School Funding in Australia: A Critical Policy Analysis of School Sector Influence in the Processes of Policy Production

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Abstract: The distribution of government funding for schooling can lead to significant differences in educational opportunities and outcomes for students. Unsurprisingly, school funding policy has been a site of intense political and public debate in many countries. In Australia, the Public, Catholic, and Independent school sectors, which collectively make up the Australian education system, all receive government funding. This article examines the representation and influence of the three school sectors at key moments in the policymaking cycle of the *Review of Funding for Schooling*, a pivotal 2011 report that shaped the trajectory of school funding policy in Australia. This case study focused on the report's development and found a disproportional representation of the Independent and Catholic

school sectors at key points in the Review's policy cycle. In light of this critique, the article includes recommendations for more equitable policymaking processes in the future.
Keywords: school funding; critical policy analysis; policy cycle; Australia; equity

Financiamiento escolar en Australia: Un análisis político crítico de la influencia del sector escolar en los procesos de producción de políticas

Resumen: La distribución de los fondos gubernamentales para la escolarización puede dar lugar a diferencias significativas en las oportunidades educativas y los resultados de los estudiantes. Como era de esperar, la política de financiación escolar ha sido un lugar de intenso debate político y público en muchos países. En Australia, los sectores de escuelas públicas, católicas e independientes, que en conjunto conforman el sistema educativo australiano, reciben fondos del gobierno. Este artículo examina la representación y la influencia de los tres sectores escolares en momentos clave del ciclo de formulación de políticas de la *Review of Funding for Schooling*, un informe fundamental de 2011 que dio forma a la trayectoria de la política de financiación escolar en Australia. Este estudio de caso se centró en el desarrollo del informe y encontró una representación desproporcionada de los sectores de escuelas católicas e independientes en puntos clave del ciclo de políticas de la Revisión. A la luz de esta crítica, el artículo incluye recomendaciones para procesos de formulación de políticas más equitativos en el futuro.
Palabras-clave: financiamiento escolar; análisis crítico de políticas; ciclo de política; Australia; equidad

Financiamento escolar na Austrália: Uma análise política crítica da influência do setor escolar nos processos de produção de políticas

Resumo: A distribuição do financiamento do governo para a escolarização pode levar a diferenças significativas nas oportunidades e resultados educacionais para os alunos. Sem surpresa, a política de financiamento escolar tem sido um local de intenso debate político e público em muitos países. Na Austrália, os setores de escolas públicas, católicas e independentes, que coletivamente compõem o sistema educacional australiano, recebem financiamento do governo. Este artigo examina a representação e a influência dos três setores escolares em momentos-chave no ciclo de formulação de políticas da *Review of Funding for Schooling*, um relatório crucial de 2011 que moldou a trajetória da política de financiamento escolar na Austrália. Este estudo de caso concentrou-se no desenvolvimento do relatório e encontrou uma representação desproporcional dos setores escolar independente e católico em pontos-chave do ciclo de políticas da Revisão. À luz dessa crítica, o artigo inclui recomendações para processos de formulação de políticas mais equitativos no futuro.
Palavras-chave: financiamento escolar; análise crítica de políticas; ciclo de político; Austrália; equidade

School Funding in Australia: A Critical Policy Analysis of School Sector Influence in the Processes of Policy Production

The distribution of government funding for schooling can lead to significant differences in the educational opportunities available for individual students, schools, and communities (Horsford & Sampson, 2013). Importantly, school funding is not only about economic disparity--social and political forces influence the "who gets what, when and how" (Lasswell, 1958, p. 1) of resource distribution at the national, state and local levels of an education system (Connors & McMorrow, 2015; Molla & Gale, 2019). At the centre of the most intense school funding debates is an ongoing contest between the values of "entitlement versus need" (Connors & McMorrow, 2015, p. 21), meaning that fundamental issues related to equity are the subject of contested, ongoing debate. As researchers, teachers, and citizens, we believe an equitable education system provides equal opportunity and resources to all students.

