Strengthening the Intersections Between Secondary and Tertiary Education in Australia: Building Cultural Capital

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> **Q11 Chairman:** Professor Eastwood, did you see a recent speech by the chancellor of Oxford University where he was saying we should not bash universities for failing to widen participation. This is the fault of the schools for failing to promote it.
> *Professor Eastwood:* I am aware of Lord Patten's remarks.
> **Q12 Chairman:** What do you think of them?
> *Professor Eastwood:* He points to something that the NAO Report also signals. Perhaps the greatest challenge is the transition from level two to level three, that is to say, getting people to stay on in the system beyond 16. I think that is common ground. I think there is quite a lot of partnership working to take that forward, but the view of HEFCE would be yes, it is important that we increase the pool of young people participating to level three but equally it is important that universities discharge their responsibilities to work to widen participation in higher education (House of Commons Public Accounts Committee 2009)

Over the last ten years, both the UK and Australia have engaged in powerful, centrally driven attempts to increase the numbers of people entering universities – to 50% of the population in the UK aged between 18-30 by 2010, and in Australia to equip 40% of people 25-34 with an undergraduate degree by 2025[1]. Essential to this proposed growth is the concomitant increase in the numbers of historically educationally disadvantaged groups entering Higher Education (HE). The UK's 'Widening Participation' strategy has concluded with varying degrees of success across the country and across demographic groupings (Action on Access 2009; House of Commons Public Accounts Committee 2009) whilst the Australian government's social inclusion agenda (of which investment in higher education is just a part) is in its infancy.

This article will explore the ways in which the Australian initiative has been built to increase its relative success. It will look at the policy discourses which dominate the field and consider an initiative which seeks to make the barriers between school and tertiary education much more permeable for low socio-economic (LSES) students, and their success in tertiary education more assured.

Aspiring to Social Inclusion

> Australia faces a critical moment in the history of higher education. There is an international consensus that the reach, quality and performance of a nation's higher education system will be key determinants of its economic and social progress. If we are to maintain our high standard of living, underpinned by a robust democracy and a civil and just society, we need an outstanding, internationally competitive higher education system (Bradley *et al*, 2008: xi).

The Bradley Report was commissioned by the federal government to provide a rationale and a shape for beginning an 'education revolution'[2] designed to update Australia's education system relatively quickly after decades of neglect. One part of this revolution concerned the softening of the interface between the secondary and tertiary sectors in order to dramatically

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[1] The other target is for 20% of the undergraduate cohort to come from LSES backgrounds by 2020.
[2] An umbrella term covering everything from buildings, policies, to IT.

increase the HE[3] numbers of the following demographic groups: Indigenous Australians, people from regional and remote areas, disabled people and (after steadily low numbers for twenty years), LSES students.

Australia's response to its critical moment emerged just as the UK's equivalent – the 'Widening Participation' scheme – was being wound down after ten years of operation. With the UK experience as background, Australia set in place a number of funding and partnership arrangements, and objectives through which to measure success. More on this later.

Firstly, it is important to explore the policy discourses embedded in both governments' approaches to educational inclusivity and exclusivity for they are remarkably similar. At a foundational level, and as Bradley makes clear above, the need to improve the numbers of educated citizens is viewed as a matter of individual self improvement, and a national economic imperative.

Generally without overt reference to class, policy initiatives note that there is a widening gap between those who enjoy stable economic prosperity and its resulting benefits (social cohesion, access to high-quality education, technologies and healthcare and a high sense of civic and community engagement) and those who have a tenuous connection to the workplace, to social networks and services and have resulting poorer health and wellbeing. Consequently, their educational levels are low and they are less likely to take opportunities to raise their educational level in order to generate personal economic prosperity through secure and productive employment.

The aspirations of the Australian federal government's social inclusion agenda include reducing such relative disadvantage and increasing social, civic, and economic participation[4]. Engagement in HE is seen as a key means of providing the opportunity for personal and national progress through improving social and cultural capital, community connections, social integration and employment opportunities. As Simon Marginson argued as long ago as 1997, HE has been seen historically as a route to citizenship, and successive governments have attempted to shape it to that end – clearly not very successfully (Marginson 1997).

