

**Effective Performance Management:
the next challenge for our schools**

- Ben Jensen

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Transcript

A new era of transparency will force considerable change in our schools. The My School website will soon include financial information for each school and more accurate measures of school performance.

These changes will provide numerous strategic challenges and opportunities for school administrators, school boards and policy makers. The research shows that improving teacher effectiveness is the most successful way to confront these challenges. However, recent evidence highlights that both government and non-government schools are generally not effective in shaping their organisations to maximise teacher effectiveness and engage in successful teacher evaluation and development.

Dr Ben Jensen, Director of the school education program at the Grattan Institute, addressed these issues and presented strategies for how schools can best confront these strategic challenges.

Speaker: Ben Jensen, Program Director – School Education Grattan Institute

Moderator: John Daley, CEO, Grattan Institute

AUDIO: This is a podcast from Grattan Institute, www.grattan.edu.au.

STEVE: Ladies and gentlemen, if we could make a start. My name's Steve Clifford. I'm a partner in Allens Arthur Robinson and delighted to welcome you tonight. We at the firm are very proud of our association, we like working from time to time with the Grattan Institute and I think tonight will be a great example of the sort of thinking and thought provoking ideas that we've come to know. As you're probably aware, Grattan Institute's an independent and non-aligned think tank focused on Australian domestic public policy and some of the current projects which it's working on include productivity growth, cities, energy, water and tonight's topic, school education.

If I could just pause and I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners, custodians of the land, the Elders past and present of the land where this meeting's taking place.

As you would have seen from the papers in relation to tonight's discussion there's a new area of transparency that's been forced on schools and it's going to be a very interesting dynamic to see how school boards, administrators and policymakers cope with the new challenges. The My School website is going to require all sorts of finance information and other measures of school performance to be publicly available and it's a brave new world. I'm particularly interested in this for two reasons: one, because as a professional services firm, we are very reliant on the people that we employ being at the top of their game, being good thinkers, being ... having been well educated. And I was talking to Ben before and he made an interesting comment that some of the research shows that people who've been through primary, secondary and even tertiary don't always have the sorts of skills that you might like, and I know some of my older partners say well they can read and write but can they think? So let's see if the new ... if this ... if brave new world actually does help the education system.

Tonight, we're joined by CEO of Grattan Institute, John Daley. And John will be more involved in the latter half of the presentation after Ben's given his presentation. But John graduated from the University of Oxford in 1999, DPhil in public law after completing an LLB Honours and a BSc from the University of Melbourne in 1990. Young for his age, I mean you look young for your age. Twenty years experience spanning policy, academic, government and corporate roles at the University of Melbourne, McKinsey, ANZ, he's covered just about every area of the workforce. And currently John's research and publishing interests include government privatisation, the objectives of government and the situation in which government intervention is justified which is very relevant tonight.

But our first speaker is Ben Jensen. Ben joined the Grattan Institute last year from the OECD where he'd spent five years working in the international policy arena on these very issues, issues critical to Australian education policy. And in that role at the OECD he took the lead in the production of two significant reports and we'll get the benefit of that work tonight. The first

report was entitled *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments*, and the second was *Measuring Improvements in Learning Outcomes: Best Practices to Assess the Added Value of Schools*. And prior to joining the OECD, Ben was a senior analyst at the Department of Premier and Cabinet and has had a number of other roles too. He holds a PhD in economics. So for those of us, I say the first reason I was interested in hearing about tonight was because we employ very bright people and we like to see the education system working. But the other area, just quietly while I'll be sitting at the back very interested, is I've got two kids who are at uni and one who's still in the high school ... the secondary school system and I think it's a real challenge as parents to see what's happening too. So much as I love my work, I'm very interested as a parent. So over to Ben to start off. Could you welcome Ben Jensen, please.

(Applause)

BEN: Thank you very much for the invitation. Thank you very much for these wonderful premises to have this discussion tonight and thank you very much all of you for coming. We'll run tonight mainly as a Q&A session but I thought it would be good to get a bit of a ... a few slides out of the way first so I'm always trying to keep PowerPoint to a minimum. But I think it's important given the topic of discussion that we run through some, I guess some detail of what the next version of My School is going to look like, My School 2.0 or My School version 2. There have been quite a few changes to My School and I'll quickly go through those, perhaps not as many changes as many of us would like to see, but there has been quite a few including a new front page focusing on, or providing some more information generally about schools, school staffing issues, staff per student ratios, some school finance information which is on the front page and I will go into further detail later on because there's an entire page devoted to school finance information which we will talk in detail about tonight. Some greater information about the IXIA index which describes students' socioeconomic background. There have been some good changes to the IXIA index. There was a lot of criticism when it first came out and how it described the socioeconomic background of students. There have been some good changes in that. It actually provides some student level data this time around, some student level data that identifies parents' education and occupation background and that is a significant step forward. It presents a different picture for school to us all, and much more accurate picture. However the data needs to be improved and I definitely hope state governments can lift their game there, I should say minus the government, or the state we're currently in because they're already well ahead of the ball game there. There's also some information about students and there's also some information about general secondary school outcomes there. So there's some, I guess, the front cover, the glossy changes we've seen to My School. This page you'll be more familiar with for those of you who, I think if you're one of the ... I think the latest figures were that 73 million Australians last year visited My School, but if you're one of those you'll be familiar with this page. This is very, very similar to what we had last year which described ... was a presentation about school performance. The main change which you may be able to see there is below the actual measure of school performance, if you look in blue there for the different NAPLAN assessments, we have reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy. In blue there is the average score of the school. The change this year is that they put a confidence band around that which is not the minima and maxima, it really is a confidence band around that to reflect some of the statistical work they've done. And that is then compared to the scores in like school groups which is based on the IXIA index, so based on taking schools with a similar socioeconomic background and I'll talk a little bit more about that in a second, and also compared to all school groups. So it's very, very similar to what was presented last year in this respect. For those of you that have been following Grattan's work, the work we've done over the past year, we were quite critical of this methodology and it's ... the way school performance was presented on the My School website. Unfortunately, not a lot of that has changed. But one thing that has changed which we clearly recommended was a greater focus on student progress. Unfortunately, we haven't seen a move to value added methodologies but we have seen a shift to student progress. And so what you unfortunately can't see that well there, but there you have a ... it looks like a box and whisker diagram, but it basically presents the average score of students for a given test in Year 7, their score in Year 9 and the progress made, a line drawn in between them. Now, what you also see is the comparison with like school groups there. The blue school, the blue diagram ... boxes there, that's the school you're interested in, that's the school you're looking at on the My School website. The grey boxes there, that's the like school groups. So the comparison is there that we're focusing on student progress on this page, and

