . . . will require the use of creative and innovative approaches, including new staffing redesigns and supports to meet the versatile teaching and learning environments of the times. . . . [and] educational leaders to think carefully about the decisions they make regarding the technologization of their systems.

- **Cultivation of systemness throughout the organization**: . . . Stakeholders – as individuals and (or) groups – interact within the system, learning from and contributing to it, as the system itself evolves. These stakeholders, ultimately, have both independent and interdependent responsibility for changing the system. (pp. 1612-1615)

### 3.9.8 EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT INFLUENCER

Being an **emotionally intelligent influencer** is the eighth leadership capability emphasised in this literature review. Enacting emotional intelligence is imperative no matter whether an educational leader is creating strategy or mobilising teams into action, a leader's success depends on how they do it: "Even if they get everything else just right, if leaders fail in this primal task of driving emotions in the right direction, nothing they do will work as well as it could or should" (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 3). Understanding the powerful role of emotions as a school leader will set the best school leaders apart from the rest, not just in tangible ways such as teachers wanting to remain working at the school, but also in the all-important intangible methods, such as higher morale, motivation and commitment of themselves and staff (Kelly & Barsade, 2001). Primal leadership, as Goleman et al. (2013) contended, not only ensures that staff members do a good job, but it extends beyond this as teachers and other staff members look to the formal school leadership for supportive emotional connection – for empathy. Whether a school leader wants to acknowledge this requirement of their role, according to Goleman and colleagues, all leadership includes this primal dimension. According to Goleman et al. (2013), whether a school community withers or flourishes depends to a very large extent on the leader's effectiveness in this primal emotional dimension: "how leaders handle themselves and their relationships. Leaders who maximize the benefits of primal leadership drive the emotions of those they lead in the right direction" (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 6).

Fullan (2021) ascertained that to be an emotionally intelligent leader in a school, one must have social intelligence which is the propensity to work with others to achieve common goals. In education, which has arisen from individualistic traditions, various forms of collaboration have begun to occur over time. However, he insists that these forms of collaboration tended to be superficial (not, for example, changing the culture of the school, let alone the profession). The social intelligence of the group and individuals within school communities has not been well cultivated in the evolution of learning. However, Fullan (2021) does testify that in the last little while there have been some stronger forms of teachers working together with greater focus and outcomes. Fullan believes that the problem with the "system" and with the "school community" is that social intelligence, when compared to technology, has been significantly underdeveloped. It is a weakness in systems as well as a weakness with the leaders in the system. Therefore, as Goleman et al. (2013) asserted, emotional intelligence needs to be a primal leadership drive, so that social intelligence and collaboration can evolve in our school communities.

The view of Entrepreneurial Leadership is supported by findings from the European Union (EU) funded project "Leadership Improvement for student achievement" (LISA). Through collaborative research undertaken with leaders in six EU countries, the project concluded that the entrepreneurial style of leadership involved:

> Encouraging relations between the school and community and parents, promoting cooperation with other organizations and businesses, discussing school goals with relevant stakeholders, utilizing appropriate and effective techniques for community and parental involvement, promoting two-way communication between the school and the community, projecting a positive image to the community, building trust within the local community, communicating the school vision to external community. (LISA Contributors, 2009, pp. 11-12)

Any discussion regarding the concept of entrepreneurial leadership rests on an assumption that it can in some way be differentiated from other forms of leadership, further, that "conditions of compulsory schooling have changed in ways that are encouraging more entrepreneurs to enter the field and to behave entrepreneurially" (Hentschke & Caldwell, 2007, as cited in Miller, 2018, p. 103). The literature identifies a range of reasons to explain the necessity for school leaders to be an **entrepreneur**:

