Chapter 12
Recommendations: What We Know and What We Can Do

This chapter is a call to action, and outlines some of the practical measures that teachers might undertake to reclaim their profession and its standing. It will also offer some advice to others with a stake in education. In short, it sets forth outline how teachers can leverage their own skills and knowledge about teaching and learning, and apply these to the re-education of others, not just their students.

Counterclaim a claim set up in opposition to another, esp. by the defendant in a civil action against the plaintiff.

HarperCollins (1999), p. 362

Preamble

I am Teacher

I accept that the syntax above is flawed, but I trust you get the gist. Apologies, too, to Reddy and Burton (1972). At the heart of this section is commitment to education and its benefits. Chapter 4 referred to teachers being pushed and pulled around by their passions. Education gets pushed and pulled around quite a bit, too. Maybe it’s time for education, and teachers, to push back some. Some of the advice will concern how the rest of us can demonstrate our membership, even honorary membership of, solidarity with, and commitment to, the teaching and learning community of practice, for the benefit of all—the common-wealth and—well-being.

Teaching and management (and parenting) hold this in common—they are about “managing” (I’m not so sure I like that term) people. And enabling them. And making yourself redundant in the process by helping them reach a point of responsible autonomy. If you can’t manage that, it’s really hard to proceed further. That will be the backdrop for some of the information on offer in this closing chapter. Curriculum

1Not a wooden stake in its heart, it is hoped.

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J. Buchanan, Challenging the Deprofessionalisation of Teaching and Teachers, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-8538-8_12

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and assessment documents are often couched in terms of what learners know and can do—hence the subtitle of this chapter. All of us in the education field, including those of us outside the schoolroom, work in the service of education, and, therefore, of educators, in support of their learners. In the words of the song referenced above, (Reddy & Burton, 1972), “I know too much to go back and pretend” otherwise. In examining school system performance internationally, Barber and Mourshead (2007, p. 5) contend that.

the experiences of these top [10] school systems suggests that three things matter most: 1) getting the right people to become teachers, 2) developing them into effective instructors and, 3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child.

Sounds simple. Particularly if teaching equates to instructing. But teaching requires “constant informed and complex decision making” (Mills & Goos, 2017, p. 637). Barber and Mourshead concede that “the complexity of this task and uncertainty about outcomes is rightly reflected in the international debate about how this should be best done” (p. 5). Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2018, p. 37) point out that “simple solutions embedded in orthodox approaches to effectiveness are less likely than ever to be useful in solving the intransigent or ‘wicked’”, with regard to educational complexities and problems. They warn against (p. 142) “recourse to simple solutions, elixirs and silver bullets” as proposed solutions to complex educational problems, by “those unfamiliar with the exigencies of everyday life in schools” (p. 53). As a child, I was advised by my dutiful parents to listen to the teacher. All these years later I still commend that advice.

Our Aspirations

In Chap. 2, I introduced the “Melbourne Declaration” (MECCTYA, 2008) on Educational Goals for Young Australians. It’s a good place to seek counsel on who should do what in support of education. I’d like to proceed through some of (what I see as) its highlights, and allow you to bathe in its warmth. As is the case in many spas, there will be the occasional jet of cold water, to make you appreciate the warmth. I concede that I’ve cherry-picked from the Declaration. I accept that I’m less concerned about prosperity. That’s because I have it. In my defence, though, I believe that prosperity, or at least adequate material comfort, and employability, will proceed from the elements highlighted in the document. Ignore my commentary if you wish, or just read the Declaration, and highlight your own bits. Or rewrite2 it. Many countries have similar aspirational and heartening documents. The Melbourne Declaration is the kind of stuff we should be metaphorically nailing (e-nailing?) to our political representatives’ doors, to hold them accountable—our Disputation on the Power of Indulgences?

2The Declaration is under revision at the time of writing.
According to the Declaration, “Australia values the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society…high quality of life for all”. Schools are pivotal in “promoting the intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians…healthy, productive and rewarding futures” (MCEETYA, p. 4). I’m not sure that schools should be yoked with responsibility for spiritual development, but these are an attractive set of outcomes—and further illustrate the complexity and responsibility of teachers’ work. To continue.

Australians must be able to engage with scientific concepts and principles, and approach problem-solving in new and creative ways…social interaction, cross-disciplinary thinking…a school’s legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others (p. 5).

We entrust teachers to facilitate the above for our young. I’m unconvinced that values are national, or can be nationalised. I’m sure that values can cross national borders—unlike some refugees.

Schooling should be “free from discrimination”; it contributes to “a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity” (p. 7). I’m tempted to replace “respects” here with “interrogates” in two senses of the word: inquire about, and ask to defend itself. “Interrogate” somewhat jars on the ears, sounding like it has terror at its heart, but it describes the process of interrogating—“asking among, or between”. An apt way to consider and question others’ cultures, and our own—as long as we all—Centre, and Periphery (see Dovchin, Pennycook, & Sultana, 2018) commit ourselves to this equally. Biesta (2010, p. 85) invokes generating “responsible responsiveness to alterity and difference”.

