



Review

Left Numb and Unengaged. (Re)Conceptualising Risk: What (Seems to) Work for at-Risk Students

David Zyngier

Faculty of Education, Monash University, Wellington Rd, Clayton, VIC 3800, Australia;
david.zyngier@monash.edu; Tel.: +613-9904-4230

Academic Editors: Richard Harris and Carol Fuller

Received: 14 July 2016; Accepted: 21 February 2017; Published: 16 March 2017

Abstract: This review of current research into ‘at-risk’ programs serves to categorise and characterise existing programs and to evaluate the contribution of these programs to assisting students ‘at-risk’ from marginalised backgrounds. This characterisation questions the (sometimes) implicit assumptions and the consequences of those assumptions inherent in and behind these various accounts. Using as a lens the (various and varied) understandings of social justice and the goals of education, three sometimes overlapping and sometimes contesting standpoints are identified in relation to ‘at-risk’ students; they are characterised as instrumentalist or rational technical, social constructivist or individualist, and critical transformative or empowering. I argue that a critical transformative understanding of ‘at-risk’ may deliver improved outcomes for young people by challenging ‘the school context in which the young people are located’.

Keywords: student risk; social justice; critical pedagogy

1. Introduction

“Schooling should be socially just so that...all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent” [1].

“If a business is losing clients it doesn’t blame the clients, it looks at itself and makes the changes that need to be made [School Principal]” ([2], p. 74).

The literature on ‘at-risk’¹ students is large to the extent of being overwhelming. However, there are a number of research works cited repeatedly across the literature, in particular longitudinal research from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. From works that originate in Australia, a number were commissioned by the Australian Department of Education and Youth Affairs and written by various academic researchers. Research conducted for the Australian Department of Education, Training, and Youth Affairs (DETYA) has suggested that the usual term, ‘best practice’, be replaced with ‘good practice’ [4] because of the inexactness of the studies and measures involved in assessing the benefits and outcomes of various programs. I adopt this same cautionary approach here using the latter term, ‘good practice’, throughout.

The relationship between individual socioeconomic disadvantage and academic outcomes is well established. Current data confirm that underprivileged and disenfranchised students have lower rates

¹ I acknowledge that the term ‘at-risk’ is a deficit laden term, Swadener [3] uses the positive term “at promise” rather than negative ‘at risk’. I prefer the term disenfranchised to disadvantaged or at-risk as it recognises the reality of these communities at promise—the working-class, inter-generationally poor, Indigenous and refugee communities—without any deficit implications.

of school completion and university uptake than those of higher socioeconomic status [5]. There is also substantial evidence that both the quality and the socioeconomic profile of a school matters with respect to academic outcomes [6–10]

School retention among Australian young people has increased over the past three decades but a growing body of research evidence reveals that Australia's school-based education systems alone are not meeting the needs of significant numbers of young people [11]. This analysis of the research literature attempts a synthesis and reformulation based on the epistemological standpoints, both explicit and implied, of the various researchers in relation to their (various and varied) understandings of social justice and the goals of education [12,13]. I identify three sometimes overlapping and sometimes contesting standpoints in the research literature in relation to 'at-risk' students, which I refer to as instrumentalist or rational technical, social constructivist or individualist, and critical transformative or empowering. Taking a recognitive social justice position [12], I explain why programs 'which simply seek to achieve change in the individual young people are doomed to failure' ([14], p. 4) and why a critical transformative understanding of 'at-risk' may deliver improved outcomes for young people by challenging 'the school context in which the young people are located' ([14], p. 4). The paper uses these three lenses in turn to review and evaluate the efficacy of the 'at-risk' programs research and argues that only programs that address students 'at-risk' from a transformative epistemological standpoint actually deliver the desired long-term improved outcomes for young people.

To identify relevant literature, we conducted an extensive search of education-focussed electronic databases. Such databases included Proquest, Expanded Academic ASAP, Informit, A+ Education, ERIC, PsychINFO, The British Education Index, and SpringerLink. Other databases perhaps less uniquely focused on education issues, such as JSTOR and Web of Knowledge, were also included in our electronic searches. We used Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>) to help compare search results across the academic databases. We also searched the websites of relevant organisations whose work encompasses the topic area. These included the OECD, Departments of Education (states and federal), and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum.

While this paper has Australia as its focus, the findings are relevant across all contexts and countries.

2. One Problem, Many Interpretations

In Australia in 2014, it is estimated that approximately one in five young people of high school age was out of school, although accurate data is difficult to obtain². Meanwhile, nationally, there are over 900 flexible learning programs, educating over 70,000 students each year [11]. The Dusseldorp Skills Forum reports that in the years 2004 to 2005, at least 15 percent of 15–24 year olds (an estimated 560,000) in Australia were not in full-time learning or work; 30 percent of Australia's school leavers were unemployed, in part-time work, or not in the labour force six months after leaving school; and 43 percent of early school leavers and 23 percent of school completers experienced a troubled transition from school in 2004 and 2005 [15]. In addition, in 2006, 27.6 percent (399,000) of males aged 15–24 were out of work but not looking for work [16]. Long states that early leaving from school (Year 10 or below) is a considerable risk; in 2004–2005, 45 percent of Year 10 leavers were 'at-risk' of unemployment in the labour market six months after leaving school. OECD figures estimate that somewhere between

² Australia currently has a gap in national data about non-attendance for under-16s. In 2014, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) introduced the key components of the National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting (National Standards), on which government and non-government providers of attendance data are requested to draw when providing data for national reporting purposes. ACARA states that this will enable consistent and comparable reporting of attendance rates for students in Years 1 to 10 (including ungraded students where applicable) for government, Catholic, and independent schools in Australia. The student attendance data collection will complement the data collected through the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC). All school jurisdictions report against these for 2014, except NSW, who start in 2015. The national apparent retention rate for students from Year 7/8 to Year 12 was 79.9% in 2012 and 81.6% in 2013. About one-fifth of young people still do not complete Year 12 in an un-interrupted linear fashion from the start of high school.

15–20 percent of young people leave school without worthwhile qualifications and that 15–30 percent are classed as ‘at-risk’ of failure in school. A total of 30–50 percent are ‘at-risk’ according to these figures [8]. It is notable that, according to the Bureau of Statistics in 2014, 8.5 percent (249,000) of men were still ‘at-risk’, out of work but no longer actively seeking work [16].

Previous OECD longitudinal research [8,17–19] concludes that there is no single factor associated with education success or failure. It seems that being ‘at-risk’ of failure at school is the product of the interaction of many variables; some are student based (various forms of special educational need and adolescent developmental problems), others may relate to factors in the student’s home and community environment (low income, ethnic minority or migrant background), and still others are school based (inappropriate teaching methods, inadequate resources, poor curriculum). The OECD research reviewed here has variously attempted to provide overarching explanations of educational failure by stressing the causal effect of psychological, socio-cultural, or institutional variables (or a combination of these). As is concluded below, it is not uncommon for contrasting and complimentary perspectives to be located together.

te Riele has described ‘a bewildering array of projects’, a ‘multitude of programs [that] has led to confusion and inefficiency’ ([20], p. 54) while Mortimore and Mortimore [21] identified three separate categories or different approaches to improve students’ outcomes in ‘at-risk’ programs. The three approaches include special endeavours for the benefit of individuals within already effective schools that concentrate on building on existing good practice, the focussed intervention by projects and programs in schools that are failing, and system wide reform. They note that there are frequent and obvious overlaps between them but make the point that it is not just a question about ‘what works’ but equally important ‘what works for whom and under which circumstances’ ([21], p. 110), Gale similarly suggests that:

At times the differences between these categories appear minimal and the differences within them great, yet . . . the categories offer plausible and useful accounts that warrant their separations ([22], p. 253).