- **A rapidly changing world** (LISA Contributors, 2009, p. 9). School leaders need to be able to manage crisis, uncertainty, and complexity (Pihie et al., 2014, p. 4).
- **Increasing accountability –** The PISA tests – the Programme for International Student Assessment – have become the most influential rankings in international education (Walker & Fisher, 2013). There is an increasing global emphasis on accountability manifested at both national and international levels.
- **Decentralisation –** increasingly, regional and national governments are devolving decision-making powers with respect to budgets, curriculum, staffing, etcetera to school leaders, recognising that individual context is important and that leaders need to make decisions based on the needs of their stakeholders.
- **Improved performance in teaching and learning –** one of the key drivers towards a need for a more entrepreneurial style of leadership is that the quality of teaching and learning needs to be such that it creates a "citizenry with a capacity to compete successfully in the global village" (Scott & Webber, 2015, p. 113). Australian school systems need to contribute to the long-term sustainable economic growth in the nation and be able to respond to the need to promote equity, to respond to cultural diversity, and to reduce early school leaving (Scott & Webber, 2015).
- **For Australia to compete globally, future generations need to have the mindset and skills to be entrepreneurial in society.** Citizens need to be creative, socially responsible, spot opportunities, understand and take risks, and work in teams to solve problems.
- **School leaders need to equip their students and staff for a complex and uncertain future.**

Savvy and business-minded primary school leaders who are entrepreneurs see now and into the future as to the skills and abilities that students and staff will need.

## 3.9.10 EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE ATTENDER

The current national educational system is not working as well as what it could in relation to equity and inclusion (Sahlberg, 2021). Thus, a new narrative for primary school leaders in Queensland needs to establish how to motivate students. From an economic viewpoint, the educational system represents a poor financial

investment, as well as lessens the life chances of many primary aged and adolescent students. Currently the system is costing the Australian society massive amounts of money – both directly (health, welfare, incarceration) and indirectly (lost income and expenditure).

A new system, as Michael Fullan (2021) is proposing based on the four right drivers (see Fullan's 2021 report), would be more costly in the short run, but would soon pay back society with increased productivity. As a leader within a school community and school system – micro, meso, macro – while implementing Fullan's model, there must be equitable and inclusive sensibility and coherence, which does not include a list of "give us money" for this and that (p. 29). Instead, the new narrative, focusing on equitable and inclusive primary schools needs to be based on smart investments that will produce both social and economic benefits to the school community and the larger system in the foreseeable future. Along with the smart investment there needs to be an explicit commitment on behalf of all leaders at every level – bottom, middle, and top – to serve all students – all of which are easier to do when the four right drivers are working together. Fullan (2021, p. 30) provides some ideas as to how school leaders could accomplish the feat of being an **equitable and inclusive attender**:

- Generate ideas from the middle and the bottom. Evolution is relentlessly bottom up; don't wait for the top;
- Make anti-oppression of designated groups a priority;
- Invest in the quality of the teaching profession with respect to all schools and age levels with "social intelligence" (teachers collaborating for better results) at the centre;
- Invest in parent–community school partnerships for best learning; and
- Connect to broader networks locally, statewide, nationally, globally.

## 3.9.11 ADVOCATE

The new primary school principals of the future need to be strong and courageous by advocating with wisdom for the needs of their school communities – class size, working hours, wages, optimising student achievement by other methods than standardised testing, equity and inclusion of all community members, resources, building trust, forging collaborative relationships/culture, professional learning – are but some of the areas that have been noted throughout the literature review (DeMatthews, 2016). Thus, the importance of the primary school principal in Queensland being the **advocate** for the "specific needs" of their school communities where no two schools are identical.

As primary schools within Queensland work to create equitable and inclusive environments, they have an important role in educating a school community beyond mere academic standards set by the State. School leaders need to ensure that they are preparing citizens and future leaders capable of advancing democracy and creating a more just society. Principals need to understand their important role as advocate and community leader. The pandemic has very much highlighted that "schools are among the few public spaces where people struggling to deal with poverty or oppression can congregate to discuss relevant and critical issues" (DeMatthews, 2016, para. 5). Together, a principal can lead all school community members – students, teachers, staff, parents/carers – "to engage in advocacy [as well as further] develop academic, social-emotional, and professional skills" (para. 5). Principals need to advocate for life-long learning for all school community members (DeMatthews, 2016).