The Declaration holds the government (and calls us?) to “Encourage parents, carers, families, the broader community and young people themselves to hold high expectations for their educational outcomes” (p. 7). It appears the village does raise the child after all. How, then, is the village supporting the child’s teachers? It’s difficult to know when we’ve met this criterion of “encouraging” successfully—higher order outcomes are slipperily elusive in assessment. Is “encourage” sufficient?

“Promote a culture of excellence in all schools, by supporting them to provide challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities…build on [students’] gifts and talents” (p. 7). I’m not sure why there’s a comma after “challenging” above. For emphasis, perhaps? “Personalised learning” further underscores complexity and responsibilities for teachers in meeting their students’ needs.

Successful learners [including teachers?]…play a role in their own learning…are able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined way…are creative, innovative and resourceful…able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines…plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas (p. 8).

[Cold water jet alert:] The above appears inconsistent with the increasing micro-management applied to teachers of late—and basic skills testing until year 9.
Successful learners “are able to make sense of their world” (p. 8). If they manage this, I pray that they might explain it to me in terms that I can understand. I wish them luck. As with culture, etc., above, I suggest replacing “make sense of” with “interrogate” their world.

Confident and creative individuals: “have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity…to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing…a sense of optimism about their lives and the future” (p. 9). What circumstances and contexts might be most conducive to such wellbeing, for learners and those who teach them? Also, is it realistic to (ask others to) hope in the face of gloom? I’m not saying that everything’s gloomy. Just sometimes. Perhaps the take-home message here is that a removal of autonomy is likely to corrode, dissolve or undermine—pick your metaphor—teachers’ and learners’ sense of agency and optimism. Confident and creative individuals “are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities”. They “develop personal values such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others”. [Another cold douche incoming:] To what extent and how do current teacher-testing regimes embody honesty, empathy and respect? Current approaches possibly build resilience. The confident and the creative, “relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships…embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions” (p. 9, emphasis added).

Active and informed citizens: “act with moral and ethical integrity”, another test for the testers, and us all. They “contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians”. As with gender, the lines between the two groups are blurry. “Reconcile” means to “make friendly again”. Nice, in a world where “befriend” has assumed sinister connotations. (I’m not suggesting a suspension or abandonment of vigilance in this regard.) Such citizens are “committed to…democracy, equity and justice…are able to relate to and communicate across cultures”. In sustaining and enhancing their social and natural worlds, locally and globally, such citizens “are responsible” and “work for the common good” (p. 9, emphasis added). I note that, as opposed to curricular outcomes, the outcomes here are not led by demonstrable verbs: “explain, identify, analyse…”, in an apparent concession by the Declaration that such things are difficult to measure. That aside, if we were able to demonstrate such outcomes of school for all students—the Declaration doesn’t appear to discriminate or cherry-pick here, as to which children should bear these fruits—that would be a superlative outcome, and a race worth winning globally—not that I wish to demote this to a competition.

According to the Declaration, “excellent teachers have the capacity to transform the lives of students and to inspire and nurture their development as learners, individuals and citizens” (p. 11).

Deserving of its own paragraph, I reckon. I’m tempted to buy a t-shirt with “Transformer” on it. Or “Influencer”. I hope that you’ve had the fortune of at least one teacher in your life who has done some or all of the above for you. If you haven’t, much of this section may seem like hollow, unattainable rhetoric.
Teachers can’t achieve this alone. School leaders (how might we support them?): “facilitate learning…by promoting a culture of high expectations in schools…creating and sustaining the learning environment and the conditions under which quality teaching and learning takes place” (p. 11). It’s the environment, stupid.3

The curriculum provides “a solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built”. It “will support students to relate well to others and foster an understanding of Australian society, citizenship” (p. 13). The curriculum should facilitate “deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning [the term ‘basic skills’ does not appear in the Declaration, but ‘essential skills’ makes an appearance on p. 8.4] and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications”. The curriculum (and, presumably, the teachers who convey it) will “enable students to…understand the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life; and open up new ways of thinking”. Curriculum serves to “support the development of deep knowledge within a discipline, which provides the foundation for inter-disciplinary approaches to innovation and complex problem-solving”. It will also “underpin flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise”.

We are demanding much of our young, and of their pedagogues, their child-leaders. Moreover, how do you give all that a mark out of 10? According to the Declaration, “assessment will be rigorous and comprehensive…national testing” (p. 14). [The water in the spa is now getting a little cold. And it’s going down a bit. We may soon discover who’s naked in here.] “Targeted support can help disadvantaged young Australians to achieve better outcomes”—yes, but school and teachers cannot do this in the absence of sustained support. [Not only has the water grown cold, it’s developed a dubious colour and odour about it.]

Parents will be offered information on the school’s extra-curricular activities. Laudable though these have the potential to be, the subtext is that merely fulfilling the demands of curriculum (and general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities, etc.) is insufficient.

Parents will also be provided with “information about a school’s enrolment profile” (p. 17) [Eww. Slime!] I’m not sure on what valid basis a parent might select or reject a school based on its “enrolment profile”. I may have misinterpreted that statement’s intent.