you'll see the progress made there with the red line, the progress, that's where students are in Year 7, they progress to the next blue box over on the right in Year 9. They're compared to like school groups which I've highlighted with a green arrow. Now the difference between this, you will hear this described as sort of value add and methodology, it's basically a value add and modelling I've seen some people in the government refer to it as it's pretty much value added but not quite. That's completely wrong, it's not value added, it's student progress, they are very, very different things. Value added does something very different than what's presented here. Value added doesn't compare schools to like school groups. It doesn't use socioeconomic background to say well student performance is here, let's compare it to student performance with ... or schools with similar characteristics. What it does is say here's a school performance or a student performance, let's say they got, in this case they got around about 540 with a test. Let's compare the progress they make with other students who got 540 in the same ... in the initial test, because the best predictor of student progress or the best predictor of performance in Year 9 is what you ... what your score was in Year 7. Your best predictor of future performance is current performance. This provides a much more accurate measure of school performance 'cause you're controlling better for socioeconomic background characteristics. So what I see from this with this focus measure, if you take what they're saying there is the progress made by the school in blue, which they've called a ... actually it's a secondary school in suburban Sydney, they've taken the progress there and compared to what they say is like school groups. What you will notice immediately from that and anyone who's familiar with value added is, that what they're calling like school groups contains students who perform significantly above students in this school. That's the main difference. Value added doesn't do that. It doesn't compare schools with schools who perform higher, because you must remember, for a secondary school, that initial test is in Year 7 in May. So they've been at the school for about three or four months. It's very hard to say that that school has contributed significantly to their performance in those three or four months. What we're really interested in is what the school contributes to their performance over the two years between Year 7 and Year 9. So My School is saying that the school with students who on average scored 540 is statistically similar to the school whose students performed about 560. Value added doesn't do that. Value added says schools where the average student scored 540 are statistically similar to schools that also scored an average 540 and then you take into account socioeconomic background characteristics. So this school is presented as not progressing as well as the other school, it's progressing as ... sorry, not performing as well as the other school on the initial page we saw. And yet you'll see that actually they progress rather similar to what have been identified here as their statistically similar groups. The difference is that they actually started off lower. So they've been penalised for having students that actually performed lower when they entered the school rather than their progress once they're there. Rather than looking at what the school contributed to their learning, this school has actually been penalised in terms of how their performance is perceived for having students who performed less well when they entered the school. This is the big difference between a value added methodology and a methodology that focuses on let's look at raw scores and then try and control for background characteristics. Enough about value added because I'll talk for too long on that.

Here's the more interesting information in terms of what's going to get the press coverage in December, early December when this is released. This is the new financial information that is going to be available for every school. The important change that is going to take place is that this information will be available together with improved measures of student performance. I don't think ... sorry, I shouldn't say student, of school performance. I don't think they're great measures of school performance, they're clearly incomplete. We are still just talking about scores and literacy and numeracy, but My School is throwing these two things front and centre into education. Here's the financial information and here's the measure of school performance. And in my view this is going to have substantial implications for Australian school education that have really yet to be discussed, because the main discussion about this page, the financial information still focuses on how much a government school's getting and how much a non-government school's getting. And in my opinion that is a debate. These are of much less importance than how do we improve schools overall.

Now if you focus, it's very difficult I see, but I'll just run you through what it says there. What we have is recurrent income and we also have capital expenditure. And what it does is divide the recurrent income between federal government contributions, state government contributions,