These are laudable and appealing ambitions, yet they also obfuscate a number of key drivers of such disadvantage (social class, for example, and the traditional elitism of universities in both purpose and practice) whilst simultaneously utilizing a resilient set of discourses about 'aspiration'. Archer *et al* (2003), writing during the time when Widening Participation was in full swing, make a convincing argument:

> …any analysis of class inequalities in relation to higher education must take account not only of people's shifting class identities but also the role of the educational institution itself in creating and perpetuating inequalities' (p. 14).

It is our contention that the 'raising aspiration' discourse is one which firmly fixes people from disadvantaged backgrounds as without ambition, without understanding, without realistic hope for change or even recognition that they 'need' change. As with every dichotomy, this categorisation is set against a middle-class norm where people possess the cultural and social capital to understand the advantages which HE brings and the wherewithal to make sure they use the system successfully. By doing so in Australia, it is estimated that their lifetime earnings will be increased by $1.5m (National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling

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[3] HE was conceived, in the Bradley Report, as part of a 'broader tertiary education system' (p. 179) which was more flexible and responsive.
[4] See http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/

2008, p.6). 'Raising aspiration' as an intervention to increase the enrolment numbers of disadvantaged students is a fraught notion as Sellar *et al* (2011) explain:

> However, 'raising aspiration' is a deeply problematic trope around which to establish social justice projects. There are at least three aspects of concern here. First, dominant conceptions of aspiration imply potentially offensive and normative assumptions about the value and legitimacy of particular educational pathways, forms of employment and life projects. That is, those who don't aspire to *higher* education are assumed to have *lower* aspirations. Second, it underestimates the potential for stratification associated with expanding education systems, which can result in less advantaged students being diverted into lower status institutions (Parry, 2010; see also Bourdieu and Champagne, 1999)…Third, it is by no means clear that underrepresentation in HE is caused by low aspiration, as opposed to holding aspirations for different ends or not having the capacity to realise one's aspirations (p. 38).

The Aimhigher strategy in the UK was founded on such discourses of self-improvement, where the raising of aspiration was seen as a precursor of success, rather than the other way around. Directed towards LSES students between 14 and 18 years in LSES areas, Aimhigher was a program designed to raise aspirations amongst these students, support their attainment and (as a corollary) increase the number progressing to HE. Individual students with potential were targeted and mentored through their high school years, with university visits and discipline 'tasters' common. The benefits for the targeted learner were thought to include removing social and psychological barriers and providing tailored support at key moments, skill building and creating a clear understanding of the benefits of HE (Action on Access 2008).

Whilst the impact of the lack of rigorous evaluative data has been discussed elsewhere (Gorard *et al* 2006), it is nevertheless possible to make some general comments about Aimhigher's achievements:

> ….there is little evidence that HE participation in England has increased in recent years; and, except for at the margins of the social spectrum, it does not look as if it has widened (Chilosi *et al*, 2010 p.2).

The individual students who engaged strongly with Aimhigher, however, consistently developed positive attitudes towards HE, albeit temporarily. It also slightly improved their chances of attaining higher GCSE results (Chilosi et al 2010, p.8). These are unsurprising results given that Aimhigher was strongly focused on aspiration rather than attainment raising. The National Audit Office (2008) concluded that the numbers of LSES, full time students entering university had risen by 2% over four years.

Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP)
The Australian federal government's response to the Bradley Report was the opening of an income stream for universities entitled the 'Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program' (HEPPP), which was a carefully tailored response to the UK experience.

The funding began substantively in 2011 and was structured in such a way as to reward universities who made significant changes to their structures and processes with the aim of promoting aspiration, achievement, accessibility and attainment for students from the above disadvantaged cohorts. It had two component parts designed to address two of the apparent weaknesses of the English experiment**.**

The first, entitled *Participation* financially encouraged universities to enrol increased numbers of LSES students, centered on their baseline numbers. Each university was contracted to systematically contribute to the overall 20% LSES target – but some more than others. This was a challenge for the elite Group of Eight (Go8) whose reputation was staked on the ability to recruit from the top and who had the lowest numbers of enrolled LSES students. Their Executive Director, Mike Gallagher argued against the enrolment of a greater number of students with lower levels of university entrance, suggesting they were doomed to various failures:

> 'It's not about the Group of Eight, because we vacuum clean from the top talent pool', he said. 'But the downstream effect is disturbing, especially if these are people going into teacher education, for instance, and teach the next generation of people and they themselves haven't done too well at school. You've got a bit of a problem.
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> The answer is, be careful about letting all the horses run down the hill without knowing where they might end up. I think we've unleashed something here that we don't know the end result of. Either it's going to cost a fortune, or standards will slip, or a whole lot of people's lives will be damaged' (Norrie 2012)

Despite these trepidations, A$325m was made available over four years (2011-2014), given to universities pro-rata for use in prescribed activities to facilitate poorer performing students' success - including support services, partnership activities, admission, selection and monitoring processes, and equity scholarships. Universities with higher numbers of students from the four targeted groups were given increased resources to assist in supporting them through their qualification.

