Maintaining independence in the face of increasing accountability

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Abstract

The word ‘accountability’ has become not only a buzz word in political speak but also it is being used as a justification for increased government and consumer surveillance in the discourse of ‘choice’ and ‘competition’. While the public neo-liberal discourse has the surface appearance of independence and autonomy, underneath this façade is the notion of federal control. This paper has two major themes. The first theme traces the historical application of accountability in relation to international western education systems and the second theme looks at the consequences when flawed interpretations of accountability are used to attain political outcomes. This increasing surveillance and political manipulation has consequences for schools, teachers, students and the community.

Introduction:

In most western countries large amounts of money are being poured into education systems both for private schools and in public schooling. Everyone has a stake in knowing how effective schools are, from the taxpayer to the investor, with that investor being either a parent paying for a private school education or the government providing taxpayer based funding for school budgets. Parents enrol their children at schools with the expectation that they will receive a 'good' education that will lead to a 'good' job. Getting a 'good' education is more likely to be seen as a consequence of a 'good' teacher and teachers are often blamed for student failure. The Australian worker wants to see their tax dollar well spent while the media are eager to act as the vehicle of accountability to the community under the umbrella of so-called investigative journalism. There is little wonder, then, in the desire to see accountability.

This paper has two main sections. In the first section we offer suggestions on what accountability means to various sectors of the community before outlining the historical perspective of accountability as it has been applied to education systems in the Western world. The second section looks at the consequences of accountability in those same educational systems and what this has meant for those systems before drawing this argument together to suggest what accountability could mean in contemporary times for independent schools in Queensland.

<u>So what is accountability and what does it look like?</u>

When we talk about accountability and farmers, in this State especially, it means anything from diversity to partnerships. It also means someone to blame for land degradation, tree clearing and ultimately, the drought, through flawed farming practices. If, on the other hand, we talk about accountability and the environmentalists, it means lobbying to the government about farmers and their practices, lobbying to the government about big business messing with nature and unsustainable practices. Again it is providing someone else to blame or to be held accountable for the current position.

Accountability when it comes to something like the Australian Intelligent Services on the other hand, means to be shrouded in secrecy. The Intelligence Services Act 2001 details the functions of these Services and specifies the role of such people as the Minister for Foreign Affairs, however we, the public, do not know about the operations of the Services. This reporting is kept internal due to the secrecy/security of the nation, a convenient call. When visiting the homepage of the Australian Democrats we discovered that this party has an "Accountability spokesperson" – Senator Andrew Murray. In a current press release posted to this page the Australian Democrats were requesting the President of the Senate provide a special report to the Senate on the failure of government departments to answer Senate Estimates questions. Senator Andrew Murray stated the following:

> A summary of questions provided by the Clerk of the Senate dated the 19th May 2005 reveals that 62 questions remain unanswered. The staggering aspect is that 43 of the outstanding questions were put to Treasurer Peter Costello's Department of Treasury. To put this in perspective, the Senate requires answers within five weeks. The fact that one year has lapsed and no answers are forthcoming from the Government is contemptuous of the senate and indicates a growing attitude that the Government does not need to be fully accountable for how it spends taxpayer dollars (Australian Democrats, 2005)

What this means is that while the Government demands accountability of others, it does not necessarily follow this practice itself. This was delightfully played out at a recent Senate Estimates Committee where it was 'discovered' that the Australian Defence Force could actually lose rather large pieces of equipment such as a tank and an ambulance (Eastley, 2005). This particular Senate Estimates 'performance' was rather timely as coinciding with this was US/Australian war games or exercises taking place in our backyard at Shoalwater Bay, on the coast from Rockhampton, Queensland. Now the Federal Government promote these exercises as demonstrating the nation's support/commitment to national security and US foreign policy in the Age of Terrorism, therefore subsequently anything spent on military requirements is seen as both legitimate

and possibly similar to the activities of ASIO, quite opaque. However, this opaqueness was revealed recently at the same Senate Estimates committee when it appeared that the army had 'lost' tanks, ammunition and a number of small arms (Eastley, 2005). As reported by Louise Yaxley on AM:

> Ian Goodwin from the Auditor-General's Office told the Senate Estimates committee that billions of dollars worth of equipment couldn't be found … explosive ordnance inventory for $845 million, repairable items, which is a component of specialist military equipment, for $2.8 billion … land and buildings for $1.4 billion … Warren Cochrane from the audit office gave some options on the whereabouts of the defence equipment. 'These pieces of equipment couldn't be found during the stocktake. Whether they're there somewhere, or defence has lost them or misplaced them or sent them off from the unit without accounting for them we don't know. And neither does defence.'(Eastley, 2005).