fees, charges and other I guess parent contribution and other category to give a total in terms of recurrent. It's a similar story in terms of capital, Australian government contributions, state and territory government contributions, some ... basically some school loans and then some other categories. Now this will be important in terms of the government vs non-government school debate because it is a debate which has suffered from if not misinformation, then at least poor interpretation of how the funding system works, namely non-government schools are largely funded by the federal government, the Australian government and government schools are largely funded by the states and territories. Therefore, you create misperceptions about growth in expenditure for government and non-government schools. So this debate will provide some clarity and some greater transparency there and I think that's important. But the greatest implication will be in the longer term. And for some schools that will happen much quicker than that, but the greatest implication will be, we now have this information front and centre available to everyone, and added to that, new measures of performance that have been given greater emphasis than ever before and this is going to kick off a whole new wave of cost benefit analysis, a whole new wave of analysing decision makings within school education. For better or for worse, but it's definitely here and the implications I think are many for schools and for school systems. So this will present a new ball game for people in December. I think the game is going to change for many schools very, very quickly, particularly for those in the non-government sector, it will change almost straight away. For government schools I think it will ... the change will be a bit more gradual, but for policy makers not that much. And I think this is because a lot about school quality is not tangible, is not transparent, is not easy to look at. And My School doesn't make it transparent or easy to look at, but it does throw up here's some measures of performance and here's some measures of cost. It doesn't say here's what ... here is the quality of this school here is what makes this school good or bad, that's for others to interpret, for others to look into the school. But it's very clear that when we look at school effectiveness it's very hard to communicate in succinct items. Therefore when school systems, policy makers or individual schools have started to emphasise some of the good qualities, or they identify some of the areas of effectiveness in their schools, they've highlighted such things as class size, school buildings, extra curricular facilities, curriculum education philosophy and discipline and school environment. Now they emphasise a lot of other things as well. I could probably add another one, the range of subjects they offer. But there is some clear ones that are consistently given when a school says here's what we are about when a school is trying to market itself in the market place, when policy makers are trying to say we've invested in schools, this is what we're doing. And as you can tell, I've divided those into the top three and the bottom two. The bottom two is probably where research says there's a greater effect on student performance than the first three. Although, I will say in the first three that depends a little bit on the specific program in place.

So, on December 3 when this information comes out, I think ... here are some questions that some schools are going to get straight away and some school systems are going to get straight away. Why is my school's performance below those with lower fees? What does that mean straight away for a school? What does it mean for policy makers? What does it mean for administrators and bureaucrats when someone says in another state they spend much less per student but their performance is higher than in this state? Their performance in the other state is higher than my school. What does that mean? In my view, that changes the conversation we have in Australian school education. We very rarely talk about cost and benefits in such a manner. We very rarely talk about school effectiveness or the effectiveness of programs in such a manner. A lot of people who run schools do because they're faced with the cost and benefits all the time, but it's not as much a part of the public debate. What does this mean? This means we're going to have to focus much more on the factors that influence student performance, the factors that influence progress by students, and student learning over time. That means teachers. The effectiveness of teachers in schools, the effectiveness of teachers in school education systems. It's the largest predictor of student performance and the top teacher in Australia can get through around twice in terms of the student learning that their students receive than the least effective teacher. For the ... if you want to go to a lower band, highly effective teachers get through a full year's curriculum in about three-quarters of a year compared to a less effective teacher. They have the greatest impact on student learning, the effectiveness in teachers. We have said that at the Grattan Institute time and again, we believe the best investment we can make not just in school education but throughout the economy is to invest in teachers. And importantly, I think it's essential that we realise that Australia has a poor

performance in terms of performance management of teachers. The indicators there are not good. For most school it's ineffective, for about 10 percent of schools it's good and for two, three, five percent of schools it's excellent. And in those schools that are doing an excellent job of teacher performance management, they're way ahead of any policy makers or most researchers are.

So just to finish and we'll get onto some Q&A. If you think about when you visit a school, and you're thinking about sending your ... you're normally taken on a tour of the school when you're considering as parents to send your child to the school, when you consider what is emphasised by policy makers, when you consider what's emphasised by bureaucrats and administrators about what is good about our school education system, I think these are some of the slogans or the statements that you hear. We have the smallest classes of any school in the region, we just built new science and maths buildings, we've extensive sporting facilities and a new oval open just last week which your student's going to enjoy when they join us next year. And students in our school in the top 10 VCE performances in the state, HSC in other states.

In the future, when we've started to have - in the future sounds terrible - in the longer term when this impact has come through and we've had to have a greater emphasis upon what presents the greatest bang for our buck, what presents the most effective resource allocations, the most effective investments we can make in school education, it would be great if we can see this and I think we're going to. Schools saying we have the highest paid teachers in the country. We all ... I don't think there's anyone who says teachers are underpaid. Sorry, yes. There's anyone who doesn't believe that teachers are underpaid. This is the sort of start that I think can start to change that. We already have competition where non-government schools are pulling the best teachers from the government school sector and as that increases, as that pay differential increases, government schools will have to respond as well.

I think it's also great when ... if we start to see more schools, or school systems saying we've changed the structure of our school so that our best teachers teach more of our students. We have the most effective evaluation and development programs for our teachers to ensure the quality of our teaching is improving all the time. These are the sorts of things that I think will be talked about more and more often as people become more and increasingly aware about how we improve school education and the need to improve school education without increasing costs to a great degree.

In terms of the bottom one, as we move to a focus on student progress, as we move to a focus on value added, it would be great if we did focus more on a school ... students in a given school progressing more. But I think it's fair to say that parents are actually interested in both. Parents are interested in what percentage, oh these are the top performers, and what percentage do progress over time. So I'm going to leave it there and move to the Q&A because me talking's not as good.

JOHN: Great. Ben, thank you very much for that very rapid run through some fantastic material. I guess you probably picked a couple of questions and let me ask one or two of them. You identify teachers as being the most important resource in schools.

BEN: Yeah.

JOHN: You say teacher effectiveness is the most important thing to do. What do we do to make it any better?