The second component (entitled *Partnerships*) was made available to assist universities forge relationships with other education providers such as schools, Vocational Education and Further Education providers. The purpose of this funding was to enable universities to raise the aspirations of low SES individuals and communities through outreach activities with a range of providers: schools, adult education providers, community groups and other stakeholders. In undertaking this outreach and liaison work, the aim was to assist people to view tertiary education as a viable option, and to enable them to work out an educational pathway which best met their needs. A$108m was distributed to support these activities.

From 2011, most of the available funds were distributed using a method of competitive grants designed specifically to engender co-operation between universities, and between the pre-tertiary and tertiary sectors. Later we will discuss one of the federally-funded projects, operating across schools and universities which systematically prepares students from LSES, diverse and under-represented backgrounds with the social, intellectual and cultural capital for tertiary entrance and success.

The International Imperative
Whilst there are arguments for greater educational equality based on concepts of social inclusion, citizenship and equity, another (arguably more powerful) driver comes in the form of economic imperatives at both macro and micro levels. The micro (individual) level has been touched on above and needs little explanation – the more you learn, the more you earn, to use a popular aphorism, and data bear this out (National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling 2008).

The OECD's recent report *Equity and Quality in Education. Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools* (2012) makes both the economic and social argument for the improvement of school systems to ensure – at the very least – school completion:

Across OECD countries, almost one of every five students does not reach a basic minimum level of skills to function in today's societies (indicating lack of inclusion). Students form low socio-economic background are twice as likely to be low performers, implying that personal or social circumstances are obstacles to achieving their educational potential (indicating lack of fairness). Lack of inclusion and fairness fuels school failure, of which dropout is the most visible manifestation – with 20% of young adults on average dropping out before finalizing secondary education….

The economic and social costs of school failure and dropout are high, whereas successful secondary education completion gives individuals better employment and healthier lifestyle prospects resulting in greater contributions to public budgets and investment. More educated people contribute to more democratic societies and sustainable economies, and are less dependent on public aid and less vulnerable to economic downturns. Societies with skilled individuals are best prepared to respond to the current and future potential crises. Therefore, investing in early, primary and secondary education for all, and in particular for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, is both fair and economically efficient (p. 11).

As we've made clear, however, the Australian and UK governments, using parallel arguments, have sought to move not only to secondary completion but to a much increased level of tertiary completion. Yet there appears to be a systems failure as Eastwood points to at the start of this paper, and with which the OECD concurs – LSES students are less likely to complete school and thus far less likely than others to go to university.

The Australian HEPPP partnership strategy is specifically designed to generate much stronger, smoother and more cooperative relationships between pre-tertiary and tertiary providers in order that LSES students and schools (in particular) are supported to enable university entrance at a systemic level.

The OECD report offers a methodical approach to addressing the clear precursors of school and student failure and also gives five clear methods for improving both institutional and individual achievement which, aside from family tradition, is the clearest indicator of accessing tertiary education (National Audit Office 2008 p. 13). Some of these address common systems failures which are indicative of later dropout (grade repetition, for example) or the generation of poorly performing LSES schools (giving parents full choice in school selection, for example).

In the following section of the paper, we address five of the OECD recommendations from *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting disadvantaged students and schools* (2012) which stresses the 'harmful equation' of disadvantaged students and low performing schools and provides 'a strategy for low performing disadvantaged schools to raise their students' achievement' (p. 5) through five linked recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Strengthen and support school leadership
Recommendation 2: Stimulate a supportive school climate and environment for learning
Recommendation 3: Attract, support and retain high quality teachers
Recommendation 4: Ensure effective classroom learning strategies
Recommendation 5: Prioritise linking schools with parents and communities

We now map these recommendations against an innovative system of school improvement and support for under-represented and LSES students which has been particularly successful in the United States entitled AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination). Recently introduced to Australia, the development of AVID has been funded through the HEPPP competitive grant system and follows each recommendation from the OECD report, whilst

simultaneously addressing many of the weaknesses found in the Aimhigher strategy. It does this with a holistic approach that seeks to simultaneously raise individual students' academic, social and emotional outcomes, raise the quality of teacher pedagogy, and improve the quality of school leadership and support to generate whole school reform in underachieving schools.