These three approaches impact on the development of different implementation and policy strategies [17] and will be characterised below on the basis of their social justice perspective(s) and understanding of the purpose of education, for whose benefit the education system functions, and what is privileged as a result [12]. While Connell termed these three standpoints compensatory, oppositional, or counter-hegemonic ([23], pp. 51–52), I have previously called them instrumentalist or rational technical, social constructivist or individualist, and critical transformative or empowering [24]. Connell proposes that the imperative of social justice is ‘to generalize the point of view of the *disadvantaged* rather than separate it off’ ([23], p. 52; original emphasis). Like Gale [22], I favour a ‘recognitive approach to social justice, concerned as it is with rethinking social arrangements thought to be just, giving status to things thought to be counterproductive and decentering concerns thought to be pivotal’ ([22], p. 253). These three perspectives are now examined below as a way of categorising the research on ‘at-risk’ students.

3. Compensatory, Deficit or Instrumentalist View

A compensatory or instrumentalist approach to the issues of risk are characterised by a retributive view of social justice [12,22], seeing the goals of education as largely vocational in order to prepare students for (sometimes, but not always) meaningful and productive work. Workplace skills and competencies are privileged in a curriculum that is overlaid with programs of school reform often determined or driven by national testing regimes. The beneficiaries of this approach are the broader economy and employers of labour in particular. Connell [23] suggests that the logic underpinning this perspective is that it aims to ‘bring the disadvantaged to the same table at which the advantaged are already eating’ ([23], p. 51).

Research into youth resilience suggests that certain youth are more or are less resilient or socially competent. Fuller [25] speaks about young people in terms of their individual vulnerability, which characterises the lives of many children ‘at-risk’ and focuses on their psycho-social and environmental circumstances in terms of their deficits. Children who do not have a healthy or competent temperament, or who are born into families that cannot provide rich relationships, are seen to lack ‘natural resilience’. In this view, these deficits almost inevitably and inexorably lead children to succumb to risk. That is, risk is seen as pathological. Fuller describes ‘at-risk’ in terms of inadequate or inappropriate psychological development and behaviours attributed to individuals and their families, seeing it in terms of a ‘war’, using the metaphors and clichés of battle, with schools as the first line of defense, and the ‘early identification’ pathology of deficit behaviour. This essentialist and positivist typology has been clearly rejected as self-fulfilling labelling [26] of risk factors to include individual, family, school, and social circumstances. Rosenthal ventures only one conclusion of a prescriptive nature from his research, that:

superb teachers can teach the unteachable; we know that. So, what I think this research shows is that there’s a moral obligation for a teacher: if the teacher knows that certain students can’t learn, that teacher should get out of that classroom ([27], p. 4).

A deficit view also shifts the blame for student failure at school onto ineffective parenting and the inability of youth to control their impulses, to delay gratification, or cope with stress. Emphasising psycho-social issues, deficit research proposes programs and measures that focus on individual behavioural modification and other psychological strategies that attempt to remove community and environmental risk factors, correcting students’ and family behaviour so that all or most ‘at-risk’ youth can become more resilient; that is, bouncing or springing back from these risky situations [28]. Instrumentalist perspectives focus on the individual, whether it is the young person or the family unit, and suggest that ‘while not all young people face the same degree of risk, all young people are vulnerable to some extent’ ([28], p. 26). Fuller [24] stresses that peer connectedness, fitting into school, and feeling attached to significant adults promotes such student well-being. Stewart [14] comments on this model as ‘fail[ing] to recognise the significance of gender, race, sexuality or ethnicity on young people’s experience of these risk factors’ ([14], p. 1). This approach identifies ‘problem behaviours’ as the core of the ‘at-risk’ issue and therefore suggests intervention strategies to either prevent or ameliorate these problems because ‘[e]ach young person [has] a unique set of needs and capacities, and [is] exposed to a unique combination of risk factors, requires individualised instruction and if ‘at-risk’, individualised pathway planning’ ([29], p. 8). These deficit explanations give rise to programs and pedagogies that provide for separate provision, streaming, withdrawal, and a plethora of remedial education programs [30,31]. Because of this and other research for example the Victorian Suicide Prevention Taskforce [32] and the Victorian State Government increased spending for school counsellors by \$8m a year and initiated the School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) program. The Victorian Suicide Prevention Task Force identifies family connectedness, school and peer connectedness, and community and neighbourhood connectedness as crucial factors inhibiting risk and encouraging resiliency [28].

While the ‘Full Service School’ research reflects a deficit approach, some valuable outcomes for good practice have developed, such as the need for effective leadership, the need for a core of committed teachers, an interventionist welfare approach, dynamic full-time counsellors, strong community links, and clear ‘at-risk’ identification practices. Budge [33] describes these developments as dealing with student social and self-esteem issues, the counselling of students, and basic literacy and numeracy. Only in a minority of programs is appropriate teaching and curriculum highlighted, and in most cases this is in a context of basic skills and remediation. That is, the focus was still on changing the student ([33], p. 29).

In short, much past research (for example Batten and Russell [34]) defines ‘at-risk’ as a pathology ([3], p. 2) related to a lack of connectedness between the individual student and the family, community, school, and peers. Batten and Russell ([34], p. 2) in their meta-review of the Australian

literature of 'at-risk', are sympathetic to this deficit view and suggest that it is 'virtually synonymous with disadvantage (absence of beneficial factors such as adequate family income) or maltreatment (presence of active negative factors such as physical abuse within the family)' ([34], p. 2). They propose that students who underachieve and fail at school can be characterised by their lower socio economic status families resulting from a deficit of cultural and economic capital.

This view of resilience as the antidote to student deficiencies has had a significant impact on the development of programs in schools with large numbers of students identified as 'at-risk'. The programs can be characterised as seeking to enhance student attachment to school through a behavioural or psychological process enhancing student well-being so that students feel wanted and loved, fitting in and belonging to school [31]. Dependence on 'protective' factors is also acknowledged by Fullarton [35] as fundamental in relation to student engagement. Fullarton's conclusion that student engagement is located in and owned by the individual student and that connectedness and well-being according to this view is measured and promoted by student participation in extra curricular activities at school has been critiqued and rejected [28,36].