This so-called lost equipment is rather worrying considering the hype surrounding security breaches, airport scams and other 'first line defence' areas highlighted by the tabloid press. Back at Shoalwater Bay protesters held up entry to the army area for a short time with this being televised nationally. Locals are angry that promised road upgrades and associated funding has not been forthcoming (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2005). One of the protesters pointed out that the government was spending outrageous amounts of money on these exercises at the same time that our health and education systems are in crisis.

So accountability here is all about justifying a slice of pie, a pie that is finite and that is seemingly getting broader but thinner, becoming more like a pizza base rather than grandma's lemon meringue pudding. There is also a disturbing trend here where it could be argued that the Federal government, under the catchcry of democracy, demand accountability of the electorate but do little to uphold that same understanding of accountability to the electorate.

Along with accountability, the concept of 'performance' has become entrenched in political, social and educational discourses where someone or something has to be accountable in return for a particular performance. Accountability becomes an interesting concept when applied to schools and educational systems especially when there are multiple stakeholders with this accountability. Here we are talking of government, schools, teachers, parents and the community. In this next section we look at the historical application of the word 'accountability' and what this has come to mean in Western educational systems.

Historical perspective of accountability in education:

In this section we look at accountability and education in the US, UK, NZ and Australia. Accountability in the US has resulted in the emergence and entrenchment of outcomes based education. In the UK it has meant national testing and the publication of league tables as part of the Parent's Charter to determine which schools to enrol students. For New Zealand it has meant a change towards a single post school qualification and a dismantling of policies that had encouraged between-school competition. In Australia it has revived the usual arguments between State and Federal bureaucracies and their respective Ministers. We look at each of these in turn beginning with the US and outcomes based education and high stakes testing.

<u>Accountability in the US: The emergence of outcomes-based education</u>

Newmann, King and Rigdon (1997) suggest that accountability is the term widely used in the literature that now means school effectiveness and teacher performance. The word accountability is synonymous with outcomes-based education and this has a long history in the United States. Coupled with outcomes-based education is compulsory state mandated testing and this has become a focal point of teacher and student activity due to the 'high stakes' associated with this testing (Williams & Dixon, 2003).

As Lee (2003) identifies, the linking of outcomes-based education and subsequent holding of teachers and administrators accountable for the quality of students' work mirrors the efficiency movement of the early 20th century. This movement emerged from

Frederick Winslow Taylor whose time and motion studies came to signify Taylorism, factory production and industrial management. By describing the exact specifications of each task to be performed, levels of performance could be raised through the elimination of wasted effort (Lee, 2003). At the same time there was a prevailing discourse that young people needed to only know what was immediately useful in order to prepare them specifically and directly for their future occupational roles in society (Lee, 2003, p. 65). Franklin Bobbitt, an academic for the University of Chicago, decided that curriculum reform was the best way to achieve this social efficiency. This model required that each student be accessed and matched with a curriculum specifically geared to fostering work habits and future occupational roles.

The industrialists liked this idea because they saw this reform as able to prepare school leavers for the workplace at a time when there was a severe shortage of skilled labour due to WWI and the halting of immigration. Under this efficiency banner, teachers were told what to teach and by insisting on definitive standards or outcomes, administrators could then see which teachers were 'good' and which were 'weak' and thus enabling schools to get rid of inefficient teachers.

With the 1929 Wall Street crash public support for efficiency disappeared and a new discourse of 'social reconstructionism' appeared in early 1930s. In this new discourse politicians and administrators were attacked for ignoring the social issues. In an era where employment had all but dried up, schools were now being constructed as sites for developing teachers and students as informed social critics which was in line with President Roosevelt's domestic reform program of social rejuvenation – the NEW DEAL of 1933.

However post WWII critics highlighted the 'anti-intellectual' consequences of this vocational focus. Of course this criticism was enhanced through the media highlighting a potential threat to national security brought on by the Soviets technological advances in the space race. Lee (2003) goes on to explain that there was continued resistance to this broadening of curriculum by many educators and this came to a head in 1957 when the

Soviets launched Spuntik 1 and signalled their technological advances. There was now this moral panic that American schools had become intellectually soft and Congress responded to this panic by passing the National Defence Education Act 1958 which allow large scale funding to be poured into education, specifically languages, mathematics and the physical sciences, in the interests of national security.