More broadly, the Declaration declares that “the community should have access to information that enables an understanding of the decisions taken by governments”. [Sometimes, though, it seems that government decision-making is as murky as my spa water.] “Governments will ensure that school-based information is published responsibly, so that any public comparisons of schools will be fair…privacy will be protected”. I’m not sure if, and how, governments can ensure public comparisons are

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3With apologies to Carville (1992). Respect.
4For those offended by the term Basic Skills Testing, I suggest adopting the euphemism BS Testing in polite company.
fair, and how they can convince an aspirationally sceptical public, and teaching and student body, accordingly.

Well, bits of the spa experience were agreeable, at least. But even the pleasant parts of the spa experience are mere froth, bubble and hot air—faking it real?—if we do nothing to realise them. I need a shower.

Current basic skill testing regimes arguably establish a vicious circle. The more the school students seem incapable of spelling and punctuating better, the more spelling and punctuating they are obliged to do (and under test conditions—without the supports available to us in everyday work situations).

Teacher Recruitment, Supply and Demand

In 2016, Masters observed that the matriculation threshold for people entering teacher education was well below the aspirational top 30% level, and declining. This aspiration is, itself, modest. For a teacher with an ATAR matriculation score of 70, almost a third of their students are “better at school” (it’s a rough measure, I’ll grant) than they themselves were. Similarly, one-third of the parents they encounter outperformed such a teacher at school. More concerningly, the lowering of ATARs is presumably a sign that fewer matriculants find school teaching attractive. This establishes another vicious circle, in concert with the basic skills one—a vicious downward double helix? As Barber and Mourshead (2007, p. 25) explained.

Once teaching became a high-status profession, more talented people became teachers, lifting the status of the profession even higher…Conversely, where the profession has a low status, it attracts less [and fewer] talented applicants, pushing the status of the profession down further, and with it, the calibre of people is it able to attract.

Barber and Mourshead refer to Finland and South Korea in this regard, which had existing “strong teaching forces”; the first “became” is arguably the slithery term in Barber and Mourshead’s quote above.

The matriculation score problem may be exacerbated by universities over-enrolling teacher education students, the lower performing of whom will struggle to find jobs in the profession. Such graduates are more likely to find work in hard-to-staff schools, teaching the underserved—which seems undeserved.

Of course, no simple formula equates the best students and the best teachers, a point noted by Masters (2016). Being or becoming a good teacher is so much more than being a good at passing (basic skills) tests, the most easily quantifiable measure of student performance. Nevertheless, teachers do need to be adept at spelling, punctuation and the like in their leadership of children and dealings with parents and the community. Even though Barber and Mourshead (2007) are not averse to “hard” measures, such as interventions and examinations, they assert that “the challenge is broadly one of finding the best educators and giving them the space to debate and create a better curriculum and pedagogy” (p. 26).
A strong “gatekeep” in teacher education only computes in the context of large numbers wanting to enter. In the absence of popularity, walls, gates and other barriers are redundant and counterproductive. We will see what the draconian measures in Australia, if they are imposed in the absence of more professional attractors, produces. One outcome may be the de-diversification of the profession (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018); dual processes leading to a constriction of curriculum and candidature.

I tend towards pessimism. But this far into the final chapter, I was hoping to be in a better place than this. Were this a novel, at this stage, the hero might find himself gagged, and tied to the railway tracks, hoping that the heroine, on a horse, will arrive before the train does. I’ve shared too much. What might be salvageable from this point?

I occasionally set my GPS for a trip up the north coast, then drive south, just to mess with its head. I’m a man with multiple, complex needs. Ridiculous though my gesture sounds, we have arguably done something similar to and with the Melbourne Declaration. If the Declaration (Part 1) represents our educational aspirations, arguably, the system has failed to meet them, or even to head (us) in the right direction, as per the Chinese proverb cited in the previous chapter; it appears to be continuing to fail its teachers, and vicariously, its students. We may have lost sight of some of the Declaration’s lofty aspirations, because we are looking in the wrong direction. I perhaps need to take a look out the window, there’s a beautiful, fragrant Melbourne Declaration (well, most of it, anyway) out there. Ponder what education can achieve for those who get a real one, and the benefits for the rest of us who those young people go on to assist.

Just as subjugating or undermining teachers is bound to have similar effects on learners, so supporting learners is likely to have a flow-on effect. Barber and Mourshead (2007) set out some features of schools where effective new instructors are developed. These include extensive induction for new teachers; more than ten per cent of time dedicated to professional development; extensive peer observations and demonstration lessons; discussion of practice and diagnosis of individuals’ teaching; and substantial research budgets for improving instruction (p. 41). The effectiveness and quality of such strategies is difficult to quantify. To enhance student performance, such schools employ effective, and needs-responsive means of supporting struggling students. Such jurisdictions are attractive to teachers, with a 1:10 ratio of entrants to applicants, and a top 10% entrance threshold.

Who Can Help?

I mentioned in Chap. 1 the prospect of making the teaching profession more competitive, and selective-of-candidates, by making it more attractive. What follows is some, necessarily brief, advice as possible starting points for various stakeholders for their consideration. The advice derives from some of the themes stitched into the book,
in particular: education should be autonomy-oriented; good teaching and learning proceeds from mutual trust and respect, both earned; education is complex and risky.