The Australian context provides an illustrative case given the three school sectors that make up its education system—Public, Catholic, and Independent—all receive government funding. Despite the fact, each enrolls different proportions and demographics of the Australian student population meaning they do not equitably reflect the diversity of Australian society (Australian Government, 2011; Reid, 2020). For example, the Independent school sector enrolls 14% of all Australian students, yet 6% of those students come from the bottom quartile of the Socio-Economic Advantage (SEA) index (Australian Government, 2011). In contrast, the Public school sector enrolls 66% of all Australian students, yet 79% of the students in this sector come from the bottom quartile of SEA.

Unfortunately, global comparisons show differences in academic performance between Australia's highest and lowest performing students are more dependent on family and social background than in many other countries such as Canada, Ireland, Austria, Korea, Finland (Organisation Economic Co-operation & Development [OECD], 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2010, 2013, 2016). Despite the above inequities and differences, the entitlement versus need debate has meant the three school sectors' representatives have fought for their portion of the public school funding purse for the better part of a century (Keating, 2011). The latest iteration of school funding debates revolved around the *Review of Funding for Schooling* (2011) [the Review]: Australia's most extensive national review of funding since 1973 (Keating & Klatt, 2013).

The purpose of this article was to critically examine the policymaking processes of the Review in order to consider the role and influence of the three school sectors across the policy's cycle. To attend to this purpose, we designed a qualitative case study research design to analyze a particular phenomenon within a bounded context (Merriam, 1998). The following research questions guided our study:

1. What types of roles did the representatives of the three school sectors in Australia play in the *Review of Funding for Schooling's* policymaking processes?
2. Were the three school sectors equitably represented across the *Review of Funding for Schooling's* policymaking processes?
3. What can we learn from studying the *Review of Funding for Schooling* to make school funding policymaking more equitable in the future?

We bound the case from September 2004, the federal election campaign of this year involved a bitter fight over school funding policy (Gillard, 2014), until April 2012, when the federal government publicly released the Review's final report. Our retrospective critical policy analysis was generative

for identifying inequities and then recommendations for impacting future school funding policymaking in real-time.
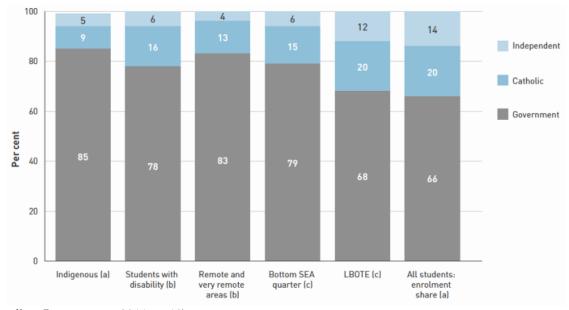
   We organise the article's sections as follows. The first provides an overview of the structure of the Australian school system and a history of school funding policy in the country. The second section considers the policy document at the centre of this article: *Review of Funding for Schooling* (2011). We then build on this by reviewing relevant literature and then presenting a rationale for a critical policy analysis approach before explaining how we drew on Ball and colleagues' (1992) policy cycle as a theoretical framework. The fourth section describes the methodology and key findings from the study. The paper concludes with a discussion of the study's contribution and suggestions for moving toward more equitable school funding policymaking processes in Australia and elsewhere.

The Australian School System: Structure and School Funding Policy History

   The Australian school system enrolled 3,849,225 students across 9,444 schools in 2010 (Australian Government, 2019). It features grade levels from Foundation to Year 12, with schools, for the most part, split into primary (Foundation–Grade 6) and secondary schools (Grades 7–12).

   There are three school sectors, Public, Catholic and Independent, which are pillars of the school system. Each sector enrolls differing proportions of the total Australian student population, and there is also a lack of equitable distribution of students concerning cultural backgrounds—Indigenous students in particular—disability, remoteness, socio-economic advantage (SEA), and language background other than English (LBOTE) [see, Figure 1]. These inequities provide the frame for our critical approach to analysis. It is worth noting that there has been a drift towards the Independent sector in recent years, particularly among the socially and economically privileged (Connors & McMorrow, 2015). Each of the Australian school sectors has its unique characteristics, and we detail these in the sections that follow because they provide a lens for our CPA approach.