Post WWI education had provided skilled workers to rebuild America's economic prosperity; by the time America entered WWII educational leaders saw the function of schooling as being the mechanism to embody the values of a modern democratic society and post WWII education saw the need to promote patriotic values with Congress guiding the content of the curriculum through the restructuring of intellectual capital that saw an emphasis on foreign languages, mathematics and physical sciences in the interest of national security (Lee, 2003).

Administrators saw education as needing to change to foster work habits and skills desired by the economy. Between 1975 and 1985 curriculum was becoming highly politicised with conservative politicians pushing the mantra of 'back to basics' where there was a focus on mathematics, science, social science, computer science and foreign languages. The driving force for change came from business groups who were concerned about the economy and the growing threat of international competition. There are contemporary similarities here with the perceived 'brain drain' in Australia, and Queensland specifically, where there has also been a pouring of funding in biotechnology, coupled with the mantra of the 'Smart State' and science initiatives. Criticism of the educational quality in American schools increased during the 1960s with this culminating in the introduction of minimum competency tests for high school graduation.

Growing unease over the quality of education in America saw introduction of minimum competency tests for high school graduation with a view that this would raise academic standards and increase educational achievement. Declining test scores and supposedly poor quality teacher education program led policy makers to seek ways of 'teacher

proofing' the classroom. This was justified on the grounds of public accountability and the need for monitoring what teachers and students should know and be able to do. The way to do this was performance-based standards. These tests were supposed to raise standards and increase educational achievement. Another contemporary similarity here is the possibility of Minister Nelson's national Year 12 test in order to satisfy employers and universities of a minimum level of educational competency.

From this brief historic overview of American educational shifts during the 20th century we can see that there has been a long history of efficiency, reform, performance and outcomes as related to education in the US. Despite a growing realisation that 'educational standards' can not be raised by political decree or by mandating more stringent assessment tests and practices, Bill Clinton's Goals 2000 and the current No Child Left Behind Act (2002) still requires state accountability systems to be aligned with state education standards (Rowe, 2000). Each state is responsible for developing content and performance standards, measuring improvement, implementing assessment, reporting this assessment and implementing sanctions for not meeting performance goals (Rowe, 2000).

The UK experience:

We will now turn briefly to the UK experience of educational accountability. In 1988 Margaret Thatcher's government passed the Education Reform Act designed to mandate a national curriculum featuring core traditional subjects such as English, Maths and Science as well as attainment targets setting out expected standards of student performance and national testing (Lee, 2003). The argument behind publishing the test results was similar to that underlying US testing during the 1960s and 1970s. Administrators believed that the publication of test results was a way of providing unequivocal evidence of the quality of teaching and learning in English schools (Lee, 2003). In 1991 a Parents Charter was launched where comparative league tables were compiled for each school and school district to assist parents in deciding which schools to enrol their children at (Lee, 2003; Rowe, 2000). Rowe (2000) insists that the publication of the Parents Charter serves the Government's purpose of providing accountability to the

general public as well as a mechanism for maintaining educational standards. Rowe (2000, p. 75) also highlights another function, that of blame shifting as seen by this comment:

> The focus on allowing market forces to predominate makes it possible for governments and educational regulatory bodies to locate blame for 'poor performance' or 'ineffectiveness' at the local and/or school level. Since markets operate through competition in which there are 'winners' and 'losers', the designation of schools as 'effective' or 'ineffective' is seen as an inevitable consequence.

What is not immediately clear is the definition of 'effective' other than scoring high on the league tables compared to other schools regardless of context, socio-economic factors and resources. What has happened as a consequence of the Parents Charter is that, through the media, certain schools have been labelled as 'failing' and there has been a cry for 'poor' teachers to be sacked. Rowe (2000, p. 76) states that the consequences of this publicity has been the closure of one school after government investigation and parents have even moved location in order to enrol their children at 'better' schools on the basis of the ranking within the league tables. So while the original intention of the Parents Charter was to assist parents in deciding which schools to enrol their children in, the government has actually used league tables to reduce the number of schools under the guise of 'failing' schools. This has also been under the guise of public demands for accountability and maintenance of educational standards (Rowe, 2000). According to Rowe (2000) the British media had a field day in grabbing headlines about failing schools, poor teachers and bad teaching blamed for low standards.