AVID

AVID is a not-for-profit university preparation program designed to increase the number of students from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds aspiring to, accessing and achieving success at university. It is a system that promotes differentiated learning and inclusive education practices. It also builds robust partnerships across schools and tertiary providers to support reciprocal learning opportunities. AVID focuses on whole school reform and has developed programs for early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary settings.

It achieves this through a system of ongoing professional learning for teachers, support staff and school leaders, which centres around embedding explicit teaching strategies across the curricula and training staff and school leaders to use institutional data to make informed decisions. It seeks to raise teachers' expectations and students' capacity and performance . Critically, AVID accelerates underperforming students placing them in courses of rigour and builds additional academic and social skills and support to ensure they successfully complete these courses thereby maximizing their choices for subsequent tertiary studies. Evidence shows that over time the AVID system positively transforms the leadership, structure, instruction, and culture of a school, and significantly increases the number of students who enter and are successful in tertiary studies (Hubbard & Ottoson 1997; Lozano *et al* 2009; Watt *et al*, 2007).

AVID is designed predominantly for underachieving students in the academic 'low to middle' many of whom are from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Often these groups of students aspire to go to tertiary institutions, but many are unclear about the benefits, and don't consider it a viable option (Bowden & Doughney, 2010; Morrison, 2010). More practically, many find the application processes intimidating or onerous. For those who would be the first in their family to attend university, they often lack the social capital and human resources to help them understand and persist with university aspirations and access, (Archer & Hutchings 2000; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Dennis, Phinney & Chuateco, 2005; Harvey et al, 2006; Lozano *et al*, 2009; Madgett & Belanger, 2008; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Thayer, 2000). AVID demystifies entry processes to tertiary education by explicitly teaching students institutional literacies. It builds the academic, organisational, metacognitive and affective skills needed to persist and succeed at university and beyond (Hubbard & Ottoson, 1997; Swanson *et al* 1995).
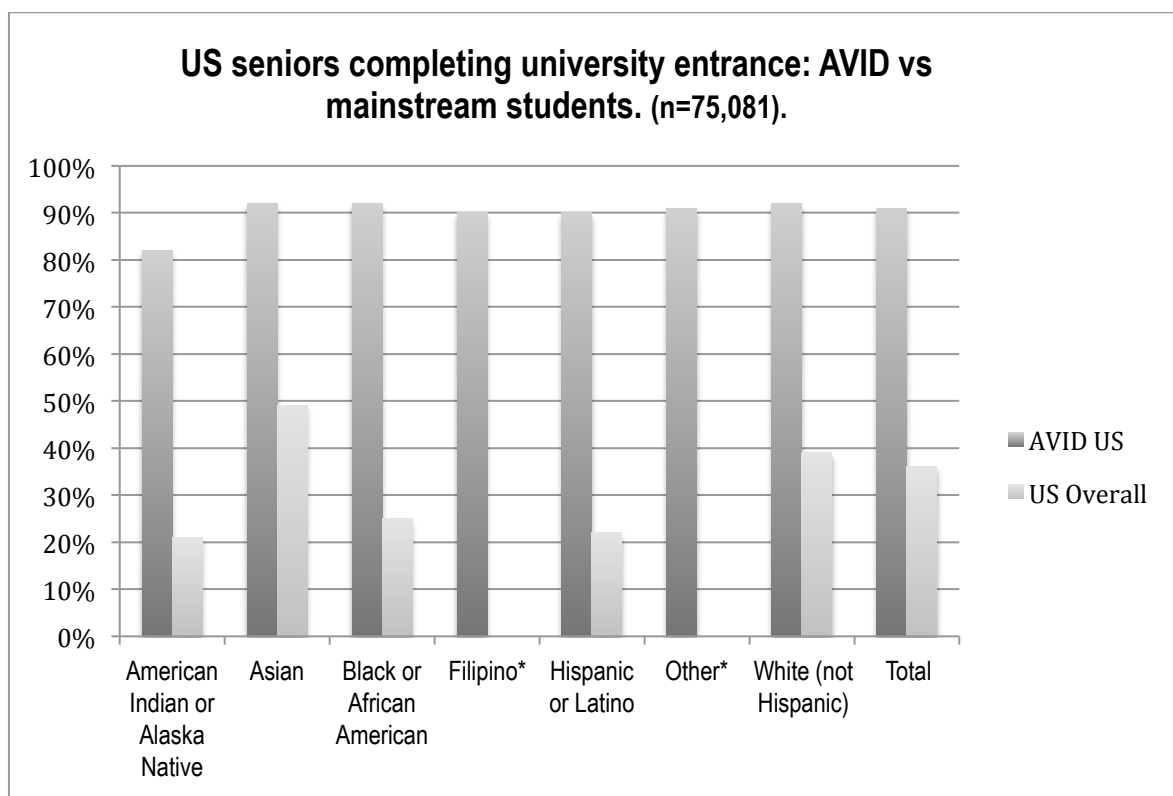
The OECD report (2012) noted that