Figure 1

Australian Student Enrollments Percentage of Each School Sector in 2011

(Australian Government, 2011, p. 10)

The Public School Sector

The Australian Public school sector is the largest and oldest in Australia, beginning before the Australian federation in 1901. Landmark legislation passed in the 1880s in each of the colonies of Australia—which at that time were Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia—created free, compulsory, and secular education for all students (Wilkinson et al., 2006). However, at this point in Australian history, "all Australians" did not include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who were often subject to practices of segregation and exclusion (Cadzow, 2007). In terms of its portion of the Australian student population: In 2011, 66% of students attended Public schools (Australian Government, 2011) with 79% of students from the lowest quartile of SEA backgrounds attending these schools (Australian Government, 2011). While the Public school sector is still the only sector that must offer a free education to any student, individual schools within the sector increasingly operate as free-standing organisations detached from local authority, oversight, and planning and are encouraged to compete rather than collaborate with other schools (Brooks & Normore, 2010; Hogan & Thompson, 2020; Holloway & Keddie, 2019; Savage, 2011; Savage, 2013; Thompson et al., 2019). However, technically all Public schools are part of the Public school system.

The Catholic School Sector

The Catholic school sector is the second largest in Australia. However, it is significantly smaller than the Public school sector. Its purpose is to provide a mainstream education with religious instruction (Connors & McMorrow, 2015) and has operated in Australia since the first half of the 19th century (Wilkinson et al., 2006). Many Catholic schools charge modest fees to enable access to students from all backgrounds, including those who may not be Catholic. In 2011, 20% of Australian students attended Catholic schools (Australian Government, 2011). Most Catholic schools are part of a school system: Each system has its ownership, systematic traditions, and mission statement. Federal and state governments provide funding in blocks to these systems, which then use discretion to allocate funding between schools (Australian Government, 2011). That is to say, the Catholic system has separate funding arrangements with both levels of government, which allow it to allocate funding to individual schools in its purview according to its volition. These systems play an influential role in the delivery of schooling across Australia because they must meet government requirements in terms of compliance and accountability in order to receive public funding (Australian Government, 2011). Government funding for the Catholic sector is the subject of heated and ongoing debates in Australian society (Keating, 2011; Kenway, 2013).

The Independent School Sector

In recent decades, the Independent school sector has emerged as an influential stakeholder in the Australian education system (Connors & McMorrow, 2015). For the most part, these schools operate as stand-alone entities overseen by a governing body and run by a principal, marking a key difference between it and the other two school sectors. Schools within this sector often represent particular community groups, mostly, but not always, with religious affiliations (Australian Government, 2011). The number of students attending schools within this sector has grown significantly in recent decades. For example, in 1970, Independent schools enrolled 4% of all students in Australia. Most of these students attended denominational Christian schools. Other Independent schools were Jewish and non-denominational schools and a small number of other schools (Australian Bureau Statistics, 1971). Yet by 2010, the Independent sector's enrollment share had increased to 14% (Australian Government, 2011). However, the make-up of its student population does not equitably reflect the demographics of broader Australian society (see, Figure 1).

This fact is problematic because an overrepresentation of disadvantaged students in a school has been shown to disproportionately impact the opportunities and outcomes of those attending the school (Australian Government, 2011). This link is even stronger when there are multiple disadvantages—such as English as a second language, geographic location, and disability—as they compound to negatively affect education performance (Australian Government, 2011; Kenway, 2013). Like the Catholic school sector, government funding for the Independent school sector is the subject of heated and ongoing debates in Australian society that shows no signs of disappearing (Keating, 2011).

There was much at stake in the *Review of Funding for Schooling* (2011) for the three school sectors because the Terms of Reference provided to the appointed panel required them to provide recommendations to the government for the school funding period beyond 2013 (Australian Government, 2011).

Australian School Funding Policy

The funding of Australian schools has a long and complex history that began with legislation passed by colonial governments in the late 19th century to provide free, compulsory and secular schooling for all students (Wilkinson et al., 2006). Though the legislation ended the public funding of all schools not adhering to its criteria, it is important to note that religious schools did not cease to exist (Connors & McMorrow, 2015). For the purposes of this paper, we skip forward to analyze the emergence and trajectory of the Australian government as a major funder of Australian schools because of its role in commissioning, funding, and implementing the recommendations of the Review.