Challenging this position, particularly in highly disadvantaged contexts, alternative program provision has been criticised for targeting a cohort of students without changing the culture of the school, focusing on superficial problems rather than addressing root causes, and for implementing educational reform without the social and economic reforms needed to change the circumstances of such communities [37,38]. Wright, McGlaughlin and Weekes' [39], discussion of the effects of race, class, and gender on school exclusions in the United Kingdom and Aylward's work with the Inuit in Canada [40,41] acknowledges the effects of school cultures on retention rates. While schools are forced to compete against each other, these 'challenging' few students are viewed as a danger to the educational chances of the mainstream well-behaved majority. Marginalised students are stereotyped as deviant and, like the pathology view of 'at-risk', are seen as capable of 'contaminating' the school culture. This can cause parents to think twice before sending their children to the local state school, creating a school culture that emphasises discipline and correct behaviour and programs designed to 'reinforce structures that have broken down' ([39], p. 35), rather than question the structures themselves. These deficit views ignore the issues of socio-economic disadvantage coupled with cultural diversity, gender, and geographical location [42].

4. Oppositional or Social Constructivist Individualist View

The oppositional or social constructivist view regarding student success and failure is an individualist approach to dealing with student risk. It often includes the streaming of 'at-risk' students either into separate school systems (technical colleges or vocational schools for the students 'good with their hands'), 'separate but equal' courses for students 'at-risk' within an academic school (the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) introduced in 2003 is an example of this), selective specialist schools in New South Wales, and elite private schools. It is widely described in the literature as the move for more effective schooling reflecting a (re)distributive view of social justice [12,22,43]. Education goals are largely academic for the personal edification and individual enrichment of students, achieved by individual advancement and competitive assessment through hierarchical subject disciplines that especially privilege and benefit society's elites. Connell describes the logic of this approach as 'you don't try to bring the poor to the same table as the rich because the table itself is not level, and the poor can't get a fair feed at it' ([23], pp. 51–52). While this often produces more dignified and interesting classrooms [28], it does not necessarily raise substantive (and critical) student inquiry that questions the acceptance of official knowledge [44] for students other than the middle class). Connell concludes that 'at its best, this could produce an educational ethos which build[s] on working-class experience and ideas about learning' ([23], p. 51).

Rice and Lamb [45] have shown that the most favourable outcomes are achieved when specific interventions, such as alternative programs, are provided within the context of a supportive school culture and by school-based strategies designed to ensure the best possible classroom practice at the

mainstream level. This sentiment is echoed by other researchers [46,47], who conclude that the factors that are most predictive of educational success for students placed as ‘at-risk’ include effective school leadership, coherent classroom management across all curricular areas and year levels, and the regular and coordinated monitoring of student progress. Less integrated models of alternative provision are less likely to substantially build the capacity of the school and its community to meet disenfranchised young people’s needs, let alone to inform or support systemic change.

The Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) commissioned research [2,3] argued for a ‘more holistic approach’ ([3], p. 23), under which schools and education require significant structural reform, at the same time as providing support services and programs for students ‘at-risk’. It argues for ‘high quality education’; disregarding class and socio economic status as issues, there is a conviction by the Report’s authors that, with sufficient effort from teachers and students themselves, the deficits can be turned around. This approach also points to several factors that seem to mitigate risk, especially resilience and connectedness. Resilience is described as those protective factors both internal and external to the individual that seek to ‘reduce the impact of risks, or changes the way a person responds to these risks, thus shielding them from negative outcomes’ ([2], p. 21).

In response to the perceived needs of young people ‘at-risk’, programs have either been portrayed as preventive or ameliorative (remedial) as part of an early intervention strategy [3]. Schools then come to be regarded both as part of the problem but also a component of the solution. Budge [33] describes the most common approaches by schools as creating or offering remedial rather than preventative programs for students ‘at-risk’, while the problem of risk itself is rarely addressed [8,17–19,33,48].

The fixation on improving outcomes for students in the so-called ‘problematic’ middle years of schooling in all Australian States and Territories is a direct result of the social constructivist position adopted in the early middle years’ research [42,49–51] investigated the perceived efficacy of these middle years’ programs across Australia in improving the quality of teaching, learning, and student outcomes in literacy and numeracy and especially for student members of ‘at-risk’ groups. These groups included students from lower socioeconomic communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI or Indigenous) communities, students with a Language Background other than English (LBOTE), rural and remote students, and students struggling with the transition from middle/upper primary to the junior secondary years. Luke et al. concluded that where schools were focusing on:

dedicated whole-school middle years’ programs that emphasized pastoral care and the well-being of students, there was no corresponding indicative data reported that demonstrated improved social outcomes for such students. Where interventions were characterised by withdrawal and ‘pull out’ programs—encouraged in traditional high school structures and where there was a strong ‘test score driven’ state mandate in primary schools—student outcomes gain as reported by school leaders proved more difficult to sustain unless such interventions were linked and articulated back into mainstream classroom pedagogy and curriculum reform efforts in the school ([42], p. 9).

The current questioning of unequal outcomes for ‘boys’ in Australian schools is a similar phenomenon of this individualist approach [52–55]. In this discourse, questions are seldom asked about which boys are at risk, assuming that all boys are equally seriously being disadvantaged in schools. Luke et al. ([42], p. 10) stress that interventionist school-based programs must go beyond a focus on current:

philosophical orientations towards adolescent psychological development patterns and pathologies ... to directly address how new economic conditions, social contexts and diverse patterns of youth identities, cultures and learning styles are intersecting with issues of growing cultural and linguistic diversity in communities.

These ‘dilemmas of students’ intervention’, which schools face in their attempts to intervene in and prevent early school leaving, and schools’ reactions to ‘at-risk’ students are not easily resolved [56].

Angwin et al. [56] suggest that some schools are more inclined to have students elect, drift, or be driven out either by design or by the school's actions or inaction, sometimes even in 'unofficial forms of exclusion by which schools persuade both parents and students themselves to collude in their own exclusion' ([57], p. 7). Mortimore and Mortimer [21] highlight the effect of disproportionate enrolments of 'at-risk' students in certain schools, where the concentration of students 'at-risk' can create a culture of disadvantage within the community, further compounding an already difficult situation for schools. Although changes in curriculum and pedagogy will be beneficial for these students, the common practice of disproportionately large enrolments of such students in particular schools runs the risk of these schools being labelled as 'at-risk' specialists. Even research into 'at-risk' students at such schools can cause a flight of mainstream students to 'more balanced school populations' ([21], p. 131). Publication of comparative academic results and/or national and state assessment benchmarks, league tables, parental choice programs, and voucher systems being promoted by various ministers of education may only accentuate any flight of cultural capital ([21], p. 121). This is where children of relatively advantaged parents are able to be educated exclusively with children from similar backgrounds in schools that are able to attract those parents (most able to support the school) and those students most likely to succeed academically [58]. The impact of this 'exodus' on schools then becomes a concern. Wells and Serna argue that this problem will remain:

As long as elite parents press the schools to perpetuate their status through the intergenerational transmission of privilege that is based more on cultural capital than 'merit', educators will be forced to choose between equity-based reforms and the flight of elite parents from the public school system ([59], p. 734).