Similar alarmist headlines have figured recently in the Spectator (Seldon, 2005) where Anthony Seldon, Headmaster of Brighton College, stated that children are being overworked by dumbed-down tests and that analysis and creativity take second place to getting the right scores. He goes on to say that students are being taught 'how to play the system' and do well in exams through the practice of teaching the test answers. Many schools are considering a change from the state curriculum to the International

Baccalaureate (Seldon, 2005, p. 13) and Seldon regards his school sector as having been too complacent when it came to the government's policies as outlined here:

> If independent schools had been doing their job properly, they would have vetoed the nonsense of Curriculum 2000, and devised their own examination system, in association with academic state schools. But independent schools have not sought to set the agenda in education, though they are now beginning to move more on to the front foot (Seldon, 2005, p. 13).

Perhaps Seldon is offering a timely warning for independent schools elsewhere that to follow an homogenous curriculum and testing regime is to become part of a bureaucratic system that requires more administration, publication of league tables for school comparison and where, in some cases in the US, there has been an increased placement of students into 'special education' as results from these children are not counted as part of the overall school performance (Harry *et al.*, 2005).

As Harry, Sturges and Klinger (2005, p. 12) report this placement of lower achieving students into special education units occurred in a school that served a predominately White population in a high income area where there were also African-American students who represented both an ethnic and low SES minority:

> The main challenge that they [administration] faced was the presence of extremely high academic standards set by the majority group in the school. Our data revealed that African-American students were over-represented in special education placements at this school, at double their proportion of their overall presence in the school population. Yet their academic levels seemed to be higher than those of children referred in inner-city schools. Thus, despite high quality instruction, the local norms of the school effectively raised the bar for low-income African-American students. Furthermore our research across the 12 schools indicated that pressures from state-wide testing were driving administrators to remove potential failures from the general education program because up to that time, the scores of children in special education did not 'count' in the school's ratings.

This has the potential to occur in any school system that becomes reliant on test scores to determine the 'worth' of a particular school. This becomes significant in an increasingly competitive educational marketplace. Another significant trend or discourse emerging here is that of time wasting in teaching specifically for the test to improve results. There appears to be more exams and more testing, however what is being learnt is less and less. Moreover, the students are learning one basic message – rote learning of particular details that are required to pass the exam. To echo Seldon (2005, p. 12-13) 'our students are becoming very adept at A-level physics … But this is very different from teaching pupils to be … good physicists. We are teaching them less to think than to excel in exams.' It is possible to argue here that education (in the UK) for administrators means high scores, for many teachers it means teaching to a prescribed test and for the students learning the 'right' answers and to hell with anything else. There is little time left over to do anything else.

What has been happening in NZ

Just to finish this section on international perspectives of Western educational systems we now turn briefly to New Zealand where there has been a different philosophy in place until recently. From 1935 until 1985 NZ operated under a Keynesian welfare state model, then with the election of the Lange Labour Government in 1986, NZ moved to a market based model in line with international competition/globalisation. Education did not escape this restructuring process with this reform continuing through the duration of the National Government, in power from 1990 to 1999. The then New Zealand Minister for Education borrowed heavily from the model set out in the UK with the development of an outcomes-based National Curriculum Framework and a National Qualifications Framework covering both academic and vocational subjects (Lee, 2003). There is currently no compulsory national testing however there remain strong advocates for such measures (Williams & Dixon, 2003).

While there has also been considerable debate regarding educational reform and the implementation of a national curriculum, NZ has adopted a single post school

qualification the NCEA, awarded to students who can demonstrate that they have met or exceeded predefined outcome standards in individual subjects with both academic and vocational subjects included. To gain a full NCEA students earn 240 credits over 3 years with each standard is worth 3 or 4 credits. Half of the standards are assessed externally and, for every achievement standard there is explicit performance criteria for each grade of credit, merit and excellence.

Williams and Dixon (2003) argue that with the advent of the Tomorrow's Schools (1989) policy there was greater emphasis placed on accountability at the school level and increased competition between schools but that the current Labour led Government has dismantled a number of policies that had encouraged competition between schools. Despite this many schools are using assessment results to promote their effectiveness; however schools can select the kind of information they wish to report to their external communities and while this doesn't enable direct comparison between schools there can be some subtle inference of 'worth' (Williams & Dixon, 2003).