The initial driver for the Australian government's intervention into education funding was the launch of the Russian Sputnik in 1957, which sparked calls for improved science education given the nature of the Cold War political climate (Connors & McMorrow, 2015). In response, the Menzies Commonwealth government in 1964 responded by providing a $10 million program of capital grants for science laboratories in secondary schools allocated on a roughly pro-rata basis between the government and non-government school sectors (Wilkinson et al., 2006). Also, during this time, there was an increasing number of voices suggesting that the federal government needed to supplement the funding of schools to ensure they could meet the basics such as classroom space, educational resources, teachers' wages and so on (Connors & McMorrow, 2015). Furthermore, both the Public and Catholic school sectors were under significant pressure to deal with population growth and the changing approach to education occurring at the time (Wilkinson et al., 2006).

Meanwhile, the Independent school sector was able to sail through this challenging period on the back of fees and support from its privileged clientele (Connors & McMorrow, 2015). More broadly, the rise of neoliberal economic and social policies in the industrialized, liberal democracies of the West during the 1970s and 1980s placed significant political pressure on the federal government to keep Australia competitive in the increasingly global economy (Connors & McMorrow, 2015). It is worth noting that before the Whitlam government (1972-75), the federal government did not provide ongoing funding to any schools in Australia.

Seemingly in response to the challenges outlined above, the federal government commissioned a national review of school funding policy in 1973. The review processes produced the Karmel report (1973): the last national review of school funding in Australia. The report recommended the federal government step in to fund schools facing shortfalls (Connors & McMorrow, 2015). The Australian High Court's ratification of the report's recommendations for increased federal involvement in school funding via its interpretation of section 96 of the Australian Constitution changed the future of the Australian education system (Connors & McMorrow, 2015).

This is because the implementation of the Karmel recommendations would pave the way for the federal government's contribution to funding both Public and non-government schools to increase rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s (Lingard, 2000), with the latter the greatest beneficiary of federal funds, which to this day remains a contentious issue in Australian society (Keating, 2011).

Post Karmel, the Australian federal government became increasingly influential as globalization and its ability to raise revenue beyond the Australian states and territories took effect (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In combination, this resulted in a "vertical fiscal imbalance" (Lingard, 2000, p. 11) between the revenue-raising power of the states and the federal government, a trend exacerbated after the latter took over responsibility for collecting income tax during World War II (Savage, 2020). In recent years the federal government has pursued the reorganization of the Australian education system from state and territories independently running their education systems towards a national approach to education (Lingard, 2000; Savage, 2016). It has increasingly sought to influence the direction of Australian education policy and, by extension, school funding policy in ways that reflect its broader economic and social agendas for the nation (Gerrard et al., 2017).

Recent decades have seen significant increases in federal funding for Public and non-government schools (Reid, 2020). However, the ledger has been firmly favouring non-government schools regarding funding increases (Savage, 2015). The favouring of the non-government school sector over the Public sector was economic but also cultural. To illustrate, in his final year of an eleven-year reign (1996-2007), Prime Minister John Howard made clear that he considered the Public education system to be little more than "the safety net and guarantor of reasonable quality education in this country" (Armitage, 2007, p. 21). The direction of federal funding in recent decades reflects this attitude. Indeed, school funding policy and the debate of need versus entitlement for the three Australian school sectors continues to be, and will likely always be, a highly contentious political issue in Australia (Keating, 2011).

Despite these shifts and changes, the federal government is still not a provider of schooling but continues to provide significant funding for schools (Savage, 2020). State and territory governments still run Public schooling, and these schools receive funding from both levels of government, with the majority coming from the states (Australian Government, 2011). It is important to note that while Public schools are unable to charge fees as a requirement of enrollment, a minority of high socioeconomic Public schools are increasingly drawing on voluntary parental contributions to improve their position in the education market (Rowe & Perry, 2020a, 2020b; Rowe & Perry, 2021). Non-government schools also receive funding from the state and federal governments. On top of these amounts, they can raise revenue from the fees they charge each student to enroll and from private fundraising which varies markedly depending upon the school (Connors & McMorrow, 2015). Most government funding for the non-government school sector comes from the federal government (Australian Government, 2011). In 2010, for example, the Australian government provided 74% of all government net recurrent funding for the Catholic sector and 73% for the Independent sector. The Australian government provided only 15% of the recurrent net funding in the Public sector, with 85% coming from the states and territories (Australian Government, 2011).