> Schools need to set high expectations for what every child can achieve, despite their levels of disadvantage and the achievement levels with which they enter school. These high expectations can be complemented with supportive structures and services: Positive learning environments offer strong instructional and emotional support (Hamre and Pianta, 2005). (OECD, 2012, p. 141)

AVID's program focuses on achieving precisely this through a focus on eleven essential attributes that position inquiry practice and collaborative learning theories as central, key pedagogical approaches. These provide an implementation and certification framework for schools that make explicit expectations for school leaders, teachers, tutors and students:

1. AVID student selection must focus on students in the middle, with academic potential, who would benefit from AVID support to improve their academic record and begin college preparation
2. AVID program participants, both students and staff, must choose to participate in the AVID program
3. The school must be committed to full implementation of the AVID Program, with students enrolled in the AVID yearlong elective class(es) available within the regular academic school day
4. AVID students must be enrolled in a rigorous course of study that will enable them to meet requirements for university enrollment (A-G).
5. A strong, relevant writing and reading curriculum provide a basis for instruction in the AVID classroom
6. Inquiry is used as a basis for instruction in the AVID classroom to promote critical thinking.
7. Collaboration is used as a basis for instruction in the AVID Classroom
8. A sufficient number of tutors must be available in AVID elective class(es) to facilitate student access to rigorous curriculum. Tutors should be from colleges and universities and they must be trained to implement the methodologies used in AVID
9. AVID program implementation and student progress must be monitored through the AVID Center Data System, and results must be analyzed to ensure success
10. The school or district has identified resources for program costs, has agreed to implement all AVID Essentials and to participate in AVID certification. It has committed to on-going participation in AVID staff development
11. An active interdisciplinary AVID site team collaborates on issues of student access to and success in rigorous college preparatory courses

The report goes to cite AVID as 'a curricular measure that seems to have a great impact placing low achievers in advanced programmes rather than lowering the expectations' (OECD, 2012, p. 141). It uses AVID as case study of excellence for the way it accelerates rather than remediates, and for the combination of program components that have seen involved schools increase their retention rates by 34% compared to a 14% drop at comparable schools (OECD, 2012, p. 141).

The graph below offers evidence that AVID is successful in stimulating and supporting learning, particularly for minority groups with a history of under-representation at university insofar as their achievement rates (in terms of qualifying for university entrance) are much greater than their peers who were not enrolled as AVID students:

US seniors completing university entrance: AVID vs mainstream students. (n=75,081).

(Greene & Forster, 2003; AVID Center, Senior Data Collection System, 2011 – 2012)

In the next section, we explore the ways in which the eleven AVID essentials correlate with the OECD's recommendations for supporting disadvantaged students and schools, and offer an explanation for its successes.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen and support school leadership

Arguably, one of the drivers of AVID's success is a systematic approach to building the skill set of both teaching and leading staff in high schools. Targeted professional development programs are offered throughout the year by AVID Center staff who visit each school to provide support to the leadership, teaching and support staff as required (Hattie, 2009; Marzano & Pickering 2011).