Globalising Australian education

Australia was not immune to these global changes in educational policy and during the 1980s the then Federal Minister of Education, John Dawkins, reiterated that "schools play a critical and central role in the nature of our society and economy" and "if economic performance is to be improved then 'adjustment of the school curriculum' was needed" (Lee, 2003, p. 76). Here again we see schools being closely aligned to the economy and the desire of governments to have control over what should be taught. However with education being a State rather than Federal responsibility in Australia, a change in national strategy could only be done through State cooperation. Rather than National curriculum, Australian States opted for own curriculum based on shared goals outcomes.

Richard, perhaps this section needs to be expanded a little more by more in-depth local expertise/knowledge, however as the other papers in this session are covering the Australian situation perhaps this can be dealt with lightly with us directing the audience to take note of the other speakers.

In Australia school education is one of the largest financial outlays of all states and territories and, as historically, funding levels have been determined by costs rather than outcomes, expenditure data was deemed sufficient to meet public accountability requirements at both the state and federal levels (Watson, 1996). For Watson (1996) accountability means the continuation of State/Federal antagonism and funding squabbles and about getting a slice of the Federal pie to add to State education budgets. Subsequently this kind of accountability has the potential for competition between the States with 'performing' States perceived as those most cost-efficient rather than effective (Watson, 1996, p. 108). Accountability here means comparing a State's performance in education and possibly then reducing funding to meet the most efficient. But Watson (1996) warns efficiency is not enough to judge school performance and that there is the potential to replicate 'high stakes testing' environments if governments chose to go towards the American model.

Consequences of accountability, outcomes-based education and the desire for curriculum control:

So what does this mean to schools, education, teachers and students? With the continual re-emergence of varieties of outcome-based education directions there has to be some reason for its popularity. Proponents of outcomes-based education state that one of the main advantages of this approach is the flexibility of delivery. Because the emphasis is on outcomes rather than inputs, this approach is not concerned with the process of teaching and learning enabling a variety of modes of learning such as distance and flexible learning, workplace learning, individual and group learning (Lee, 2003). Along with funding formulas, outcomes based education could be a way of re-allocating funding for education with the focus also on outputs rather than inputs.

Lee (2003) highlights two other major advantages of outcomes-based education, firstly, this approach offers transparent goals for the student and teachers and secondly, gives a sense of direction to learning with defined criteria in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding. Student scores can be useful for internal purposes as diagnostic or improvement measures. Rowe (2000) emphasises that the limitations arise when using

educational performance indicators such as assessment results as the vehicle of accountability or as ‘measures’ of student learning outcomes. Looking simply at the student scores in isolation has the potential to skew results, where these can be used as an indirect method of measuring any kind of performance within schools, be it the performance/s of teachers, students or school system.

Lee (2003) groups some of the disadvantages perceived with outcomes-based education around teacher ‘performance’ where teachers say that they are becoming de-skilled and de-professionalised, teacher autonomy is inhibited and performance rather than understanding is emphasised. Clearly here the testing of student learning outcomes can be seen as a tool for indirect testing of teaching effectiveness. There is also the possibility here of some educators/administrators not understanding how to measure curriculum outcomes. Rowe (2000) considers the main disadvantages to outcomes-based teaching is the manner in which test or assessment results are interpreted and then used. Assessment, then, is pivotal but questions arise about what is being tested — is it testing what is says it is testing. In other words, what is at stake here is not, the reliability of the testing, but the validity of the test.

Research has shown that teachers reallocate their time to teach subjects figuring in the state tests, consequently there has been a call for closer alignment between test content and what the test is actually measuring (AERA Research Points, 2003). Recently research has again highlighted the role of the teacher where it has been shown that students can learn more from one teacher than another (AERA Research Points, 2004). This research has shown that a teacher’s impact on student achievement can range form small to huge, but that it is the improvement of performance from year to year that matters, not the overall achievement score on a test (AERA Research Points, 2004). It could be argued here that while the teacher is critical in how the student learns, consistency in ‘good’ teaching over the whole of a student’s schooling matters more rather than a series of individual ‘one-off’ teacher episodes. Thus it is the whole, rather than the sum of the parts, that ultimately impacts on the educational product — the well-rounded productive citizen. This signals a new dimension of testing — that of value adding assessment.

According to the AERA Research Points (2004) a value added assessment system can be a valuable tool for determining whether a school or system is making a difference in student learning beyond family and community impact.