This also creates in disadvantaged schools a 'climate less likely to be sympathetic to children not only not producing no positive contribution to these indicators, but who may also prevent others from doing so' ([57], p. 8). This is 'directly related to the introduction of a market system of education' ([57], p. 8), in which the reduced tolerance of 'at-risk' pupils creates a scenario in which 'we have to have losers in order to sustain the winners' ([60], p. 61). Instead of 'promoting equality of opportunities through education, inequality is a necessary driving force within a competitive system' ([60], p. 6). Alleviation of the actual disadvantage in these cases may be more useful than localised school interventions.

Typical of a social constructivist approach is the call for more effective schools to try to raise the standard of as many schools as possible so that choice becomes less of an imperative for families. However, as 'more and more people desire access to fewer and fewer schools', the issue of limited social and cultural capital is further accentuated [61]. Dividing the students more equitably between schools or even bussing students from more affluent to less advantaged schools has been suggested ([21], p. 129). Defending social constructivist intervention, Mortimore and Mortimore argue that it is 'impossible to make a fair judgement of what [a school is doing] without taking into account the nature of its student intake ... It is foolish to pretend that the social background of the students makes no difference' ([21], p. 131). According to the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) ([27], pp. 26–27), educational programs for students 'at-risk' should include a focus on real-life issues of immediate relevance to students through 'education by stealth or in disguise' ([62], p. 32) through an integrated approach across many subject areas that link young people to key people in their community. Luke et al. ([42], p. 10) reject this and conclude that 'schools are required to move beyond the current professional emphases on curricular integration, student care and behaviour'.

There is a view, expressed strongly within the wider literature, that any alternative education service provision should be designed to meet the specific needs and reflect the specific context of the school and its local community [63].

Student engagement is often cited as crucial to counter student risk. It is rarely defined, usually as an opposite of alienation or disengagement [37]. Apte suggests that engagement is:

some reference to the idea of *joining* with another person, the process of forming a relationship, of getting to know each other in a way which is meaningful to what you might need to do together (emphasis in original) ([62], p. 42).

Reflecting both deficit instrumentalist and oppositional social constructivist discourses, Brown and Holdsworth [64] suggest that programs to engage youth need to include a mix of student focus and school focus issues. Apte [62], taking an oppositional social constructivist position, concludes that maintaining student engagement can be achieved through a focus on curriculum and pedagogical (school/teacher) factors, including work that requires responsibility and challenge within a cultural sensitive environment. The Full Service School (FSS) model [27] includes integrated multiple strategies across many contexts for effective intervention that focus on a comprehensive set of factors but not the deficits of the individual. Brown and Holdsworth [64], Apte [62], and Szirom, Jaffe et al. [27] acknowledge that curriculum and pedagogical change in schools cannot be successfully implemented without teacher professional development that will enhance the capacity of all teachers.

While the social constructivist literature acknowledges that schools have a ‘critical role’ in both prevention and early intervention for ‘at-risk’ students, there are also many outside factors. Hence successful programs will extend beyond the school, but ‘how far is still the subject of debate’ ([3], p. 25). Brown and Holdsworth ([64], p. 126) confirm that students ‘at-risk’ also clearly understand that the nature of the school culture and ethos is critical to their attachment to school in both a positive and negative sense. Luke et al. ([42], p. 8) reject both the instrumentalist and social constructivist approaches, arguing that dedicated tied-funding provided for ‘at-risk’ ‘target groups appears to encourage piece-meal and pull-out approaches’ and makes student improvement more difficult to sustain unless such interventions are linked and articulated to the mainstream program. They suggest that whole-school programs that emphasized pastoral care and the well-being of students do not improve social outcomes for ‘at-risk’ students. They maintain that what is required is the revision and modification of whole-school mainstream pedagogy and curriculum programs and teaching, learning, and assessment to improve outcomes for target group students [42]. Approaches to teaching and learning need to stress higher order thinking and critical literacy, greater depth of knowledge and understanding, and increases in overall intellectual demand and expectations. Luke et al. [42] indicate that programs that have ‘connectedness to the world’ in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment can generate improved academic and social outcomes for all students but especially for those from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds, while programs that recognise and engage student differences in classroom teaching can produce systematic and sustainable interventions that could serve the needs of ‘at-risk’ students. While higher order intellectual engagement is necessary in programs in order for all students to access employment and to pursue improved life pathways through school to post-compulsory study, work, and community life, there needs to be an emphasis on the intellectual demands of school work and student engagement in mainstream pedagogy that moves beyond increased participation rates and basic skills development. This includes assessment procedures that also focus on higher order intellectual outcomes from all schooling programs with emphasis on curricular integration. This change needs teacher-leaders with a clear philosophy, coupled with a strong pedagogic and curricular focus, who can act as internal change agents [42,65].

5. Counter Hegemonic or Critically Transformative

A third approach dealing with students ‘at-risk’ is a counter hegemonic or critically transformative view, based on a recognitive view of social justice [12,22] wherein the goals of education are social-democratic in order to develop students’ knowledge of their world and their ability to act within it. A critically transformative view of ‘at-risk’ students recognises that:

the mainstream curriculum is hegemonic in the society at large in the sense that it is part of the cultural and practical underpinnings of the ascendancy of particular social groups—capitalists and professionals, men, Anglos ([23], p. 38).

While benefiting all students, this view specifically seeks to privilege the standpoint of the least-advantaged through their participation, critique and a focus on diversity, because ‘in general the position of those who carry the burdens of social inequality is a better starting-point for understanding the totality of the social world than is the position of those who enjoy its advantages’ ([23], p. 43). This view assumes that schools have the power:

to make a positive difference to pupil behaviour, a willingness to listen and to learn from the perspectives of others—especially including the pupils themselves—and a commitment to taking whatever action possible to enhance the quality of pupil’s engagement with all aspects of school life ([57], p. 14).

A critically transformative standpoint presupposes a belief that all students have the capacity to become willing, active, and positive participants in school. This view acknowledges that this capacity is rarely automatic but has to be developed, otherwise it ‘remains dormant or sometimes masked by attitudes and behaviours, which actively deny the existence of the students’ power to engage and learn’ ([57], p. 14).

While the diversity of attributes of the early school leaver become ‘a cliché of the literature, there is no dominant typification of an early school leaver’ ([3], p. 15). Furthermore, Thomson [66] and Mortimore and Mortimore [21] warn about the dangers of a public discourse that labels schools as welfare, disadvantaged, and ‘at-risk’ specialists. Teese and Polosel [61] have described the social geography of disadvantage, which Thomson [66] has described as ‘rustbelt schools’. However Connell critiques what he terms a false geography of poverty ([23], pp. 23–24) that holds that educational inequality is a problem of the disadvantaged or poor minority who are culturally different from the majority. He rejects the:

remarkable amount of research [that] still goes looking for evidence of the psychological, altitudinal or cultural distinctiveness of poor children. With little success. The bulk of the evidence actually demonstrates the cultural similarity between the poorest groups and the less poor ([23], p. 23).