The school, in turn, is held accountable for its progress in lifting achievement rates for all students. After three years of implementation, schools can apply for certification and after operating for at least five years, it takes about 18 months of coaching to become a national demonstration school, which is considered very prestigious and is a formal, public acknowledgement of the quality of the school in achieving substantial school reform. A variety of data are collected including test scores, school structures, leadership and teaching performance.

In a follow-up study to previous research that found AVID's professional development is a significant predictor of teacher leadership by Huerta *et al* (2008), Watt *et al* argue that 'AVID supports educators with quality professional development which helps them become more apt in their leadership abilities' (2010 p. 547). They describe how regular, structured professional development and training builds leadership across the school and suggest:

This makes the AVID program unique in the world of staff development. Its professional development component is organized and effective, resulting in core individuals becoming vested stakeholders in the program (p. 548)

Recommendation 2: Stimulate a supportive school climate and environment for learning

Each of the 11 Essentials speaks to this recommendation. Essential 2, for example, highlights the voluntary nature of AVID, which makes it more likely that the school will get buy-in from the key stakeholders and a sense of ownership for their own learning in the process. A major goal of AVID is to support students to become independent thinkers and learners who ultimately take responsibility for their own learning.

The principle of accelerating students is consistent with this recommendation and is captured by Essential 4, which requires academic rigour to be central to all teaching and learning. It enables high expectations to be set for each student as teachers account for the current levels of learning of individual students and the different rates at which students develop.

Recommendation 3: Attract, support and retain high quality teachers

There is a strong emphasis throughout the OECD report on the need to engage high quality, highly-skilled teaching staff at low performing schools, and the argument is made that this is the singular most important factor in a process of changing both school cultures and disadvantaged students' performance : 'effective teachers are vital for disadvantaged schools' (OECD, 2012, p. 130).

Following Marzano & Pickering (2011) and Hattie (2009, 2011) AVID recognizes that improving teacher quality is at the heart an engaged classroom and of AVID's system. Teacher participation in the program is robustly voluntary, and supported with resources to ensure high quality, ongoing professional learning. The vertical site team collaboration builds a professional learning community, providing a theorized common language with which to discuss learning and teaching. It elevates a shared sense of professionalism, responsibility and commitment to ensuring the university aspirations and goals for these students are shared across the school and tertiary sectors.

AVID's comprehensive professional learning program draws on the explicit pedagogies of Vygotsky, Marzano, Costa and Bloom and is itself subject to continuous review and improvement from a dedicated curriculum development area. It uses an inclusive pedagogical approach that provides continuous training to teachers with an emphasis on using data and evidence to personalize learning programs. Pedagogies are based on the Socratic methodology where lessons are designed to make explicit the metacognitive processes that are occurring in conjunction with the subject content being taught.

Schools and universities work collaboratively to implement AVID. Tutors, for example, are often sourced from nearby universities and are trained in the AVID system, attending classes at the school twice a week to work with AVID teachers and students using a Socratic methodology that builds the critical and cultural engagement for independent learners to be successful at both school and university (Kozulin *et al* 2003; Watt *et al* 2011). Their pedagogical practice is informed by both the cognitive and affective domains defined by Bloom and revised by Marzano & Kendall (2007). In particular, clear explicit discourses about learning are used by undergraduate tutors who themselves model both the learning strategies and the subject positioning of a student who has attempted and achieved university entrance.

Recommendation 4: Ensure effective classroom learning strategies

AVID's methodology uses a set of explicit pedagogies it abbreviates to WICOR:
- Reading and Writing for purpose
- Inquiry
- Collaboration and
- Organisation Skills.

Across each of the four domains, AVID strategies centre on Socratic methods as a form of inquiry-based discourse that engages students and stimulates critical thinking. Teachers are trained to provide students with many structured opportunities to practice skills in critical thinking, reading, inquiry, and dialogue to analyze issues of increasing complexity (see Kozulin *et al*, 2003).

Explicit critical reading and writing strategies, including oral and visual literacies, are taught in turn to teachers of all disciplines so that each is equipped to teach the specific literacy requirements of their subject. Training materials for teachers are similarly scaffolded, ensuring recurrent reinforcement and modeling of AVID pedagogies. Whether you are an AVID student or an AVID teacher, the purpose of any learning activity is made explicit to ensure the deeper, metacognitive processes are also being learned in addition to the content.