Outcome based education and assessment practices dominate contemporary educational discourses and are closely aligned with performance of the economy, when the state perceives a crisis whether this be in an under performing economy or a lack of skilled labour then intervention into the kinds of knowledge, understanding and skills deemed as relevant in the curriculum is advocated. Recently reported on the ABC AM program Stephen Long stated:

> Allan Greenspan said 'that America is facing a shortage of skilled workers' laying the blame on schools. 'We do not seem to be pushing through our schools, our student body, at a sufficiently quick rate to create a supply of skilled workers' and he said that 'not enough graduates were up to scratch. It's not the children, because at fourth grade they're above world average. Whatever it is we do between the fourth grade and the 12th grade is obviously not as good as our competitors abroad do' (Cave, 2005).

From these comments it can be argued that Alan Greenspan is linking the performance of the US economy with the ability and 'workplace' readiness of the school students. He clearly sees the effectiveness of teachers and schools has having the major effect on student outcomes and the ability of students to be workplace ready and he states that the children have the ability, however implicit here is the notion of ineffective teachers and a failing school system which are to blame for the shortages of skilled labour. Therefore it is the failing school system that needs to be held accountable for the 'less that spectacular' economic performance of the US. There have not been statements as explicit as this connecting school performance and the economy in Australia, however, there are numerous debates emerging regarding the vocational educational sector and job growth, skill shortages and, more recently, shortages within specific professions such as surgeons and general practitioners. These discourses are associated more with immigration policies and social policies.

In the knowledge economy learning outcomes are required to be monitored in order to maximise economic and social efficiency (Lee, 2004). This harks back to arguments put forth at the turn of the 20th century in the original efficiency movement. For some educators there has been resistance to outcomes based education because it is not about improving student teaching and learning but rather control of the curriculum and what should be in it. For others, accountability means access and equity for those students currently deemed as minority groups or belonging to low socio-economic groups. This is about broadening the concept of accountability to include the moral, social and ethical dimensions of accountability. While much US research establishes that good teaching matters, none of this tells us what better teaching looks like (AERA Research Points, 2004). Effective schooling has two common threads; the first is a rigorous curriculum and the second is a strong social support system. What this means for educators is that teaching and learning is not an isolated activity done within a sterile classroom between the teacher and the student. Teaching and learning, and the subsequent accountability, for good outcomes lies in the interrelationships between teachers, parents, students, the curriculum and community values.

Conclusion

In Australia accountability with education sees a continuation of the State/Federal divide and public/private over funding. In educational discourses it could be argued that accountability has become synonymous with two things; outcomes based learning where teacher performance/school performance can be gauged and managerial accountability. In return for funding, governments are increasing their surveillance of practices, through monitoring leading to increased control over what is taught. It can be argued here that while there is continued funding from Federal coffers, there will be continued control over curriculum content.

With education this has been accompanied by a focus on outcomes based learning where it becomes very easy to hold teachers accountable for the educational performance of their students. This mechanism, in turn, can hold schools accountable to both parents as

consumers of school services for their children and to governments for the way in which government funding is spent. Outcomes have been blamed for exacerbating existing social and cultural inequities by ranking students and teachers.

As recently as April 2005 the differing views of accountability in education have been hotly debated. At the American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual conference main arguments have been centred on student diversity and the persistent achievement gap between students who are poor and from racial, ethnic and linguistic minority groups and their peers. According to Marilyn Cochran-Smith, President of AERA 2005,

> … Most educational researchers and practitioners agree on the need for accountability, substantial disagreement exists about what students and teachers ought to be accountable for and how best to achieve results. Some believe that testing, the cornerstone of the current accountability movement is essential to ensure that all students are educated to high standards. Furthermore there are many who believe that a free market approach to education will pressure educators to raise students' test scores. Others however think that a singular focus on testing for purposes of accountability is inappropriate and that more attention is needed to the social and political dimensions of accountability and to equity issues at a societal level (American Educational Research Association, 2005).

As Seldon (2005) highlighted, teaching to pass the physics exam does not teach the student to become a good physicist, therefore it is the reliability, validity and ethically sound approach to teaching and learning that will generate our future leaders and workers, as well as raise the performance of the Australian economy, not the raising or construction of isolated test scores. This can also be seen from the comments of Alan Greenspan quoted earlier. One thing is for sure however and that is, accountability is here to stay, but in what form will continue to be debated.

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