Connell also critiques the instrumentalist neo-conservative approach to school reform via national testing and the implication of the social constructivist or liberal effective schools movement that all that is needed is to find the right educational fix. The end result of both approaches, he concludes, is:

A false geography of disadvantage [read risk] that locates the problem in the heads of the poor or the errors of the specific schools serving them [where] the virtues of the educational mainstream are taken for granted ([23], p. 24).

A critical transformative view locates students’ disadvantages or risks in the conventional subject-matter and texts, the traditional teaching methods, and assessment, which turn out to be the sources of systemic difficulty. Connell [23] and Luke et al. [42] argue that to improve the educational outcomes of these students, schools and teachers require a paradigmatic shift in curriculum and pedagogy.

The fact that certain groups in Australia seem more likely to be ‘at-risk’ than others does not come as any surprise. Students from lower socio-economic status families, single parent families, remote or indigenous youth, and youth with little or no family history of further study or even completion of 12 years of schooling are factors frequently nominated as causing or associated with risk [21,42]. Ball and Lamb [67] also found that a determinant of being ‘at-risk’ was attendance at a government school. Given the breadth of these factors, almost all students are potentially ‘at-risk’ but, significantly, some are not.

6. A New Empowered Role for Teachers

The research literature acknowledges that schools play a critical role in prevention and early intervention programs for vulnerable youth. However, the research also suggests that much of this

work appears to be fragmented, with individualistic approaches that contribute little to the capacity of the system overall. There is a view within the research literature [20,61,68–70] that it is easier, and more desirable, to change the education system than to change the student. Student failure has been identified not in relation to the individual student's performance but in terms of what the school is or is not doing [3]. There is a need then to address the three message systems of education [71], the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment needs of all students, not just the marginalised minority, if outcomes for students are to be improved.

Eldridge [72,73] and Keys Young [74] divide the factors facing 'at-risk' students into two very different types; social, cultural, and community factors and educational factors. Withers and Batten's [29] review of 10 years of 'at-risk' literature suggests that what the teacher and school does to enhance and maintain the engagement and the involvement of students is more important than an individual student focus. Lingard [75,76] indicates that teachers indeed can tip the balance, especially for marginalised students, to which Hattie adds that 'excellence in teaching is the single most powerful influence on achievement' ([77], p. 4). The Department of Education and Training (Victoria) [78] also acknowledges that 'the most powerful lever for reform is the transforming of teachers' practice'. The OECD review ([79], p. 13) of the literature suggests that 'school factors account for some 25 percent of the variance in student performance', while Hattie ([77], p. 2) claims that teachers alone contribute between 25 to 30 percent towards student achievement, stressing that 'it is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation'. As Hattie shows in the diagram below (see Figure 1), teachers together with schools make up more than 40 percent of a difference in student achievement. Rejecting the social constructivist position, Hattie emphatically states that:

Schools barely make a difference to achievement. The discussion on the attributes of schools—the finances, the school size, the class size, the buildings are important as they must be there in some form for a school to exist, but that is about it ([77], p. 2).

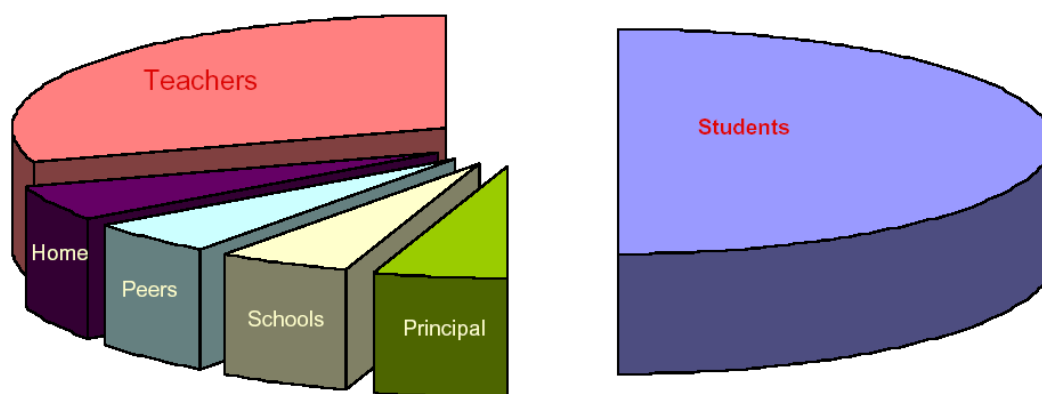


Figure 1. Factors contributing to student achievement ([77], p. 3).

From research related to educational effectiveness [80–84], much has been and continues to be learnt about key factors affecting students' general academic achievements, attitudes, behaviours, and experiences of schooling. Whereas instrumentalist and social constructivist research suggests that outcomes are influenced by students' home background and individual characteristics:

the magnitude of these effects pale into insignificance compared with class/teacher effects. That is, the quality of teaching and learning provision are by far the most salient influences on students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes of schooling, regardless of ... students' backgrounds ([85], p. 4, original emphasis).

The overwhelming evidence is that 'good' teachers can have positive impacts on students' experiences and the outcomes of schooling and 'poor' teachers can have deleterious effects.

Darling-Hammond [81] summarises extant research findings for the effects of teacher quality on student outcomes as follows:

The effect of poor quality teaching on student outcomes is debilitating and cumulative ... The effects of quality teaching on educational outcomes are greater than those that arise from students' backgrounds ... A reliance on curriculum standards and statewide assessment strategies without paying due attention to teacher quality appears to be insufficient to gain the improvements in student outcomes sought ([81], p. 3).

Programs for 'at-risk' students that are either instrumentalist or social constructivist can be characterised as advocating structural changes for systemic standards-based reforms (including curriculum deconstruction and reconstruction) that 'have a long and not-so distinguished history of rarely penetrating the classroom door' ([83], p. 16). This is consistent with the adoption of corporate management models in educational governance and a climate of outcomes-driven economic rationalism, where such models operate and are widespread, together with issues of accountability, assessment monitoring, performance indicators, quality assurance and school effectiveness [83]. While paying some attention to issues of social equity and the influence of the school relative to that of the 'sociologically-determined' [83] background characteristics of students, these standpoints doubt the capacity of teachers to make a difference relative to the influence of the socio-cultural and economic capital of home background. During the past 40 years, influential studies such as those reported by Coleman et al. [86] and Jencks et al. [87] in the USA and by Bernstein [71], and Peaker [88] and Plowden [89] in Britain, 'provided evidence that schools and teachers are not effective in enhancing achievement' ([90], p. 9) and that schools have little impact on students' outcomes. For example, after estimating that only nine percent of the variance in student achievement measures was due to school effects, Coleman et al. came to the conclusion that '...schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context' ([86], p. 325). These deficit and compensatory studies and the policies and programs based on them reflected the dominant social and political discourses that ethnic and family socio-economic (SES) background factors constituted as the prevailing determinants of students' educational outcomes. However, a growing number of researchers have been critical of these findings and have since provided contrary evidence to the earlier claims that, relative to home background influences, the effects of schooling are negligible [83,84].