**Advice to Governments (Read This Particularly If You’re Not in Government)**

I sometimes muse that somehow, national governments have inadvertently swapped their military and education budgets, and that the developing world is being flooded with Soviet-era overhead projectors, “just in case the other side is doing the same”. In Australia’s case, the criticism is a cheap shot, in more ways than one; Australia, to its credit, spends almost two billion dollars more on its education than on its defence, according to The Conversation (2019). That’s a lot of overhead projectors. The reverse is true for the United States, however (Office of Management and Budget, 2018). It allocates approximately six billion dollars (that’s $6,000,000,000, for those who like lots of noughts⁵) to education (p. 39), and more than half a trillion dollars ($600 billion, $600,000,000,000) to defence (p. 33). Russia also reportedly spends more on defence than on education (The Interpreter, 2016). According to China’s China Daily⁶ (2019) and China Power (2019), education considerably outsends the military in China. These expenditures might, in part, explain their respective countries’ rankings. It leads me to my first piece of advice, to governments.

**Stop Telling Us to Go Fund Ourselves**

According to Ting, Palmer and Scott (2019), the four wealthiest schools in Australia outspent, on their buildings and renovations, the (fiscally!) poorest 1800 schools combined. That means that any of those 1800 schools (between a fifth and a quarter of the 8500 overall) spent, on average, just over one five-hundredth (1/500—looks suitably smaller) of those four wealthiest, private schools. And, of course, some schools in the poorest quarters have much less than that average at their disposal. The report also asserts that “The richest 1% of schools spent $3 billion. The poorest 50% spent $2.6 billion combined”. Chances are, those wealthy schools had fewer urgent, non-discretionary, attention-seeking repair jobs. In a US context, Ravitch (2013) refers to the privatisation of education as a “reign of error”. It could be argued that these wealthy schools are largely funding themselves: much of their income derives from parents’ fees. Moreover, no doubt at least a proportion of those parents pays high levels of income tax, and might contribute in other ways, by, for example, employing others. Nevertheless, it seems hard to justify or normalise such disparity.

⁵Of the world’s 2-trillion-dollar expenditure on education a little more than a decade ago, according to Barber and Mourshead (2007, p. 5).

⁶This morning’s morning minion?
Such schools might like to sponsor or adopt a school in a povo part of town. It would demonstrate to the broader community these well-heeled schools’ solidarity and commitment to the broader teaching and learning community of practice. Failing that, the government might like to supplement some of those more indigent schools’ funds.

School disrepair is more expansive than building maintenance. Teachers are unsustainably time-poor and overburdened, with demands cognitive, emotional, conative and ethical. Reducing face-to-face teaching time is probably the most effective way of supporting teachers in the first instance, and renovating the profession. A formula might be devised whereby one hour of K-6 teaching entails a further hour of preparation and marking (it will often be more). A 40-h week would then equate to 20 h of teaching—presuming no other, non-teaching, or extra-curricular, responsibilities. A further reduction in face-to-face teaching hours might apply to high school, particularly in the senior years. Similarly, a further reduction in face-to-face hours might apply to teachers in their first one or two years of the job. Smaller classes, or two teachers per (only slightly larger) class might be other options, but these are likely to be more costly, as they would also require building modifications, which, as indicated above, are already problematic. Team teaching, including teachers’ aides, would bear other community-of-practice fruits that emerge from collaboration and idea-sharing. Relieving teachers of work that is unessential to their pedagogy would also bear dividends. Some administrative work and recess/lunch supervision come to mind. More broadly, avoid the temptation to go after politically expedient “low-hanging fruit and quick wins” (Masters, 2016, p. 26).

**The Status of Teaching**

Increasingly, schools are becoming where knowledge is not just located, encountered, organised and communicated, but places where new knowledge is produced—sites of research (Sachs, 2016)—both pedagogical and content-related—places where members undertake “conversing with data” (McAteer, 2013, p. 62), whether those data refer to assessment tasks or other areas of study. Edwards (2011, p. 36) refers to “places where local expertise could be made explicit so that it might be drawn on later… spaces…inhabited by workers from different practitioner backgrounds who recognised that collaboration would help with the complex problems that they were dealing with”. More broadly, Edwards commends relational and distributed expertise, and relational agency, in a way that much current micromanagement of teaching and teachers appears to douse.

Raising the status of the teaching profession, which will also enhance its attractiveness, could be achieved through offering periods of study leave, if not every seventh, then perhaps every tenth, year. Teachers would typically only become eligible at most four times in their careers. Given current attrition rates, many would become

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7Acknowledgement to McDonald (2007) for the concept.
eligible on fewer occasions again. But such a proposal might also increase teacher retention—I say this at my peril; lower attrition will flow back to the preparation of fewer pre-service teachers, resulting in fewer teacher educators, representing a saving to government. Part of the “sabbatical transaction” might require providing feedback to your current school or more broadly, after, for example, being seconded to a position as adviser to literacy education or the like, with time built-in for research pursuits of personal/professional interest.