Consequently, there was a lack of coordination in the way governments provided school funding to the three sectors for the decades leading up to the Review's announcement (Reid, 2020). There was also overlap in the funding priorities of the Australian government and state and territory governments, ensuring it was not always clear which level of government was providing funding for individual schools (Australian Government, 2011). As a result, at the time, there was significant momentum for school funding reform supported by a cross-section of Australian education stakeholders (Connors & McMorrow, 2015; Reid, 2020). Many argued that the then approach to

school funding was messy, overly complex, and opaque, given the crossover between state and federal funding (Reid, 2020). Others argued that equity issues plaguing the Australian school system meant school funding reform was, therefore, a necessity, and any review must address these issues (Kenway, 2013; Reid, 2020; Teese & Walstab, 2011). Add in the vested interests of the three school sectors, all funded according to different formulas, and the five-panel members appointed to conduct the Review had quite a task to balance these competing interests (Keating, 2011).

The *Review of Funding for Schooling* (2011)

The federal government announced the *Review of Funding for Schooling* (2011) [the Review] in April of 2010 (Gillard, 2010a). According to the federal Education minister at the time, the process would be "open and transparent, thorough and wide-ranging. It will not be about taking money away from any school. All Australians will be given the chance to engage in this historic process." (Gillard, 2010a, p. 1). The Review's overarching aim was to:

> ...provide recommendations to the Minister with responsibility for school education on the future funding arrangements for schooling in Australia for the period beyond 2013. The Review's recommendations will be directed towards achieving a funding system for the period beyond 2013 which is transparent, fair, financially sustainable and effective in promoting excellent educational outcomes for all Australian students (Australian Government, 2011, p. 225).

It is known colloquially as the "Gonski Review" because the then federal Labor government appointed David Gonski AO, a prominent Australian businessperson and public figure, to chair its five-person panel. During the Review's consultation processes, the panel received over 7,000 submissions from stakeholders, educational professionals, and members of the public. And visited 39 schools and communicated with 71 education groups across Australia (Australian Government, 2011). Whilst the Review was an attempt to have a national discussion about what the public funding of schooling should look like across sectors and states, it was also a policy mechanism by which to drive federal governmental agendas in education policy (Gerrard et al., 2017). That said, it did provide "one of the most exhaustive reviews of schooling that we [Australia] have had for decades, going back to the mid-1970s" (Bonnor, 2014, p. 35).

The research evidence circulating before the Review showing the socio-economic stratification across school sectors (Teese & Walstad, 2011) ensured that the Review would impact economic, racial, and linguistic disparities within the Australian education system. Depending, of course, on the direction taken with its processes and the findings and recommendations it made to the federal government. In response, this article provides a snapshot of the Review's policymaking processes, which offers insight, learning, and recommendations for the future beyond the Review. Before doing so, we provide some key background information and then review relevant literature to contextualise the case study.

Critical Policy Analysis and the Policy Cycle

Critical policy analysis (CPA) must locate power in policymaking processes and challenge conditions of inequity (Ball, 1994; Molla, 2021). That is, this type of policy research examines inequities from multiple perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Geertz, 2008). Researchers who adopt a critical stance focus on locating power in social practices by understanding, uncovering, and transforming conditions of inequity embedded in society (Rogers, 2004). This critical consciousness challenges assumptions that privilege some and oppress others (Willis, 2008). A critical approach