BEN: Easy. There are five main mechanisms to improve teacher effectiveness. One, improve the people who enter the profession. Improve initial education and training, improve evaluation and development once they're in schools, recognise and reward them once they're there and address underperformance once they're there. Now if you look at the ... people always think of the first one or the first two, improving initial education specifically, as just being about government intervention, about just being about government programs. But I think if we see a greater liberalisation of the labour market for teachers, if we see greater bidding up of teacher wages, a greater focus on the effectiveness of teachers, I think that will be a great spur for teacher education to improve as well. I know that governments both in Australia and overseas

are going to start to fundamentally address issues in teacher initial education because it's seen as perhaps an area of great reform, of potential benefit, and there's no doubt that that's the case, there's no doubt that the quality varies substantially across Australia and we will see changes in that. In terms of improving the quality of people who enter the profession, already in some systems we're starting to see tests of teachers. I think that's going to increase. I wouldn't be surprised if we see changes such as simply, let's raise the benchmark. If you want to get into a teacher education course, you have to have such and such a mark to get in. If you look at the other three mechanisms, they're really involved in improving evaluation and development within schools, really involved in improving performance management and they're the areas which I see for schools, and programs, as having some of the greatest benefit.

JOHN: Which I guess then begs the question of alright, well how do you foresee us evaluating teachers? What are the measures we should be using? How should we be going about doing it?

BEN: I should just say I'm one of the biggest fans of value added in the country. I'm one of those statistical people that talks about value added at dinner parties and everyone walks away. But I know the data very well and value added is a pretty poor measure of teacher effectiveness. It's not consistent over years. The consistency is not there. It's not reliable enough to be a measure of teacher performance.

JOHN: A measure or the only measure?

BEN: The only measure. It can be a measure along with other measures of student tests, but we have to remember that if we're just looking at standardised tests, that means we're only looking at teachers of literacy and numeracy which make up about 18% of the teacher population. I think there's a real potential for a lot of change and improvements in terms of how teacher effectiveness is measured and how it's managed. And that involves a focus on a lot of classroom observation, a lot of peer evaluation. It's interesting when you look at the literature, we all know in schools that professional collaboration by teachers within schools has ... is strongly linked to student learning. We all know it's important and the data shows that when it ... in Australia, most teachers collaborate only on a very artificial level. And so I think if we can get much greater peer evaluation, working in teams, that will actually add to professional collaboration and have a magnified impact on student learning. With that, I think you get also changes to the structure of schools which in the long-term I think will be beneficial.

JOHN: Ben, you've suggested that there's some kind of strategic challenges for, I guess, all schools.

BEN: Yeah.

JOHN: I guess there's some fairly obvious messages here for school boards as to what they should be focused on. To what extent are we seeing governments, who still run the largest school systems in the country, to what extent are we seeing governments change the way that they run the schooling system to start addressing some of these issues?

BEN: Yeah. I think in Victoria we're doing quite a good job. There's quite good work in the performance and development culture in Victoria. I think in other states it's less developed, much less so. And I think also we perhaps overstate the gains made in Victoria when you look at the data about what teachers say about what's happening. But I think the issue is when we ... you look at the federal government, they're focusing a lot on pay for performance, and if you look at where we are, we have poor teacher evaluation and development, little job differentiation, very little feedback which is so important for teachers improving over time. And you know, obviously perfor ... career structure not linked to performance. If you look at where we want to be which is basically the inverse of that, I think the first step along that road is actually changing the feedback and evaluation structure within schools. And I don't know that jumping to a pay for performance scheme, that is often centrally focused, is the best way to do that. I'd like to see us, if we're going to jump to a pay for performance scheme, that we do it by encouraging greater feedback within schools, greater and more meaningful evaluation.

JOHN: Alright, thank you. Ben, that's probably enough warm up questions in the nets.

BEN: Okay.

JOHN: It's time ... out in the middle.

BEN: Wonderful.

JOHN: Who would like to ask the first question? Thank you, Sir.

BEN: Let's do that.

JOHN: And there's a ... sorry, there's a mic for you, if you just introduce yourself very briefly and then fire away.

AUDIENCE: Andy [unclear 27:33] from [unclear]. One of your assertions was that there's a widening disparity between rates of pay for teachers in the public sector and in non-government education. As you might imagine, we do have different work [unclear 27:49] pay trends, non-government schools. There haven't been substantial differences in the last 15 years. Only about 5% of teachers in the non-government sector get more than the state rate, as you're probably aware possibly because all Catholic schools in Australia are pegged pretty much in the top grade.

BEN: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: There has been some expansion, however, on the number of schools [unclear 28:12] withstand the government grade, it's now a little bit more than 10% of non-government sector [unclear 28:17] Christian schools. On what do you base your assertion that there's a widening disparity?

BEN: Sorry, I ... I didn't think I said there's a widening disparity, I think we're starting to see some of the more effective teachers being recruited into independent schools and in the future I think we will see a widening pay disparity start to increase as you see greater competition for these teachers. And I think that would actually be a beneficial thing as we start to reward more effective teachers in a way that is commensurate with their value.

JOHN: Thank you. A question, oh yes, if you can go there and then we'll be up the back, the gentleman in the grey.

AUDIENCE: Please. I was just wanting to ask [unclear 29:01] responsible [unclear 29:03] evaluation framework? [Unclear 29:05] develop the framework as a ... at the state level, or do you think that's [unclear 29:12]?