Increased time for peer review: this, as we explore multiple ways of not being sure. As asserted in the previous chapter, teachers have the best-fitting responses to educational dilemmas, particularly in their local contexts—informed, ideally, by the consideration of initiatives in other local contexts. Stenhouse (1985) affirmed the primacy of experience over measurement. I’m not sure I’m entirely convinced of this, but at the very least, experience should be given a voice to complement, confront and perhaps contradict measurement. Measurement—particularly measurement of what’s most valuable—derives in part from experiences and subjectivities. Teachers need time to further investigate, share, articulate, apply and consider the effectiveness of such responses. Schools would assume some features of universities, leading in the generation of theory—theory-in-practice and practice-in-theory. Edwards and Stamou (2017) observe the phenomenon of “some research sticking and informing policies and practices, while other research gets washed away” (p. 265). They recommend undertakings between researchers and practitioners; “knowledge exchange” (p 265). Such exchange has several features: it is intercultural, and requires understanding of the other partner and their circumstances; it is collaborative, and it is reciprocal. Singh, Allen, and Rowan (2018, p. 217) point out that “theories become lived practices - they perform – not simply inform classroom practices”.

Advice for Citizen-Kids (Read This Especially If You’re Not a Kid)

The bits in brackets in these headings aren’t simply a cheap, reverse-psychology trick to trap young people into reading. They’d see right through it anyway. Perhaps more importantly, if you’re one of the very few school students reading this, you’re probably one of the kids who doesn’t need to heed the advice. So, maybe others, such as parents and teachers can encourage their kids to read it, or discuss it with them. Or if you’re a kid, get your parents and others to read it. Imagine your future. Having a job is not just an evil necessity, or even a mere in/convenience. It offers a chance to do things for other people. And at the end of it, you get money, which you can use for fun things. To give credit to a now not-so-recent advertising campaign (McCann-Erickson, 19978): Salary? $1000 per week. The dignity, independence

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8See https://www.aaaa.org/timeline-event/mastercard-mccann-erickson-campaign-never-got-old-priceless/.
and contribution of a job? priceless. I love the double meaning conveyed by self-determination. Are you on track for your career ambitions? If not…? All this may sound old-fashioned, but it’s simply extending from part of the Melbourne Declaration, that the responsibility for education is shared by us all. You may find it interesting to do some peer review, by looking at the work of some of your contemporaries, young world-changers listed in the section “how to get there” later in this chapter. If you’re in reasonably comfortable circumstances, you might also find it interesting to investigate some other peers, in developing countries, and compare their opportunities and circumstances with yours.

Advice to Citizen-Parents (Read Especially If Not a Parent)

Politicians are unlikely to listen to me, or to teachers. But, if you, as parents of schoolchildren, speak up in sufficient numbers, they will be forced to listen. Consider the type of education, real education, you want for your children’s lives—for my money, the Melbourne Declaration offers some clues. Insist on that for your kids.

Support your children’s teachers. You and they have your children’s best interests in mind. Work with them. As Mueller (2019) quipped, “parents are having trouble finding time and energy to offer a hand in the classroom, yet many do find time to engage in unsolicited teacher condemnation”. Apart from anything helping in the classroom would give insights into the complexity of the work. Some of the complexity of teaching and learning may have opened itself up to you if you have been recently assisting your children with online learning through covid.

If teaching should be autonomy-oriented, it’s reasonable to assert that so should parenting be. At the end of the day, you want your kids to be responsible, self-starting adults, independent of you. That’s confronting, but it’s less so than the alternative. There’s no space to discuss this adequately here, but you may find the following exercise of interest. Psychotherapist Morin (2017) offers 13 pieces of advice for healthy parenting. These include “snapping your kids out of” (my term, not hers): a victim mentality; self-centredness; fear of risk, or of “having a go”; flight from discomfort. For me, one element common to much of this advice is letting go, and letting your kids practise fending for themselves. If nothing else, the list might make for interesting discussion with other parents, teachers, or, depending on their age, your kids. You’ll be acting in loco magistri/magistrae (in the place of a teacher). Also, if you’d like your children to transcend basic skills, let your school and your government know.

$1000 per week doesn’t buy as much dignity and independence as it used to, but I hope you get the intent.
Note to the Citizen-Standardists\textsuperscript{10} (Read This Especially if Etc.)

As asserted at the outset of this section, good teaching is independence-oriented. Extend to the practitioners an increased say in the direction and priorities of their work. They draw on many years’ experience with their practice, their communities, their students. Allowing more scope for educational research to be conducted in schools will strengthen and embolden their voice. In short, it may be worth heeding Senese’s (2002, p. 51) advice, to “relinquish control to gain influence”.

As noted above, peer review and observations, and the conversations they generate, are highly effective ways to build the community of practice. If handled carefully, they can strengthen the bonds of trust and mutual respect among teachers. They are also a badge to students that teachers, too, are part of a practising community of learners. I believe it would be valuable for those who have been out of the school classroom for some time, and who design standards and the like, to be seconded to schools for a period, to observe, and to have their teaching observed, to model and demonstrate the precepts they have recommended. This, I believe, could assist a rapprochement and build trust and respect between teachers and bureaucrats, and would almost certainly contribute to everyone’s learning. The same could apply to teacher educators who have been out of the school classroom for some time. To be honest, the thought makes me nervous. It’s been a while… It will serve as a good refresher of how complex teaching children is. Cochran-Smith et al. (2018) note that “some approaches to educational accountability diminish trust among stakeholders and/or erode a sense of shared responsibility for the quality of the work” (p. 50).

Memo to Citizen-Self: Act Educated

(I’ll break my rule here and say, feel free to ignore this if you’re not me—I don’t wish to preach.)