signals the researcher's intentions to transform inequitable conditions, so this stance pervades all aspects of the research process (Willis, 2008). Since the researcher takes a political stance based on issues of inequity and power, some researchers believe that this positioning is subjective and unduly influences the research (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). We agree with Freire (1970), who argued that all research is political and is always from within the personal stance of the researcher. In our view, CPA is transparent in that it makes the researcher's stance explicit and public to readers of that research.
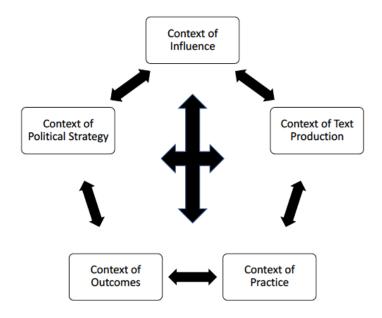
As scholars familiar with CPA (Sinclair & Brooks, 2021), we frame our study of the Review's policymaking processes around CPA's five broad concerns identified by Diem, Young, Welton, Mansfield and Lee (2014):

1. the difference between policy rhetoric and practiced reality
2. the roots and development of policies
3. the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge (i.e., who gets what and why)
4. social stratification, inequality, and privilege
5. how nondominant groups resist and engage in policy efforts.

To address the above and our research questions concerning the Review, we frame our analysis using an adaption of Stephen Ball's (1994; Bowe et al., 1992) policy cycle heuristic. For Ball and colleagues, there are three key policymaking contexts: the Context of Influence; the Context of Text Production; and the Context of Practice, with two others added later, the Context of Outcomes and the Context of Political Strategy (Ball, 1994).

Figure 2

A Policy Cycle Heuristic for Examining the Review of Funding for Schooling (2011)

Note: Modified from Ball (1994) and Bowe et al. (1992)

Context of Influence

The Context of Influence is the first of the original three contexts outlined by Bowe et al. in their 1992 book. The Context of Influence is put forward as the spaces in which different groups contest the definition and purposes of education (Gulson, 2011). For example, policy stakeholders may debate policy problems and their proposed solutions, and interest groups advocate for their preferred policies or against policies of political opponents (Furlong et al., 2000; Gulson, 2011). The aim is to understand what was going on before the policy production process begins or, in other words: "where policy is normally initiated" (Minh Ngo et al., 2006, p. 227) and how these events may eventually influence policy processes and the final written policy text. Similarly, the analysis considers a policy moment's history. That is, how and why it emerged as a problem and why it is happening now.

The Context of Influence's relationship with the second context, the Context of Policy Text Production, is characterized by ongoing tension (Bowe et al., 1992). This strain arises because the triumphant interests and ideologies in the Context of Influence need to represent their ideas and goals in an actual policy text. In this article, we use the Context of Influence frame to illuminate how the non-government school sector played a major role in shaping the conditions for the Review to emerge at the time and in the form that it did.

The Context of Text Production

The Context of Text Production is the second of three policymaking contexts in the policy cycle framework. It considers the construction, development, and representation of a policy over time. Highlighting the importance of this context, Bowe et al. (1992) point out that the meaning of a policy is up for grabs during these processes. Consequently, the final policy text that results is viewed as the outcome of struggle and compromise "to control the meaning of policy through its representation" (Bowe et al., 1992, p. 21). Thus, how the final policy reflects the prevailing goals, arguments and discourses seen in the Context of Influence is a focus of the analysis (Bowe et al., 1992; Furlong et al., 2000; Minh Ngo et al., 2006; Vidovich, 2007). The analysis also considers the specific actors involved in producing the final policy text and how they have influenced the process via their political ideologies (Bowe et al., 1992). This work recognizes that policy texts are shaped in important ways by the struggles between stakeholders who want to control the direction of an education policy in a certain way. In short--policy texts represent policy. In this article, we use the Context of Text Production frame to highlight the representation of the three school sectors at key moments of the policymaking processes of the Review, drawing attention to inequities in representation and consultation.

The Context of Practice

The Context of Practice is the third of the original three policymaking contexts (Bowe et al., 1992). The analysis here focuses on where a policy directs its attention and the arenas it seeks to influence and reform (Bowe et al., 1992). It also examines the spaces from which a policy's problem or issue emerges and then focuses on the direction and targets of a policy's proposed solutions. In other words, the analytical focus is on where the consequences of a policy are experienced (Gulson, 2011). Additionally, the Context of Practice lens requires an analysis of how the intentions and the values and principles put forward in policy documents play out in practice. Importantly, this context also encourages scholars to examine the different social realities policies seek to represent and obscure. While part of the large project from which we draw the data and findings for this article, it is not used here in our analysis.

