

SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM: TENSIONS, DILEMMAS, SOLUTIONS

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**Invited presentation at Annual Conference of
Queensland Studies Authority, 29 April 2010**



Why not the best? schools!

Expectations have been raised in Australia and comparable countries for an 'education revolution' that will secure success for all students in all settings. Such a revolution must ensure the alignment of educational outcomes, the skills required for a strong economy, and the needs of a harmonious society. *Why Not the Best Schools?* offers a ten-point, ten-year strategy that will ensure that, when all is said and done, people will look back and say a revolution has occurred and all schools can be fairly described as 'best schools'.

This book draws on a five-year study culminating in *The International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools* conducted in Australia, China, England, Finland, the United States and Wales. The findings are consistent with the McKinsey & Company report on the world's best performing school systems and those arising from OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). It goes beyond system characteristics to provide an in-depth account of how transformation occurs in schools. Fifty indicators are provided to help shape strategies for policymakers and practitioners in schools and school systems. Guidelines for leadership and governance ensure a future-focus for those who are determined to ensure that all students will succeed in the 21st century.

Brian J. Caldwell is managing director of Educational Transformations and professorial fellow at the University of Melbourne where he served as dean of education from 1998 to 2004. He has undertaken more than 450 professional assignments of one kind or another in or for 39 countries. His previous book for ACER Press was *Re-imagining Educational Leadership* (2006).

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ISBN 978-0-86431-955-5



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Australian Council for Educational Research

Why not the best schools?

Caldwell and Harris

What we have
learned from
outstanding
schools around
the world

Why not the best? schools!

Brian J. Caldwell and Jessica Harris

Eight-year research and development project 2004-2011

- 2004 to 2007: 73 seminars and workshops with about 4000 school and school system leaders from 11 countries
- 2007 to 2008: The International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools
- Conducted by research teams in Australia, China, England, Finland, United States, Wales
- Funded by Australian Government and Welsh Assembly Government
- Studies of five secondary schools in each country, with many in highly disadvantaged settings, as well as a primary and school network component in Australia
- Reported in *Why not the Best Schools?* and six separate country reports
- Extended in 2010 with an international study of school leadership in Australia, China, Korea and Malaysia



National Curriculum and the Education Revolution

1. National curriculum is long overdue
2. There are significant benefits of a national curriculum
3. National curriculum need not constrain schools in personalising learning
4. Aim of the 'educational revolution' should be transformation: significant, systematic and sustained change that secures success for all students in all settings
5. On progress to date, the education revolution must be assigned a failing grade: 46 out of 100 in the latest Educational Transformations score card (SCOPE) with a high of 8/10 for national curriculum and low of 2/10 for school autonomy



Shifting the Balance

6. There is a need to shift the balance from centralisation toward decentralisation within central frameworks of direction and support
7. There must be 'connectivity' among strategies for successful transformation, e.g. curriculum, pedagogy, facilities
8. The playing field is not level among the sectors in respect to facilities, and relative autonomy is a factor
9. A constraint on all sectors arises from high stakes testing (NAPLAN) and transparency (My School): Recent evidence from Professor Robin Alexander and Sir Ken Robinson
10. More testing: The example of Finland



Need for a new 'default setting'

11. Human resources and the comparative advantage of private schools: The concept of the 'default setting'
12. A pre-condition of #11 relates to teacher education: Finland, Korea and Singapore as exemplars
13. Progress in changing the setting is too slow in Australia: The evidence is in on the 'right' balance of autonomy, accountability and choice. The US Senate testimony of Andreas Schleicher (OECD)
14. The pitfalls of modelling England and the US
15. Federations and chains of schools in England

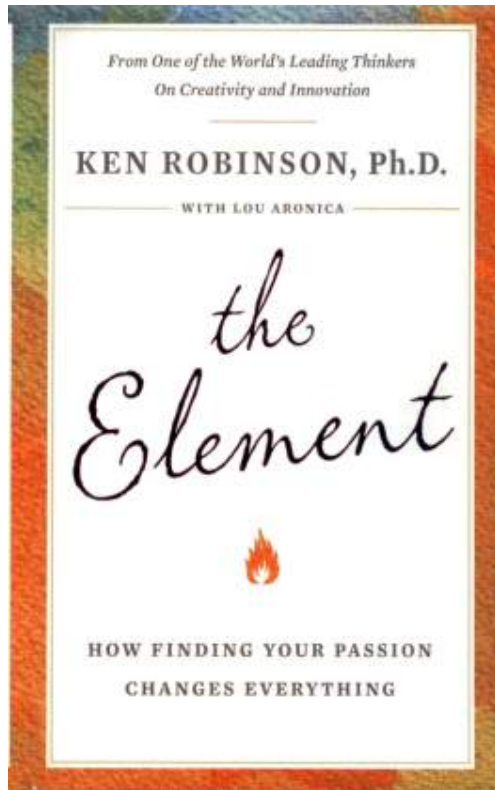


Innovation, creativity and passion

16. Shifting the balance of system as regulator to system as enabler
17. We rank poorly on indicators of innovation and creativity. The countries above us have a national curriculum, more school autonomy and no high stakes testing
18. There is unassailable evidence on the best strategies for literacy and numeracy: let's settle this in the early years and move on
19. Where is the passion? Sir Ken Robinson in *The Element*
20. The resourcing of schools. What if?