I am convinced that it is education, and the educated (us!),\textsuperscript{11} who are at the forefront of this movement or revolution—always have been. It’s largely a bloodless revolution, but not necessarily without sweat or tears. An associated question for me is how do I act educated? Fullan and Scott (2014, p. 3) argue that “for the first time in history the mark of an educated person is that of a doer (a doing-thinker; a thinker-doer) – they learn to do, and do to learn”, while Kohl (1983, p. 29) proposed that an intellectual inquirer “has a breadth of knowledge about the world, who views ideas in more than instrumental terms, and who harbors a spirit of inquiry that is critical and oppositional”. A further way of helping me to frame what an educated

\textsuperscript{10}I originally mistyped “standardistas” and was tempted to let it stand.

\textsuperscript{11}Or is it “we”? Anyway.
person is, is to ask, how do I avoid acting uneducated or ignorant\textsuperscript{12}? What kinds of behaviours, attitudes, dispositions and actions distinguish an educated wo/man, or any citizen, from an ignorant one? What kind of behaviours honour the expense that was outlaid for my education, and stand as a reasonable return on that investment?

In Chap. 1, I criticised the dismissal of critical thinking by a particular American political party. I’m guilty of the same thing. I’m guilty of much I’ve criticised in this book. I use my own echo-location devices to navigate and to smooth difficult issues, I have my own go-to echo chambers where we nod and tsk in approval and disgust, and my own views that I cosset and keep pure from external high stakes examination, or impurities. I’m part of the problem. So are you, probably. I hope you followed my earlier advice and didn’t read this bit.

All of us should return the favour of accountability. We all need to hold governments to their rhetoric and promises. The Melbourne Declaration’s two goals (MCEETYA, 2008) are that young Australians are to become “successful learners…confident and creative individuals”, and “active and informed citizens” (pp. 8–9). What has your government and mine done to advance these objectives for our learners, today, this week, this year? What have I done towards those ends?

“In a country with alarming inequities of income and opportunities, reducing the social exclusion needs to be one of the principle [sic] objectives of the [Education] Policy.” This is a tenet of the Pakistani Education Policy (Government of Pakistan, 2009, p. 12); there are few if any countries to which it doesn’t apply. The Policy calls Pakistan’s citizens: “to raise individuals committed to democratic and moral values, aware of fundamental human rights, open to new ideas, having a sense of personal responsibility and participation in the productive activities in the society for the common good” (p. 18). Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Government, 2009) bears some close resonances with the Melbourne Declaration goals. It sets out to enable all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors (p. iii). I mention these as two I have encountered recently.

### How to Get There

Pollard (2005) outlined five possible coping responses to imposed change: compliance; incorporation; creative mediation; retreatism and resistance. Of these, he sees creative mediation as the only viable response. As part of this endeavour, Pollard draws on the work of Sachs (2003) and nominates five strategies: social capital; engagement; collective action; transformative politics and strategic positioning. To these, Pollard adds reflexivity and collective responsibility: reflexive activism. I concede that resistance is also alluring. Part of this might mean reversing the tide—reclaiming the profession and teaching others, rather than simply being taught by them.

\textsuperscript{12}OK, uneducatedly or ignorantly.
Teachers, you/we are not alone. Now is a good opportunity to seize the day, pedagogically. Many parents have discovered the complexity of your work as they support their children’s learning at home, through covid-19. Moreover, the community has come to realise this: you are frontline workers. Without you, the economy implodes, not just in future, through an un(der)educated generation, but here and now; if it wasn’t already obvious, you concern yourselves with the well-being, not just the learning, of those in your care. And during covid you have exercised this care in the face of risks—whose extent and likelihood are still not entirely known—to your own, and your family’s, health.

Moreover, aside from enjoying the smorgasbord of nations’ educational aspirations, outlined above, I recommended in Chap. 10 familiarising young people with their peers—other young people who have made a difference to others’ lives, and who have used the online world to leverage this. Among those who come to mind are environmental activist Greta Thunberg, girls’ education advocate Malala Yousafzai, Ryan Hreljac, a campaigner for clean drinking water, and Daniel and William Clarke, orangutan habitat defenders. Each story, and those of many others, are humbly impressive and encouraging, in terms of the entrustment of humanity’s future to this rising generation. Some websites featuring young activists can be found below. And there are many others less well known. Our education systems are contributing something right for at least some young people. I refer to other “betterment warriors” in the footnote below. Some websites featuring young activists can be found below. And there are many others less well known. Our education systems are contributing something right for at least some young people. I refer to other “betterment warriors” in the footnote below. Apologies to the many I’ve missed. And respect. And, of course, their ranks grow daily. The—dare I say it?—child soldiers below are the people we risk producing if we take The Melbourne Dec and similar documents at their word, part of the beautiful, risky business of education (Biesta, 2013a):

- Complex. 20 young activists who are changing the world. https://www.complex.com/life/young-activists-who-are-changing-the-world/
- Institute for Educational Advancement. Child Activists: Ten stories about inspirational kids. https://educationaladvancement.org/child-activists-ten-stories-inspirational-kids/
- Global Citizen. These badass youth activists are changing the world. https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/7-badass-youth-activists-you-didnt-know-are-changing/
- Unicef Australia. Five child activists you need to know. https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/stories/june-2019/five-child-activists
- Greenpeace 5 young activists who inspired us this year. https://www.greenpeace.org/international/story/20165/5-young-activists-who-inspired-us-this-year/
- CNBC. 7 female activists who are changing the world. https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/08/these-7-young-female-leaders-are-changing-the-world.html.