Work with youth by Brown et al. (2001) suggests that the relationship between young people and teachers is of paramount importance. To build such positive relationships between students and teachers requires goodwill and commitment from both parties, but also structural support that facilitates and encourages the time and opportunity for engagement and relationship building. Brown and Holdsworth ([64], p. 126) highlight 'substantial pressures and barriers within schools that act to restrict or prevent the development of such relationships'. In particular, these pressures can be found in the practices and institutions that serve to informally exclude students 'at-risk' from school [56].

A critical transformative understanding rejects instrumentalist and social constructivist proposals to fix education systems by 'bits and pieces' [42] as these 'will not deliver long term sustainable change' ([3], p. 26). Teachers indeed can 'tip the balance' [77,90] especially for marginalised students, with a new approach and conception of pedagogy [75]. Change will require not only the:

proliferation of new practices of student support, but also whole of school change will have to be backed up and mandated by systemic guidelines, policies and appropriate resource allocations ([3], p. 26).

7. Conclusions

The social constructivist and critically transformative literature reviewed [21,42,51,62,64,90–94] makes it clear that schools in the past have been largely responsible for the weak connections between students and their communities as a result of inflexible curriculum pathways, a lack of relevance of

teaching and learning programs, the inadequate skills of teachers, and the inability of students to participate in school life. Mortimore and Mortimore conclude that these risk factors do not operate exclusively and that the:

effects of socio-economic disadvantage are cumulative [so that] individual, familial and societal factors interact in multiplicative ways. The actual impact of a bad school on a particular student's education will depend mostly on the resilience of the individual and on his or her willingness to continue learning. But the potential impact—in conjunction with the other factors—is daunting. Added to this is the effect of those national school systems that place more students 'at-risk' of failure. For the most disadvantaged, each new factor adds considerably to the problems faced by those least able to compete—with any possibility of success—and so increases the probability of their failure ([21], p. 110).

Similarly, Budge ([33], p. 29) adds that 'dropping out is the culmination of a process of disengagement that often begins in the [youngest] class'. To improve the outcomes of all, but in particular 'at-risk' youth, school curriculum must be relevant, negotiated, integrated, and connected, linking to personal and social concerns and emphasising self direction and constructive learning that include purpose, empowerment, rigour, and success [49,51].

A critical transformative view suggests a 'fundamental shift in thinking about the purpose and value of education, and how the educational system should fit into the rest of society' ([3], p. 26). Cooper et al. ([57], p. 14), while not denying the importance of the wider social and political factors, conclude that it 'remains possible for teachers . . . to take positive action' and resist the pressures that lead to increased student risk.

Researchers, including Gonski et al. [7] in their 'Review of Funding for Schooling', urge school systems to better recognise that meeting the needs of vulnerable young people requires significant investment, including greater staffing resources and facilities and a higher level of leadership and support. Research in Queensland by Lingard et al. [75,76] rejects a deficit and blame-the-victim approach, while pointing specifically to school related issues of organisation, curriculum, and school climate as important factors; most significant for 'at-risk' students is pedagogy, what the teacher does. Mortimore and Mortimore [21] add that students 'at-risk' need more help than schools and individual teachers can offer or provide. Yet, for students 'at-risk' to achieve even the national average outcome, they must:

leapfrog over many of their more advantaged peers. It is a pious hope to assume that this can be achieved by the majority of at risk students in many countries' systems. This is not to be patronising about such students, but simply to recognise that they have to compete with their peers in what amounts to a schooling race in which they begin from way behind the starting line ([21], p. 132).

Gale and Densmore ([12], pp. 112–13) come to a similar conclusion. Willis [95] makes similar claims in relation to those most 'at-risk' in Australia, Indigenous Australian students. Such deep-seated problems require systemic change; however, 'the ceding of privilege from the advantaged to disadvantaged' ([21], p. 133) would be fraught with political problems and strident opposition to achieve this [61]³.

³ The title of this paper comes from Noddings [96], Pye [97] and McCrae et al. [98,99]. Noddings argues against an ideology of control that forces all students to study a particular, narrowly prescribed curriculum devoid of content they might really care about where 'the reality of the classroom life in most schools [is] the press of teaching, getting through the curriculum, even if the students are being left behind (or left numb and unengaged) as the curriculum marches on, page by page and day by day' ([96], p. 44). Pye maintains that students are often forgotten abandoned invisible or lost in a no-man's-land in classrooms, where they are disengaged emotionally and intellectually from the education process, passively excluded not necessarily as a result of conflict, but indifference or worse, benign collusion. Finally, McCrae et al. ask in their research what has worked (and will work again) for the most disadvantaged and most marginalised at-risk group in Australia—Indigenous Australian students.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Ministerial Council on Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs. *Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century*. Canberra: MCEETYA, 1999.
2. Strategic Partners. "Doing It Well" Case Studies of Innovation and Best Practice in Working with at Risk Young People. Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2001, vol. 2.
3. Beth Blue Swadener. "Children and Families 'at Promise': Deconstructing the Discourse of Risk." In *Children and Families "At Promise": Deconstructing the Discourse of Risk*. Edited by Beth Blue Swadener and Sally Lubeck. New York: State University of New York Press, 1995, pp. 17–49.
4. Strategic Partners. *Innovation and Best Practice in Schools: Review of Literature and Practice*. Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2001, vol. 1.
5. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). *Student 2010 Full Year: Selected Higher Education Statistics Publication*. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2011.
6. Sinan Gemici, Patrick Lim, and Tom Karmel. *The Impact of Schools on Young People's Transition to University*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2013.
7. David Gonski, Ken Boston, Kathryn Greiner, Carmel Lawrence, Bill Scales, and Peter Tannock. *Review of Funding for Schooling: Final Report*. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011. Available online: <https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/review-of-funding-for-schooling-final-report-dec-2011.pdf> (accessed on 15 December 2016).
8. Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). *PISA 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2010.
9. Laura Perry, and Andrew McConney. "School socioeconomic composition and student outcomes in Australia: Implications for educational policy." *Australian Journal of Education* 54 (2010): 72–85. [CrossRef]
10. Louise Watson, and Chris Ryan. "Choosers and losers: The impact of government subsidies on Australian secondary schools." *Australian Journal of Education* 54 (2010): 86–107. [CrossRef]
11. Ani Wierenga, and Jo Taylor. *The Case for Inclusive Learning Systems: Building More Inclusive Learning Systems in Australia*. Sydney: Dusseldorp Forum, 2015, pp. 1–56.
12. Trevor Gale, and Kathleen Densmore. *Just Schooling: Explorations in the Cultural Politics of Teaching*. London: Open University Press, 2000.
13. Trevor Gale, and Kathleen Densmore. *Engaging Teachers towards a Radical Democratic Agenda for Schooling*. London: Open University Press, 2003.
14. Helen Stewart. "At risk or marginalised? The implications of focussing on at risk individual young people for workers with marginalised young people." *YACVic Bits* 1 (1998): 4–5.
15. Mike Long. *How Young People Are Faring: Key Indicators 2005*. Glebe: Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2005. Available online: <http://dusseldorp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2004/12/How-Young-People-Are-Faring-2005.pdf> (accessed on 23 February 2017).
16. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Labour Force Australia March*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2015.
17. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. *Overcoming Failure at School*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998.
18. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. *Proceedings of the Conference Preparing Youth for the 21st Century: The Transition from Education to Labour Market*. Washington: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1999.
19. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. *Education at a Glance OECD Indicators 2002*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2002.
20. Kitty te Riele. "Educational alternatives for marginalised youth." *The Australian Educational Researcher* 34 (2007): 53–68. [CrossRef]
21. Peter Mortimore, and Jo Mortimore. "Improving educational performance of at-risk youth." Paper presented at the OECD Conference: Preparing Youth for the 21st Century: The Transition from Education to Labour Market, Washington, DC, USA, 23–24 February 1999.