BEN: Okay. We should start off by saying there's clearly a performance framework at each state and there's about to be one nationally. I think you need a framework. The question is how prescriptive it is and how valuable it is. And I think what we have to remember is what the data says about teacher evaluation and development is that it's largely a bureaucratic exercise, it doesn't impact positively on the way teachers teach in the classroom. This is what teachers tell us. And it doesn't really relate to them, it doesn't properly identify effectiveness, it doesn't recognise that quality and doesn't improve teaching over time. So I think the response to that unfortunately from some is to create a more centralised structure and more prescriptive structure, and I think that's heading down completely the wrong path. I think perhaps not only is it not the best method, I actually think it possibly is detrimental because it will increase the bureaucratic nature of teacher evaluation. And what I would say is you do need a framework but when it actually comes to teacher evaluation, we need to put that evaluation at the background and have some meaningful evaluation about what teachers do. What I think would be ... is a more meaningful method is if you start to get some of these evaluative methods operating within schools. When I speak to school principals and teachers, they tell me some of the best feedback they get in terms of their evaluation, the feedback on their performance that helps their development is actually feedback from students. Student surveys, I feel this in my class, the progress I'm making in my class is either challenging, not fast enough, my teacher is

approachable, my teacher is knowledgeable, these sorts of things. Teachers are constantly asking for this information. School principals say it's incredibly valuable for development of teachers, for addressing ... identifying strengths and weaknesses in teachers, and that it is strongly, also strongly correlated with value added or progress made by students. So these sorts of measures that can ... are best implemented through the school level. I have heard discussions of student questionnaires being put on the My School website and I think that would be a terrible thing to do because I think it's really important that it's used at the ... within schools. But I think the ... we're heading down a very dangerous route when we have national institutions saying here is how you evaluate to all teachers, and that is linked into our preoccupation of somewhat in Australia of better and improved teacher standards.

JOHN: Yeah. Presumably there's an analogy, Ben. I mean would we think about a government setting central standards for the evaluation of waiters or God forbid in current company, lawyers?

BEN: Let's hope not.

JOHN: Gentleman up the back in the grey coat.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, thank you. David Zyngier, Monash University Education Faculty. Can I just suggest before I ask my question, a change to a new paradigm, point two. I think it would be better to read, our school is structured so that the best teachers teach the most difficult to teach students. Otherwise you're going to be left with our best teachers being taken off the teaching the easiest to teach teachers ...

BEN: And therefore the most ...

AUDIENCE: ... in the most easiest to teach schools. And that's ... that's not what we want. But my question is to your point, and I'm sure you don't believe what you said. You said that teachers have the greatest impact on students' learning. Because all the research that you will be aware of, that we are aware of from Grayden and ...

BEN: I can see the question coming. You can just say from just about everyone. Yeah.

AUDIENCE: From just about everyone, including people from the Australian ... from ACER, Ken Rowe, may he rest in peace, and our guru, John Haddy who's just joining us here in Melbourne ...

BEN: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: ... tells us that socioeconomics background is the most significant factor that determines or predicts student achievement, not that determines it but predicts it, that post codes are a really important factor, in other words where children live, and that that the teacher, and John Haddy has found this in his measure analysis here of 800 studies, teachers contribute no more, but significantly 25% towards student outcomes. I think it's a very dangerous slippery slope for you to go down and say that teachers are the most significant when they are a significant factor.

BEN: In your first point, I'm more than happy, I agree with what you're saying and I will perhaps restructure ... re-word the slide. Although, I think there's other ways we can structure schools in terms of students with the least performing or that need the most help. I misspoke what I meant to say in terms of what happens within the school, in terms of school programs, teachers are the most effective. Clearly student background has ... is the greatest predictor of student performance, I ...

JOHN: But is the point, Ben, I mean how much control have we got over student background?

BEN: Yeah. When we're talking from a policy lever, we're talking from what schools can do, schools really can't do much about the socioeconomic background of students entering. Policy makers, at least in education, can't do much about the socioeconomic background of students

in their school, so from a policy perspective, I should, yes, I should definitely have framed what I said from within schools.

JOHN: Why don't we go to the gentleman next door and then we'll ... we don't have to move the microphone so far. Thank you.

AUDIENCE: Peter Cole. I was just picking up on your point about schools can't affect who ... the socioeconomic background of the students. I think you're right to a limited ... to a large degree but also that something that schools don't monitor. And what tends to happen in a number of schools is over time, as their numbers drop, they get desperate about getting students in and so run wide courses and what they then become is a honey pot for those other schools that are throwing kids out. And all of a sudden they're in a no-win situation. And if ... I think if schools are much more alert to monitoring their student profiles, and hang on, we're starting to now dip into a profile of changing things, what would attract a different clientele to our school, 'cause many of those schools we're talking about have whole lots of local families bypassing them to go to a school of choice elsewhere, you know that [unclear 35:37] schools as ... is because I think the schools don't become proactive about what is likely to attract our locals. That's in my own Melbourne Park [unclear 35:46] and the school actually closed because it just didn't ... didn't know how to relate to its community, had no idea how to do it.