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13Tia Brennen (bicycle recycler and donor), Macinley Butson (inventor), Connor Macleod (tactile banknotes), Vincent Pettinicchio (homelessness activist), Campbell Remess (bear-maker for hospitalised children) and Jack Berne (supporting farmers through drought) come to mind as Australian examples. From what I can tell, most if not all are from quite comfortable homes—all the more impressive, then, that they see into others’ lives so.
Rounding up Some Themes from This Book and Their Significance:

The untidiness of teaching and learning (Chap. 1): Defining learning is not straightforward. Moving new stuff into our consciousness, and working out where to put it, can be a complex, time-consuming and emotionally and cognitively draining and aesthetically challenging process. Sometimes the new “mental furniture” doesn’t match the old, creating new dilemmas as to what to rearrange or modify, what to keep and what to discard; the new furniture might make the old look shabby. We’re likely to resent or feel threatened by someone coming in and moving, or recommending we move, the mental furniture, but as teachers, that’s what we do to learners.

Our quest for patterns, resolution and simplicity (Chap. 1): this can lead us into error or blindness. Our quest for tidiness and control can lead to a right/wrong, yes/no world; a black and white existence that does no justice to grey matter, ambiguity and risk. The big responsibility that education and educators (and all of us in the village, helping to raise the child-learner) are tasked with, is to pave the way for us to pursue mind-altering truths and possibilities.

The redundancy-orientation of teaching. Teachers, strive to make your students autonomous, and yourselves redundant. Extending from this, governments (and all of us) could invest heavily in the “first ten per cent” (of life)—the first eight or nine years. Launch every child from birth into reading and basic numeracy. But this is merely a means to one or more ends. The purpose is to provide children early on with these tools to decode the symbols around them, as a first, or parallel, step towards critically understanding them, to help them “become better at negotiating the messy, fuzzy, dilemma-ridden context of real-world life and work with positive impact” (Fullan & Scott, 2014, p. 4). This applies to teacher-learning also. The professional development and status of teachers is a means rather than an end point in itself. It’s the quality of teaching and learning that is at stake here.

Many of these matters offend our instincts: relinquishing control over our circumstances, or over others, is scary; uncertainty is scary; autonomy (Derrida’s (2014) emancipation) is scary. This might explain why so much effort is concentrated into countering such things.

In Chap. 2, I made some comparisons between teaching and rocket science, unflattering the latter. I want to state here that teaching is not rocket science. I actually believe teaching is more complex, but that’s not the main point I wish to make here. Rocket science, if my rudimentary understanding is correct, depends on split-second precision, prediction and programming that you just cannot inject into teaching. Rocket science appears to be more predictable than teaching. In some ways, I’ve left lesson one to this last chapter. It’s an understanding of this that might unclog our education system, and free and enable its teachers and learners more latitude. Teaching can be like finding yourself in the middle of a modern artwork. You’re not always sure which way is up, or out, and not everything makes sense. You can’t diminish teaching to a formulaic recipe, or an artform where the same colours and lines work every time—or even twice. It’s just not that straightforward. A reference to
the medical profession was also made in Chap. 1. Medical research is at times upheld as the gold standard for professions everywhere. Similarly, though, learning appears to be less predictable, generalizable and linear than in many medical circumstances. Of course, at the experimental edge, medical outcomes are more unpredictable, as covid-19 is demonstrating. Teaching, it strikes me, however, is unremittingly and implacably experimental.

Teaching, and teachers, have many of the keys, and can lead the way. The things I try to apply in my teaching include trust, respect, high expectations, scaffolding, patience and persistence, personalisation, (sometimes unpopular) autonomy-and decision-making-orientation, enabling, challenging, discernment (assessment), understanding of the other perspective, ego-interrogation, recognition of what others bring to the table, courage to be unpopular, lateral thinking—finding other ways to explain, pointing out the point or the relevance, showing my working…

Cochran-Smith et al. (2018) refer to promising practices in teacher education, and illustrate these with exemplar initiatives worldwide. Features common to most of them include democratisation, through practices such as local decision-making and autonomy, and a determination for equity and social justice. One particularly potent feature to my mind is self-advocacy. This reverberates with Freirean (1970) ideals, as we help young people become authors of their own liberation, their own responsibility, their own personhood, their own autonomous adulthood and equality-with-us.

Perhaps the most notable recommendation of Cochran-Smith et al.’s (2018) is the retention of teacher education in-house. Chapter one in this book devoted considerable space to dissecting a definition of medicine as a profession. The quality of teaching has been outsourced from the profession in a way that we would never dare to do in medicine. And the cure is a course of education.

Quality teaching rounds (Gore & Bowe, 2015) present another promising practice. In quality teaching rounds, groups of four-to-eight teachers support one another in communities of practice, through discussing readings chosen by members; observing one another’s teaching, and coding the observations according to a framework devised for the purpose (p. 78). Such rounds “focus on detailed description and analysis of practice; take account of local contexts; and use collaborative processes to build a collective vision of a way forward” (p. 77).