22. Trevor Gale. "Rethinking social justice in schools: How will we recognize it when we see it?" *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 4 (2000): 253–69. [CrossRef]
23. Raewin Connell. *Schools and Social Justice*. Leichhardt: Pluto Press, 1993.
24. David Zyngier. "Listening to teachers—Listening to students: Substantive conversations about resistance, empowerment and engagement." *Teachers and Teaching* 13 (2007): 327–47. [CrossRef]
25. Andrew Fuller. *From Surviving to Thriving: Promoting Mental Health in Young People*. Camberwell: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1998.
26. Robert Rosenthal, and Leonore Jacobson. *Pygmalion in the Classroom; Teacher Expectation and Pupils' Intellectual Development*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1992.
27. James Rhem. "Pygmalion in the Classroom." *The National Teaching and Learning Forum* 8 (1999): 1–4.
28. Tricia Szirom, Russell Jaffe, David MacKenzie, Strategic Partners (Firm), Centre for Youth Affairs and Development, and Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs. *Full Service Schools Programme 1999 and 2000 National Evaluation Report*. Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2001.
29. Graeme Withers, and Jean Russell. *Educating for Resilience: Prevention and Intervention Strategies for Young People at Risk*. Melbourne: Catholic Education Office, MacKillop Family Services and Victorian Department of Human Services, 1998.
30. David Zyngier, and Trevor Gale. "Engaging programs: How are Australian schools responding to low student retention?" Paper presented at the AARE Annual Conference: Education Risks, Research and Dilemmas, Auckland, New Zealand, 29 November–3 December 2003.
31. David Zyngier, and Trevor Gale. *Non-Systemic and Non-Traditional Educational Programs in FMP Secondary Schools: Final Report*. Frankston: Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning Employment Network, 2003.
32. Victorian Suicide Prevention Taskforce. *Suicide Prevention: Victorian Task Force Report July 1997*. Melbourne: Victorian Government Publishing Service, 1997.
33. David Budge. *Motivating Students for Lifelong Learning*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2000.
34. Margaret Batten, and Jean Russell. *Students at Risk: A Review of Australian Literature 1980–1994*. Camberwell: ACER, 1995.
35. Sue Fullarton. *Student Engagement with School: Individual and School-Level Influences*. No. 27 Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Research Report. Camberwell: Australian Council for Educational Research ACER, 2002.
36. David Zyngier. "Connectedness—Isn't It Time That Education Came out from behind the Classroom Door and Rediscovered Social Justice." *Social Alternatives* 22 (2003): 41–49.
37. Alan Dyson, and Carlo Raffo. "Education and disadvantage: The role of community-oriented schools." *Oxford Review of Education* 33 (2007): 297–314. [CrossRef]
38. Daniel Muijs. "Leadership in full-service extended schools: Communicating across cultures." *School Leadership and Management* 27 (2007): 347–62. [CrossRef]
39. Cecil Wright, Alex McGlaughlin, and Debbie Weekes. *"Race", Class, and Gender in Exclusion from School*. London: Falmer, 2000.
40. Lynn M. Aylward. "Discourses of Cultural Relevance in Nunavut Schooling." *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 22 (2007): 22–27. Available online: <http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/22-7.pdf> (accessed on 15 December 2016).
41. Lynn M. Aylward. "Culturally relevant schooling in Nunavut: Views of secondary school educators." *Études/Inuit/Studies* 33 (2009): 77–93. [CrossRef]
42. Allan Luke, John Elkins, Katie Weir, Ray Land, Victoria Carrington, Shelley Dole, Donna Pendergast, Cushla Kapitzke, and Christa van Kraayenoord. *Beyond the Middle: A Report about Literacy and Numeracy Development of Target Group Students in the Middle Years of Schooling*. Mount Gravatt: Commonwealth Department of Education, 2003, vol. 1.
43. Carmen Mills, and Trevor Gale. "Schooling and the production of social inequalities." *Melbourne Studies in Education* 43 (2002): 107–28. [CrossRef]
44. Michael Apple. *Cultural Politics and Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1996.
45. Suzanne Rice, and Stephen Lamb. *A Guide to Help Schools Increase School Completion*. Melbourne: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2008.

46. Greg Druian, and Jocelyn A. Butler. *Effective Schooling Practices and at-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows (School Improvement Research Series)*. Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Lab, 1987.
47. Kitty te Riele. "Schooling practices for marginalized students: Practice-with-hope." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 10 (2006): 59–74. [[CrossRef](#)]
48. David Istance, ed. *Innovating Schools*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1999.
49. Robyn Barratt, Phil Cormack, and Jim Cumming. *Shaping Middle Schooling in Australia: A Report of the National Middle Schooling Project*. Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1998.
50. Centre for Applied Educational Research. *Middle Years Research and Development (MYRAD) Project February—December 2001*. Melbourne: Learning and Teaching Innovation Division Department of Education and Training Faculty of Education the University of Melbourne, 2002.
51. Jim Cumming. *From Alienation to Engagement: Opportunities for Reform in the Middle Years of Schooling*. Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1996.
52. House of Representatives, and Standing Committee on Education and Training. *Boys: Getting It Right: Report on the Inquiry into the Education of Boys*. Canberra: Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2002.
53. Jane Kenway, ed. *Will Boys Be Boys? Boys' Education in the Context of Gender Reform*. Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 1997.
54. Malcolm Slade, and Faith Trent. "What the boys are saying. An examination of the views of boys about declining rates of achievement and retention." *International Education Journal* 11 (2000): 221–27.
55. Peter West. *Report on Best Practice in Boys' Education*. Sydney: University of Western Sydney Men's Health Information and Research Centre Research Group on Men and Families, 2001.
56. Jennifer Angwin, Jill Blackmore, Lyn Harrison, and Goeff Shacklock. "Pathway planning and 'becoming somebody': Exploring the tensions between wellbeing and credentialism with students at (educational) risk." Paper presented at the AARE Annual Conference, Perth, Australia, 2–6 December 2001.
57. Paul Cooper, Mary Jane Drummond, Susan Hart, Jane Lovey, and Colleen McLaughlin. *Positive Alternatives to Exclusion*. London: Routledge, 2000.
58. Trevor Gale. *Rough Justice: Young People in the Shadows*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.
59. Amy Stuart Wells, and Irene Serna. "The Politics of Culture: Understanding Local Political Resistance to Detracking in Racially Mixed Schools." In *Education: Culture, Economy, Society*. Edited by A. H. Halsey, Hugh Lauder, Phillip Brown and Amy S. Wells. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 718–35.
60. Margaret Stirling. "Government Policy and Disadvantaged Children." In *Exclusion from School: Inter-Professional Issues for Policy and Practice*. Edited by Eric Blyth and Judith Milner. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 53–61.
61. Richard V. Teese, and John Polesel. *Undemocratic Schooling: Equity and Quality in Mass Secondary Education in Australia*. Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2003.
62. Judi Apte. *Successful Outcomes for Youth at Risk: A Resource Kit*. Sydney: Australian National Training Authority, 2001.
63. Roslyn Black, Barbara Lemon, and Lucas Walsh. *Literature Review and Background Research for the National Collaboration Project: Extended Service School Model*. Report for the Department of Education, Western Australia. Melbourne: Foundation for Young Australians, 2010.
64. Joan Brown, and Roger Holdsworth. *Building Relationships—Making Education Work: A Report on the Perspectives of Young People*. Canberra: Australian Centre for Equity through Education, Australian Youth Research Centre (Melbourne University), Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2001.
65. Martin Haberman. "The Pedagogy of Poverty versus Good Teaching." *Phi Delta Kappan* 92 (2010): 81–87. [[CrossRef](#)]
66. Pat Thomson. *Schooling the Rustbelt Kids: Making the Difference in Changing Times*. Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2002.
67. Stephen Ball, and Stephen Lamb. *Participation and Achievement in Vet of Non Completers of School*. LSAY Research Report 20. Melbourne: ACER, 2001.
68. Roslyn Black. *Crossing the Bridge: Overcoming Entrenched Disadvantage through Student-Centred Learning*. Melbourne: Education Foundation, 2007.
69. Jane Kenway. "(E)quality in a virtuous system." In *Quality in School Education: What's Worth Fighting for?* Edited by Ilana Snider. Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2012, pp. 78–125.