BEN: Yeah. I think an extension of that is probably as I think through, non-government schools can be very good at influencing the SES of who attends. What I would say on these, I think, as I said, one of the improvements we've seen in My School this year is the inclusion of student socioeconomic background data. And I think one of the most important aspects of that not only continuing but significantly expanding so we get that A, across all students, but B, better socioeconomic data, not just your education, occupation levels but issues about individual characteristics that affect student learning, shall we say. I think that's not only important for getting a more accurate picture on My School. Obviously that would be the case and that's an important factor, but I think it's also much more valuable when schools start to analyse this data across their school at an individual student level. You'll see this in other countries where schools can pull apart their data, look at the scores, the students that aren't progressing as much as they perhaps would like or aren't progressing well, and they actually then, when you can drill down into that data and say actually let's look at the socioeconomic background of these students, they can often identify a group of students with particular learning needs related to their background, particularly if they were talking about either recent arrivals to a country or particular language background or perhaps a different migrant group that clearly hasn't assimilated properly into the school and addressed programs that way. So I definitely agree, schools don't look at it enough, but I think part of the problem is they actually don't have the data. In Victoria, they have the data but in some other states they don't. And I would definitely say that an improvement to My School not only has to be that, but creating a facility that facilitates that sort of analysis, and it will be an IT program that facilitates that sort of analysis at the school level, I think that would be a significant improvement in My School that we just haven't seen. And unfortunately it isn't being talked about enough.

JOHN: Thank you.

AUDIENCE: [Unclear 37:46] Department of Education. Just to follow on what Peter was saying, I actually followed up the closure of that school as a Masters thesis, and that school didn't go down in two seconds. It went down over a period of over a decade. So when do governments intervene to ensure that schools remain effective?

BEN: There's several factors there in terms of when governments need to intervene. What I have always said about NAPLAN and My School, first of all NAPLAN is, I consider NAPLAN assessment to be valuable and a good step forward. I consider My School to be a good step forward. But I don't think they're nearly as valuable as they should be unless they trigger interventions or policy or trigger some sort of actions. I think we could learn ... there's a lot of potential for us to address problems with students that fall behind in literacy and numeracy. There's a lot of very good programs that are used in some parts of Australia that could be expanded and a lot of good programs used overseas. So when students start to fall behind in literacy and numeracy, there's an intervention that immediately occurs. And I think you could

see something similar with schools that when they start to be identified as poorly performing, you start to see improvement programs put in place. So, and all the research says we do that sooner rather than later and that's a better thing to do. Now I'm not talking about if they get one bad year score on My School, I'm not talking about one bad year score on NAPLAN. I'm talking about having proper measures in place. For example, a step is to say well My School is a quantitative indicator, and it's only that. So, therefore, if you get the top ... the bottom 10%, then let's make sure some sort of further analysis is done, these are quantitative but qualitative as well, to say okay, what's happening within that school and is there a ... is there improvement that needs to take place, is there a problem that needs to be addressed, and then move forward that way. So I actually think intervention that happens sooner rather than later is a positive step.

JOHN: Thank you.

AUDIENCE: [Unclear 39:48]. One of the challenges we've got at first point in particular, promotion, what is promotion, what does the teacher see as promotion? Because traditionally promotion means you go into a position of leadership which means your best teachers are coming out of the classroom and performing administrative roles and that's the challenge. How do we deal with that? That's one of the things ... there's that question [unclear 40:09] that's one of our focus, that's our focus at the moment, how do we keep our most effective teachers in the classroom rather than this perception that in order to progress their career they need to go into a team leader role and curriculum leader role ...

BEN: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: ... something like that, snatch them out of the classroom.

BEN: Yeah. I think ... it's quite a ... it's a complex question and it's a really difficult question, and it's why I have the second point, because clearly, you know, teacher wants to get ahead, they get out of the classroom which is the wrong incentive. Well sorry, potentially the wrong incentive and in general probably is. I think it means we have to think about the structure of our schools, we have to think about the career structure for teachers and we have to think about job differentiation in a whole different light. I mean in general a teacher on the last ... the most effective teacher and the least effective teacher have pretty similar jobs. Both of them ... I mean, both of them are in classes of pretty similar numbers and in fact the newest teachers are often in ... are normally in classes with students that are considered more difficult to teach. There are differences in terms of they have extra duties but most of what I am told and most of what the data says is that they're really just add-ons. There are not fundamental differences in their job descriptions. So what, I mean, I would like to see is that actually you do have teachers who are either responsible for learning of a lot larger number of students, or as you say, different types of students, and they're responsible for the teaching of those students. So instead of just being responsible for the 75 students there, they're responsible for a much larger number, they're responsible for the quality of teaching of other teachers. So it's a little bit ... it's associated to what we talk about as a lead teacher now, but it's actually putting that into practice that is a meaningful practice, 'cause at the moment I think it's more of a career stage and there's some additional responsibilities added on. It's not really your whole job changes with this structure, your whole notion of what your classroom is fundamentally changes and your whole notion of what your responsibility is fundamentally changes. When we start to see that sort of change with career progression, I think we'll be much better at this. But that is a fundamental change in how schools operate. That's a much more collaborative environment for teaching, it breaks down a lot of the barriers that exist within schools which is going to be difficult. It requires, I think, increasing number of not hierarchical but different uses of ... with different resources, teachers aides, specialists for lower performing students, specialists for special learning needs, that sort of ... those sorts of issues. So, I mean I put it under the broad banner of job differentiation, of getting more effective teachers saying you now have a completely different job. And that's ... report coming up.

AUDIENCE: Hi, my name's Jo. I'm very interested in the performance management aspects of teachers in a position where once they have an ongoing position, they feel very secure and [unclear 43:12] incentive to ... to help themselves or [unclear 43:16] they can sit and perform at the same level for the rest of their lives without any risk of any kind of comeback or ... or

consequence for their actions. With this having that kind of culture within our schools, also not having necessarily the time to devote to [unclear 43:33] time, being time poor, anything like that, but how can we be more effective with the time we have in schools seems trying to create that culture where teachers can see themselves having opportunity to impress. Whereas not just a few extra, like you say, a few extra responsibilities added on to their workload of planning for a classroom. I mean what kind of things can you say that you ... you would advise us to do as managers in the school to try and enhance that performance management?