On How We Do Things Around Here

It is in democratic governments’ interests to culture a docile, complacent electorate, which might quell our “thinking in dark times” (Arendt, 2010). Biesta (2009, p. 43) calls on us to “reconnect with the question of purpose in education” (my emphasis). As citizen-teachers, citizen-learners, we need vigilance in terms of how governments may seek to infantilise or disempower us. Basic skills for teachers and students may be one way in which they are doing this, whether wilfully or not.
To some extent, education involves both forming and norming, and even the “forming” will be in part, in our own image as elders. Education fails if it fails to introduce and expose, particularly, marginalised, learners to mainstream ways of thinking, saying, being and doing. It also fails if it merely subjugates learners to such ways, or tries to eliminate or cleanse existing minority cultural traits, or fails to introduce “the rest of us” to such Other ways. Kemmis, Edward-Groves, Lloyd, Grootenboer, Hardy, and Wilkinson (2017, p. 45) speak of being “‘stirred in’ to practices”. They use it in terms of blending in, but I love its double meaning, of being stirred in to action. So it is with teachers. There is, by necessity, an apprenticeship into norms of doing and being, but this shouldn’t be at the expense of forming teachers—citizen-teachers who are ready to question, where necessary to destabilise and reform the system, and to raise up their citizen-learners to do likewise.

The “three Rs” of education (reading, ’riting and ’rithmetic), indispensable though they are, are pathways to (and proceed from) grander things. Fullan and Scott (2014, pp. 6–7) outline the six Cs of deep learning: character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking. To these, or as subsets of “character”, and/or “citizenship”, I would add compassion, caring, courage and commitment. I would also throw consequence into the mix—teaching and learning that are of consequence, and that make us mindful of consequences—and a willingness to confront. To enhance the experience, Fullan and Scott also take a couple of Es: Ethical Entrepreneurialism. Fullan and Scott contend, “it is no exaggeration to say that the new pedagogies have the potential to support a fundamental transformation in human evolution” (p. 3). Giroux (1985, p. 20) observed that schools are being undermined in their capacity to “prepare students to think critically and creatively” and armed with the skills to “make informed and effective choices about the worlds of work, politics, culture, personal relationships, and the economy”, while Biesta (2013b) calls for “transcendence, where teaching brings something radically new to the student” (p. 449). Naturally, not everything in a school day will be radical, but at the moment, basic skills testing and compliance, appear to be a metaphorical pillow, to put us to sleep—temporarily or permanently—I’m unsure which. Before I get too excited, I need to ask how we achieve these things for children in remote or impoverished communities, for girls in circumstances where girl-education invites murder, for children with disabilities or weighty burdens…

But if we fail to act on this, as teachers and as bystanders, I believe we may be doing nothing less than dispossessing our young of their birthright: an education that will give them the wherewithal to confront, perchance to remediate, the problems of this socially and environmentally fractured world. The outcome of strictured accountability is most likely, “not to build an understanding of the complexity and nuance of teaching practice or to celebrate the diversity of teachers and learners, but rather to standardise practice, stifle debate and promise the fallacious notion of ‘professional objectivity’” (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009, p. 8). Such an

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14Two of which are misspelt. I’m tempted to call them the 4 Rs, just to give maths equal opportunity here.

15I would willingly go out and set fire to something at this stage, but for the carbon consequences.
approach is largely counter-educational; it offends some of the basics of education, such as failing to devolve autonomy to the (teacher-)learner.

I believe I can be best rescued from my (culturally imposed, comfy) shallow- and narrow-mindedness by people different from me. People who see, feel, love and hate the world differently from me. People who hope, fear and worship differently from me. If I allow them, they will make me reconsider. They will reposition me to deconstruct, to dismantle—or reinforce—my assumptions about how the world works, or should work, and I theirs. At the very least, they can help me find a place where I am brought face to face with my assumptions, perhaps to challenge them, as we rub minds together to watch and make sense of the sparks that result. Their views aren’t always palatable to me, nor mine to them. But my digestion and consideration of them provides me with good, healthy intellectual (not as uncomplimentary as it sounds) roughage. Healthy for my education, my leading-out, a rescuing from my smaller, pettier, narrower, more craven self.

Returning to the title and a theme of this chapter, about knowing and being able to do, Fullan and Scott (p. 4) explain.

at times like this, it is no good to simply know or be able to do a lot, rather it requires the ability to listen, diagnose and figure out what is really going on and determine, in collaboration with other key players, how the situation might best be handled, and then, with their help, to apply the right mix of knowledge and skills to make this happen.

Sound advice for learners, teachers and managers, that.

Teachers, students, parents, managers—all of us—are called into the service of this risky, scary and volatile social experiment, education, an experiment that appears to be paying dividends to date. Arendt (1958) referred to human plurality, which, if I understand her correctly, is twofold, encapsulating both our collectivism-in-action, and our diversity. Each aspect is crucial to our self- and mutual-cultivation, and to our concerted efforts in holding those responsible, accountable for advancing, not retarding, education. The quest justifies associated frictions, and stands to enrich the rewards for education’s end users—all of us; “only the educated are free” (attributed to slave-born Epictetus).

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