Primary school principals are well positioned within their communities to offer schools as community public spaces, and knowing the many challenges confronting their internal and external communities. "Principals' access to school resources, deep and sustained roots with local families, and understanding of community needs place them in a strategic position" (DeMatthews, 2016, para. 7) to advocate for equity and equality. They must

view themselves as advocates in the lives of students, staff, and parents and to recognise that education will be insufficient if school community issues are not addressed (DeMatthews, 2016).

Primary school principals need to adopt rigorous curiosity about community needs that are morally and ethically driven (DeMatthews, 2016). Not everyone starts out as a skilled advocate. Many primary school principals may need support in developing these skills, which segues to the final leadership capability – life-long learner.

### 3.9.12 LIFE-LONG LEARNER

As this literature review is unfolding, it is rightfully acknowledged that the already demanding role of the Queensland primary school principal has become more complex by heightened system and community expectations and a sharper focus on student outcomes. School leaders are charged with the responsibility to keep up with numerous demands placed upon them, and know how to effectively manoeuvre through multi-faceted issues. Principals need to be equipped and empowered to operate in the complex school community environments and perform at their best as **life-long learners**. There is clear evidence that not all principals feel fully supported to do this (AITSL, 2020b). Supporting Queensland primary school principals to perform their role effectively is the collective responsibility of all systems, sectors, and schools and is best served either by a nationally, or state coherent standards-based approach to high-impact school leadership, leadership development and principal preparation. Such an approach should include the flexibility to adapt approaches to suit local contexts and priorities (AITSL, 2020b).

In an AITSL (2020a) report , *Empowering high-impact school leaders across Australia: A blueprint*, four key reform priorities and actions were presented that will strengthen the development and empowerment of high-impact school leaders. These reforms are focused on principals and other school leaders, across Australia, as AITSL believes they are critical to improving student outcomes. The four proposed key reform priorities are:

> **Reform 1** – Reimagine the Principal Standard as a leadership standard to establish structured career pathways and support the development of aspiring principals and other school leaders, strengthen linkages to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Teacher Standards), and prioritise high-impact school leadership practices. (p. 2)

> **Reform 2** – Develop induction resources for newly appointed principals. (p. 2)

> **Reform 3** – Establish professional learning needs across career stages and increase equity of access to high-quality leadership development and principal preparation experiences. (p. 3)

> **Reform 4** – Develop materials to support principals and other school leaders working in rural and remote Australia. (p. 4)

Clearly the reform recommendations for Australian school principals made by AITSL revolve around the principal as needing to be a **life-long learner**. Kaser and Halbert (2017) discussed life-long learning as it relates to educational leaders:

> In today's knowledge society, little is predictable and life-long learning is a given. All young people . . . are now expected to think critically and creatively, to work collaboratively, and to continually transform themselves . . . The same expectations apply to educators and system leaders. This calls for a different kind of classroom learning and a different kind of leadership. (p. 10)

The OECD (2013, 2018a) posited that everyone connected to a school community needs to be a lifelong learner, not just the students. In a report on leadership for 21st century learning, the Organisation discusses the

need for principals to be committed to continual learning. A concept underlying the learning framework is "Co-agency [the] interactive, mutually supportive relationships that help learners to progress towards their valued goals" (OECD, 2020c, p. 18). In this context, everyone should be considered a learner, not just students but also teachers, school leaders, parents, and communities (OECD, 2020c).

A co-learning role enables principals to "drive transparent, collaborative reflection, continually assessing what is working" (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014, p. 8), as well as learning from those things that did not work. It signals to students, parents, and teachers that "I lead because I know how to learn, . . . [rather than because] . . . I know more" (Katz & Dack, 2012, p. 46). Through the actions they take, primary school leaders communicate a growth mindset, one in which all learners have the "freedom to stretch themselves, make mistakes and try again" (Dweck, 2010, p. 29).