BEN: In many respects it's up to every ... I think this whole issue is about time management but I think what you're really talking about is how do we get effective performance management to which ... to create this sort of improved learning, to create the improved classrooms. And I think ... I think it's about first of all it's improved evaluation. Teachers really want feedback, they always say they want feedback on their job and they say they never get it. Teachers want evaluation, and I realise there are people who don't, but overall all the data says that teachers really want this feedback. And when you speak to teachers, they are dying for it, particularly younger teachers. And it's clear in Victoria there's a large number of mentoring and induction programs in place. Australia does that more frequently than any other country. And I will say Australia does teacher evaluation more frequently than most other countries as well. But it's just we do it, we get it out the way, let's move on and go back to our jobs now, it has no impact. So how do we change that? And I think what we have to do is say okay, what do we consider to be the methods for teaching, the approach in our school that has the greatest impact on student learning. What's the ... what's the teaching that we want to see in our school? And I would ... and when you think about that, and that will be different things for different schools and I think that's good. I think the worst thing we can do is to say let's all teach this way. But it will be different things in different schools. So once you have that and say how do we encourage that, so ... for that ... some that will be professional collaboration, for some it will be this is the way we like to teach in schools, this is the assessment methods we like to use, this is the ... I mean if we want to get into the Vergotsky and that sort of thing, how we relate teaching and learning and assessment etc. Now, therefore, how do we assess that? And I think what you will see is that the more methods you use to assess that, the better, the more feedback teachers can receive, the better. And I would really focus on some of the methods that aren't used as much when ... well actually I'll start with the test scores which ... look, I think it's worthwhile when you're trying to explain to teachers to say we know it's not about test scores but how can we look at test scores to learn about how your students are ... sorry, how your students are progressing in terms of what their next stage of development. And I spoke to school principals who, in a very poor ... low SES, sorry, school in Sydney, one of the lowest in the country, is also one of the highest performing schools in the country. And she basically sits down with a NAPLAN assessment which, let's face it, had their faults, and go through item by item with the teachers about okay, where's the next stage of development for this student. And what she says is, or what he or she says, don't want to name the school principal, is that you see patterns emerging. A particular teacher, students will be really excelling in this area of literacy and numeracy but not so much in others. She does that with school based assessments as well. Then you get into the peer evaluation and school principals are telling me that with peer based evaluation it's a really effective method to bring on ... bring along those teachers who are very reluctant to engage in effective performance management. As managers of schools, I'm sure you'll hear a lot more than me from particularly more experienced teachers that they're not really interested in a new system of performance evaluation. And what several school principals have told me is that they found peer evaluation and a lot more team work and greater collaboration in teaching, that that's an effective method to get that sort of accountability in because while those teachers don't like to hear it from you as a manager of the school, they will actually listen to another teacher. So that's just one but obviously many methods.

JOHN: Ben, can I ask a question?

BEN: Yeah.

JOHN: We've been talking so far, you know, about things at a system level. Obviously one of the points of the My School website, indeed the entire reason it was set up at least, one of the major reasons was to help parents make choices. Now, I know you have a small daughter, and let's imagine that you were back in Paris and you had to choose a school for her to go to. And

the only thing that you could possibly look at was the My School website. And, you know, you don't have to ... you're not allowed to, apart from anything else, construct an enormous league table, but you can pick out the three or four schools in the very desirable area that you've already bought a house. How ... what would you be looking for to choose one school rather than another?

BEN: Well I can tell you that the French My School website wouldn't actually have any data on it.

JOHN: No, no, no. You're looking ... you're in France and looking at this, you're coming back here.

BEN: Okay.

JOHN: I hope.

BEN: Yeah, yes. I'd be looking at the progress measures.

JOHN: Yeah, and what would you ...

BEN: I'd be looking at the philosophy of the school. But for me, this is ... this is only just something to get the conversation starting. This is only an initial look. This is only must be a quantitative ... it's only a quantitative indicator.

JOHN: Yeah.

BEN: Look, as a parent you, unfortunately, are going to be interested in the peer group that victimises schools from low SES, but most parents do that. And it's a natural thing to do. Not all parents do it by any stretch, but there's that. One of the reasons I think you hear a lot of parents saying about we want to go to non-government schools is because there's a fear about the quality of education and I'm not ... and they're unsure how to measure quality in school education. So this is not a measure of quality, but this gets the conversation going. So I think in that respect I think My School's a really good step forward.

JOHN: Okay, thank you.

AUDIENCE: Thank you, Ben, pursuing the discussion. My name's Jenny Shaw, I'm at Melbourne University. I did my PhD on the good teacher, and the dispersive discourse analysis perspective. Two comments firstly. It appears that both in the US and UK the high test stakes measurement benchmarking, publishing of results is generally being considered as a failure [unclear 49:50] and [unclear] we haven't and Alexander in the UK are all ... already warning Australia not to go down this path. Having said that, could I put to you the proposition that the very finest teachers in Australian schools will talk about relational aspects of their teaching. They will say that to get brilliant results from kids you have to establish a rapport, a trust, an intensely positive relationship. My question I suppose is can you envisage in the way the government's going with My School that there's any ability to put what good teachers know about relational aspects of teaching as some sort of a frame for the results that are coming through, it seems to me there's a very glaring gap in the way they're addressing at the moment where that rapport is not being documented in any way, neither is the research coming through.