Ken Robinson The Element (2009)



Two features

- Aptitude
- Passion

Two conditions:

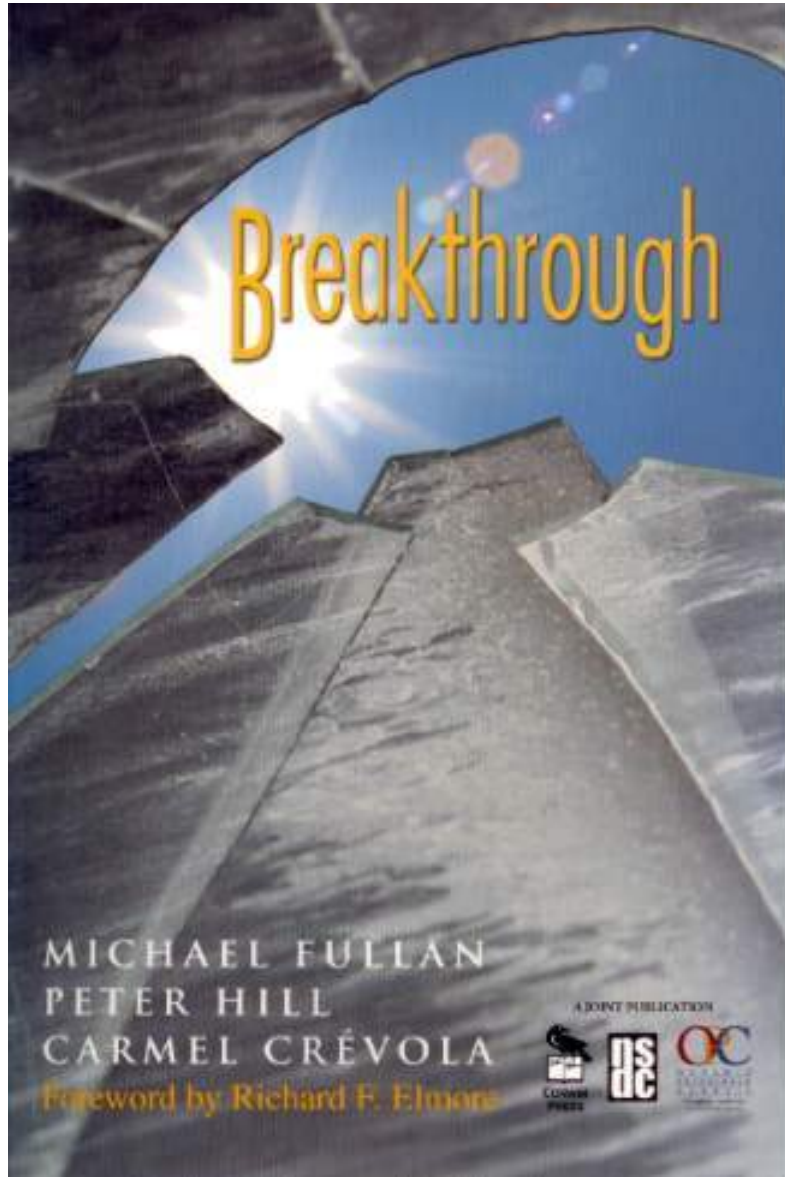
- Attitude
- Opportunity

Video and more like it at
[TED.com](https://www.ted.com)

Technology, Education, Design



Personalisation, Precision and Professional Learning



Precision

Of particular interest is the concept of 'precision' as it applies to the gathering and utilisation of data. There is an unprecedented level of data washing around schools and school systems but the breakthrough will be achieved only when 'classroom instruction in which the current sporadic data collection is streamlined, analysis is automated, and individualised instruction is delivered on a daily basis in every classroom' (Fullan, Hill & Crevola, p. 20).



Personalising learning indicators

1. The circumstances, needs, interests and aspirations of every student are known to each of the student's teachers
2. There is an assessment system in place that provides a picture at any moment in time of each student's progress against targets and expectations
3. There is a system in place that ensures that each student who falls behind against targets and expectations is given immediate support to catch up
4. There is a written learning plan for each student that can be made available to all on a right-to-know basis including the student and parents
5. Each student knows and understands in an age appropriate way his or her learning plan



Personalising learning indicators

6. Each student has at least one person who has knowledge of the student's educational and personal needs, learning plans and progress, and can provide or access and then deliver support immediately it is required
7. Each student knows that he or she is supported and cared for by the school
8. Each students knows how to access support and care whenever he or she requires
9. The parent knows about the learning plan and progress of his or her child and is kept informed of necessary care and support whenever they are required and provided
10. Each student knows, understands and practices the values and behaviours that are expected of all students in the school and more broadly in society