## 3.10 SUMMARY OF SECTION III

The third section of the review – *Leadership Implications* – considered the literature and research associated with the present and future leadership narrative. The review investigated the current debate on what is effective school leadership and how quality is measured in terms of leadership as it relates to primary school student outcomes, academically, socially, and economically. An exploration into possibilities for future leaders, through a literature search into the challenges and possibilities that lie ahead for forthcoming school leadership, were considered. It was determined that highly successful leadership in Queensland primary schools needs to support a "learning for life" mindset, not a "learning loss" mindset.

The findings from this literature review have demonstrated that all leaders have the capacity to learn. However, the structures in which they function are often not conducive to reflection and engagement. Queensland primary schools that are continually expanding their capacity to create their future require a fundamental shift of mind among their leaders, teachers, and staff members (Senge, 1990, 2006). Evolving from the analysis and synthesis of the first two sections of this literature review, Section III established that courageous, successful school leaders who are open to a shift of mind – a new mindset (Dweck, 2006, 2016) – inevitably motivate themselves and others to collective actions and embrace the following 12 School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities:

- Visionary
- Relational Collaborator
- Cultural Capacity Builder
- Creative Innovator
- Competent Carer
- Adapter
- Agile Creator
- Emotionally Intelligent Influencer
- Entrepreneur
- Equitable and Inclusive Attender
- Advocate
- Life-long Learner

Combining the literature from all three sections, a conceptual model was created from the above 12 School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities (see Figure 3.1) to support how one may lead Queensland primary schools into the future, ensuring one is leading for improvement, and that all necessary matters are taken into consideration, as outlined in all three sections of the literature review.

# CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review, *Leading Primary Schools into the Future: Unleashing the Learner Potential to Enhance the Social, Economic, and Educational Benefits*, has certainly determined that being a leader in Queensland primary schools is a role that is complex in nature. The concept and ideals of leading primary schools into the future have been explored through seeking the familiarity of the historical and current states of knowledge on this topic. Providing this foundational evidence was necessary to ensure that the next phase of the research project does not just repeat what others have already done. Through the investigation of the following two research questions, this literature review explored a new narrative and discovered the foundational premises that currently exist:

- Research Question 1 – In what ways does primary schooling impact the economic and social performance of a community/nation?
- Research Question 2 - What is the contribution of school leadership to the achievement of quality primary school student outcomes, academic and social?

As was purposed by the literature review, primary leaders within the Queensland school system are met with social, economic, and educational challenges that are embedded within micro, meso and macro structures. Some of these social, economic, and educational issues are firmly entrenched, while others are loosely connected. However, to ensure a thriving future for Queensland primary education, as was unearthed from the themes of this review, all barriers require commitment to a process of fine tuning by key stakeholders. The two intended outcomes from this review were met:

- the promotion of Queensland's primary schooling's contribution to the economic performance of the Australian nation through the collation of evidence from national and international literature; and
- to define aspects of Queensland primary school leadership that will better account for the schooling outcomes necessary for the 21st century to inform policy formulation, advocacy, and professional learning activities, in relation to school leadership.

In addition, the literature review also identified 12 School Community-Oriented Leadership Capabilities of Success to support the leading of Queensland primary schools into the future: visionary, relational collaborator, cultural capacity builder, creative innovator, competent carer, adapter, agile creator, emotionally intelligent influencer, entrepreneur, equitable and inclusive attender, advocate, and life-long learner. The findings from the literature review form a backdrop that must be further corroborated. The investigative review of national and international literature has identified gaps in knowledge and unresolved problems that still need further clarification.

Thus, the next phase of this research project will focus on the development and dissemination of a survey that will be administered to members of Queensland Association of State School Principals and invited Catholic and Independent school principals. The survey questions arise from the themes that were identified in the literature review, as well as unanswered questions, or literature that requires further corroboration. To maximise participation, promotion of the survey will be undertaken through the professional associations of school leaders. Following analysis of the survey results, the next phase of this research project will be the interview stage. Interviews will be undertaken with principals identified as aligning to the literature review themes. The aim of these next phases is to identify local examples and the dissemination of this knowledge through various media (academic and professional print) to widely promote the work of primary school leaders in constructive and positive ways of leading primary schools into the future.

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