BEN: You mean put it on My School?

AUDIENCE: I think at some point we're going to have to move towards not just reporting the facts but reporting the relationships.

BEN: The school climate indexes have been talked about all the time, about being added to the My School website. And I think the initial inclination to say well that's a good thing, it's good to get a broader measure on there. I don't disagree with what you're saying about the relationship. I think ... I don't know that that's all about effective teaching but it's clearly an important aspect of it. You can't, you know, it's very hard to teach effectively when you have

poor relations with students. And I think that's why you so ... I so often hear from school principals and teachers that feedback from the students is one of the most valuable aspects of their evaluation. Given that, and given that I think the feedback from students about that relationship, the feedback from other teachers about that relationship is I think one of the most powerful ways to improve a teacher and to improve a school overall, I'm concerned about putting it on My School. I'm concerned about what that does because it's opinion data, very easily corrupted, and what it does to put that on My School. That's the only concern I have with it and we have to think really carefully about just putting more and more information on My School that is perhaps better used within schools to improve them. So that's my only reticence with what you're talking about. I think we will get a school climate index, whether or not that's parental information or student information, or as ... sorry, feedback from parents or students, I don't know. I'd like to think it's actually parents because, A, even though I don't consider that to be as reliable, it then removes the student-teacher relationship from what's put on My School. But it's ... it's a concern I have if we start to get into that sort of information on My School. I agree with you it paints a much better picture about what a school does, but I would really like to see that information used for school improvement and teacher improvement rather than necessarily put in My School.

JOHN: Thank you. I think this will need to be the last question I'm afraid, given the time's marching on, but thank you, Sir.

AUDIENCE: Thank you. Mike Askew, Monash University, and recently here from Kings College in London. And I was kind of waving as you were saying about what's happening in England. And halfway around the globe Australia looked very attractive [unclear 53:22] for everyone. I wanted to comment on ... and there's a question about the dangers of headline statements I'm hearing, and the ... the class size data, I think the data has been linked to show that class size beyond the age of about eight or nine doesn't make much difference, but I think there's a danger in saying that there's a kind of blanket thing there. But also that if you look at high attaining ... countries that are high attaining on PISA [unclear 53:51] independent and some of the Pacific rim countries that actually one of the ... one of the ... maintenance that they have high class sizes is to raise initial teacher salaries, and salaries on entry which in turn raises the demand to get in. Finland has a rejection rate of one in 15 to go into teacher training. And so we'll find factors, the thing ... and then they don't get much in the way of pay differential, there's a very flat differential in some of these high attaining countries. So I think of your five factors, the one that maybe makes the biggest difference is the quality of people coming into teaching in the first place. And that some of these levers have to be adjusted in very particular ways to ... to raise that entry bar.

BEN: Yeah. It's a really interesting question 'cause we've raised ... Australia has raised initial teacher salaries considerably; over I think between '95 and 2006 we raised teacher salaries by about 30%, initial teacher salaries that is, initial teacher salaries. And that obviously didn't lead to increased performance, but these things have to have a flow on effect. The problem we had though is that, and you're right, we're not talking about other countries having very steep career structures or wage structures, you're right. Most of them are flat. Australia hits it relatively early. It's about seven or eight years on the wage structure that it hits it early. And we're actually seeing a lot of people leave the profession at that stage. So I think it's ... I don't think the answer is necessarily just looking at initial starting salaries. I think we actually had to look at the career structure the whole way through. And we had to link that to whole evaluation development argument. So I'm generally agreeing with you, I just think we ... therefore when we're talking about wages and linking it back, we have to do more substantial changes than what we're talking ... that just starting salaries. I'd also say that I agree with you about getting the initial improving the people coming in. If you look at the latest, I think it's the McKinsey study, I think they focus on Finland, South Korea and Singapore, from memory.

JOHN: Yeah.

BEN: That focus is on well you know, is it the top third, middle third or bottom third of people coming in. We clearly are not in that ball game. But I think we have to make substantial changes throughout to get there. I think the comparison with Finland is a little bit unfair and also with Korea, a little bit unfair in just when you talk about they also have very compressed wage

structures throughout the economy, so we have to ... we have to be careful in making those comparisons as well. But I mean, when you compare ... you just have to look at the people entering teacher education in Finland compared to people entering teacher education in Australia and that's not a knock of teachers, we just ... you look at the data there then clearly you know, that's an issue.

JOHN: Okay.

AUDIENCE: And I just wanted to comment also on what Blane said over there about relationships, which is to get into teacher training in Finland you have to spend a day in school and you're judged on your relationships as much as your qualifications, [unclear 56:48] or think they're about ... I'm not sure how you can learn to relate better, [unclear 56:54].

JOHN: Thank you. Alright. Thank you.

BEN: Thanks very much.

JOHN: Ladies and gentlemen, can I thank you all very much this evening for coming. It's been a fascinating conversation. Can I thank Dr Ben Jensen for a fascinating address.

(Applause)

JOHN: And congratulate you on the work that you're continuing to do and hope that you'll keep reading it on the Grattan website. And finally to thank our hosts, Allens Arthur Robinson for this magnificent venue and the chance to discuss one of the more important issues of our time. Thank you all very much.

(Applause)

AUDIO: This has been a podcast from Grattan Institute. Want to hear more? Check out our website, www.grattan.edu.au.

End of recording