Students are given added classroom support to take the most rigorous subjects the school offers that better prepare them for high achievement in tertiary admission testing. The process of building a tertiary entrance score is made unambiguous to these students and they are given assistance in both subject choice and effective planning for success. Similarly, they are carefully guided through the application process itself. These steps are taken to ensure that LSES students choices are not curtailed by a lack of cultural and social capital – they are inducted into a university-going culture no matter what their background. Teachers, in turn, receive ongoing training in effective strategies of instruction and effective practices focused on building a university-going culture in the whole school. This is compounded by the requirement that AVID students attend universities at least twice a year to participate in meaningful activities which enculturate them to the university environment and the expectation that they will be in a position to go there (see Hubbard & Ottoson, 1997; Mendiola *et al* 2010).

Recommendation 5: Prioritise linking schools with parents and communities

In order for schools to retain their registration with AVID, they are obliged to generate the active involvement of parents and the wider community which are critical to AVID's success at any site. Low performing schools are often located in LSES localities with a history or underachievement that may span several generations (Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Dennis *et al* 2005; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). The importance of developing tertiary aspiration for whole communities is clearly linked to their schools playing a pivotal role to achieve long term improvement in learning outcomes.

From the beginning of implementation, parents are encouraged to attend information evenings and share the decision making about participation in AVID with their child. Both sign contracts indicating they will support the principles of AVID participation and actively support their child to persist in the program, especially when it gets challenging. Parents have close communication with the AVID teacher, and enter a partnership where the students' development is tracked and maintained. A feature at many AVID sites is the Family Banquet

at the end of each year where student successes are formally celebrated and students acknowledge the support of parents and significant others. Again, the involvement of families and community are a prerequisite for continuation of a school's AVID registration.

In summary, AVID provides a systematic plan for whole-school reform over time. The ongoing data collection and analysis enables schools and regions to constantly measure and evaluate the impact of their practices and organization on student success. It establishes and fosters strong, enduring professional learning communities of practice amongst teachers, leaders, administrators, students and families.

Its growing success across the US over the last thirty two years has led to a increased number of disadvantaged students attending and graduating from HE – a success based (as we and others have argued) on explicit pedagogies, an increased teacher skill base, a change to school cultures which produce an expectation that disadvantaged students can and will transition to HE.

As increasing numbers of Australian secondary schools in LSES areas implement AVID, questions arise about the likelihood of it having a greater impact than was possible using Aimhigher in the UK. Our expectation is that it will, indeed, improve the numbers of high school students prepared to enter HE and to persevere whilst there. In part, this will be due to their higher levels of academic literacies but also to their familiarity with the tertiary environment, their families' and peers' endorsement and their own desire to achieve.

Conclusion

Mainstreaming HE is an international endeavor which has economic, social and individual interests at its centre. As we have shown, the UK began with an outreach strategy which focused on the building of aspiration amongst promising LSES students between 14 and 18 years of age. Despite their efforts, the results were mixed. As is clear from the opening discussion at the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, there was some dispute about whether the schools or universities had responsibility for the strategy's limitations.

Towards the end of the Widening Participation era, it began to be suggested that attention should be focused on not only the student, but on the institutions they are in – and those they will hopefully transition to:

> …a transformative approach to access must stress the idea that HE should be changed to permit it to both gauge and meet the needs of under-represented groups. Rather than being predicated on deficit models of potential entrants and positioning students as lacking aspirations, information or academic preparation, transformation requires serious and far-reaching structural change, which is to be informed by under-represented groups… Furthermore, it perceives diversity as a definite strength. Nor is the focus upon creating change via short-term, marginal projects undertaken by a few committed practitioners (Jones and Thomas 2005, p 619).

As Australia gears up to meet very similar challenges which the UK tackled ten years ago, its overall approach has been to strengthen partnerships between the pre-tertiary and tertiary sectors, but also between universities via the HEPPP grant system which privileges multilateral and cross sectoral projects.

In this paper, we have agreed with Jones & Thomas, and the OECD, that sustained culture change can be brought about by using a program which enriches low-performing schools and teachers, which engenders a whole school culture of academic rigour but which works

specifically with LSES students in the middle band through providing them with the cultural and social capital, the academic achievement and the expectation that they will continue on to tertiary education. Our contention is that aspirations are raised via the growth of attainment and the expectation of high achievement.

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