70. Martin Mills, and Glenda McGregor. *Re-Engaging Students in Education: Success Factors in Alternative Schools*. Brisbane: Youth Affairs Network Queensland, 2010.
71. Basil Bernstein. *Class, Codes and Control*. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1971.
72. David Eldridge. *Footprints to the Future: Report from the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce 2001*. Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2001, vol. 1.
73. David Eldridge. *Footprints to the Future: Research Report from the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce 2001*. Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2001, vol. 2.
74. Keys Young. *Identifying Good Practice in Supporting Youth Transitions to Independence*. Canberra: DETYA Commonwealth of Australia, 2000.
75. Robert Lingard, James Ladwig, Martin Mills, Mark Bahr, David Chant, and Merle Warry. *Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: Final Report*. Brisbane: Education Queensland, 2001, vol. 1.
76. Robert Lingard, James Ladwig, Martin Mills, Mark Bahr, David Chant, and Merle Warry. *Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study: Supplementary Materials*. Brisbane: Education Queensland, 2001.
77. John Hattie. "Teachers Make a Difference: What Is the Research Evidence?" Paper presented at the ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, Australia, 19–21 October 2003.
78. SOFweb. "Pedagogy." 2003. Available online: <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/pedagogy/> (accessed on 30 March 2006).
79. John Lowe, and Maurice Holt. *Making the Curriculum Work*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1998.
80. Linda Darling-Hammond. "What matters most: A competent teacher for every child." *Phi Delta Kappan* 78 (1996): 193–200.
81. Linda Darling-Hammond. "Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 8 (2000): 1. [CrossRef]
82. Elizabeth Kleinhenz, and Lawrence Ingvarson. "Teacher accountability in Australia: Current policies and practices and their relation to the improvement of teaching and learning." *Research Papers in Educational Leadership* 19 (2004): 31–49. [CrossRef]
83. Ken J. Rowe. "The importance of Teacher Quality as a key determinant of students' experiences and outcomes of schooling." Paper presented at the ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, Australia, 19–21 October 2003.
84. Ken J. Rowe. "The importance of teaching: Ensuring better schooling by building teacher capacities that maximize the quality of teaching and learning provision—Implications of findings from the international and Australian evidence-based research." Paper presented at the Making Schools Better Conference: A Summit Conference on the Performance, Management and Funding of Australian Schools, Melbourne, Australia, 26–27 August 2004.
85. Ken J. Rowe. "Submission to Inquiry into the Sex Discrimination Amendment (Teaching Profession) Bill 2004 by the Australian Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee." 2004. Available online: http://research.acer.edu.au/learning_processes/6/ (accessed on 3 March 2017).
86. James S. Coleman, Ernest Q. Campbell, Carol J. Hobson, James McPartland, Alexander M. Mood, Frederik D. Weinfield, and R. York. *Equality of Educational Opportunity*. Washington: U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare Office of Education, United States Government Publishing Office, 1966, vol. 1.
87. Christopher Jencks, Marshall Smith, Henry Acland, Mary Jo Bane, David Cohen, Herbert Gintis, Barbara Heyns, and Stephan Michelson. *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*. New York: Basic Books, 1972.
88. G. F. Peaker. "The regression analyses of the national survey." *Children and Their Primary Schools* 2 (1967): 179–221.
89. B. Plowden, ed. *Children and Their Primary Schools: A Report of the Control Advisory Council for Education (England)*. Vol. 1: Report. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967.
90. John Hattie. "Measuring the effects of schooling." *Australian Journal of Education* 36 (1992): 5–13. [CrossRef]
91. Peter Dwyer. *Opting Out: Early School Leavers and the Degeneration of Youth Policy*. Melbourne: Clearing House for Youth Studies, 1966.
92. Peter Dwyer, Helen Stokes, Debra Tyler, and Roger Holdsworth. *Negotiating Staying and Returning: Young People's Perspectives on Schooling and the Youth Allowance*. Melbourne: Victorian Department of Education, 1998.
93. Peter Dwyer, and Johanna Wyn. *Youth Education and Risk: Facing the Future*. London: Routledge Farmer, 2001.

94. Michael Fullan. *Successful School Improvement: The Implementation Perspective and Beyond*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992.
95. Sue Willis. "Becoming numerate: Who's at risk and why?" Paper presented at the Early Years Numeracy Conference, Melbourne, Australia, 31 May 2001.
96. Nel Noddings. "A Morally Defensible Mission for Schools in the 21st Century." In *Transforming Public Education: A New Course for America's Future*. Edited by Evan Clinchy. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997, pp. ix, 202.
97. James Pye. *Invisible Children: Who Are the Real Losers at School?* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
98. David McRae, Geoff Ainsworth, Jim Cumming, Paul Hughes, Tony Mackay, Kaye Price, Mike Rowland, Joan Warhurst, Davina Woods, and Vic Zbar. *What Works: Explorations in Improving Outcomes for Indigenous Students*. Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association and National Curriculum Services, 2000.
99. David McRae, Geoff Ainsworth, Jim Cumming, Paul Hughes, Tony Mackay, Kaye Price, Mike Rowland, Joan Warhurst, Davina Woods, and Vic Zbar. *What Has Worked (and Will Again)*. Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association and National Curriculum Services, 2000.



© 2017 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).