Two years after the publication of the policy cycle heuristic, Ball (1994) expanded the initial policy cycle heuristic by adding two more contexts of policy analysis (Gulson, 2011; Lingard, 1996; Taylor, 1997; Vidovich, 2001, 2007). For the most part, these two additions sought to respond to the claim that the policy cycle analyses did not offer meaningful recommendations for education and social change (Hatcher & Troyna, 1994).

The Context of Outcomes

The Context of Outcomes is the fourth of the five analytical frames and the first of two added by Ball in 1994. It is primarily concerned with policy effects and calls for examining how policies impact educational and social inequality (Gulson, 2011). In turn, the analysis focuses on both the first and second-order effects of a policy. By assessing the first-order impacts of a policy, it is concerned with results. That is the policy text's explicit goals and the degree to which it succeeds or not against these stated goals. Equally, it is concerned with the second-order effects of a policy's implementation. Here, conclusions are drawn on the policy's achievement, or not, of social justice goals and its implications for social justice. While part of the larger project from which we draw the data and findings for this article, it is not used here in our analysis. However, the findings that emerge from this context inform the final context: the Context of Political Strategy, which helps frame the recommendations in the final part of the article.

The Context of Political Strategy

The Context of Political Strategy is the final of the five analytical frames of the policy cycle heuristic. The purpose of this context is to ameliorate the inequities identified across the policy trajectory by proposing strategies to improve practice in the future: For example, a lack of access to resources, opportunities and so on (Gulson, 2011). It has a connection to the Context of Outcomes in that it "is concerned with identifying strategies to tackle the inequalities" (Vidovich, 2007, p. 289) identified there (Ball, 1994; Lingard, 1996; Minh Ngo et al., 2006). That is to say, it is concerned with using the evaluation of both the outcomes at the first level of implementation and the second-order level of achieving social justice goals to inform and suggest alternative approaches for the future. It encourages the policy researcher to identify a set of political and social activities, which might more effectively improve practice, and tackle inequities reproduced and or created by the policy. In this paper, we use this context as the impetus for our recommendations towards progressing school funding policymaking to more equitable processes and, therefore, outcomes for the Australian education system.

A Policy Cycle Approach for Studying the *Review of Funding Schooling* (2011)

Our application contrasts Ball and colleagues (1992) first use of the policy cycle. These scholars used the framework to demonstrate that policy is continuously interpreted and reinterpreted by school level actors upon implementation. Here our focus is exclusively on national-level debate and development of school funding policy because of the specifics of the Review. That said, like all policy cycle studies to date (Bailey, 2016; Bowe et al., 1992; Gulson, 2011; Looney, 2004; Piazza, 2015), this research uses the policy cycle heuristic to demonstrate that a policy is developed, debated, and contested in distinct yet interrelated contexts as Figure 2 shows. However, while the larger project from which this article draws its data uses all five of the policy cycle contexts, due to the specifics of the research questions, in this article, we provide a snapshot of the policy cycle of the Review. In doing so, we focus on the Context of Influence, the Context of Text Production and then use the Context of Political Strategy to help frame our approach to providing recommendations for the future.

Methodology

The purpose of this article was to critically examine the policymaking processes of the *Review of Funding for Schooling* (2011) in order to consider the role and influence of the three school sectors across the policy's cycle. To attend to this purpose, we employed a qualitative case study research design bounded by both time and context (Merriam, 1998). The case began in September 2004, with a federal election campaign that featured a bitter fight over school funding policy (Gillard, 2014) and concluded in April 2012, when the federal government publicly released the Review's final report. As an Australian-specific study, the case is also bound by this context.

Data Collection

Case study data collection provides the opportunity to investigate multiple sources of evidence (Geertz, 2008). As such, we provide rich and descriptive data revealing the complexity involved with the *Review of Funding for Schooling* (2011) case (Merriam, 1998). The data sources included five public records (O'Leary, 2014)—three policy texts, one press release, and one public speech—and six personal records (O'Leary, 2014)—four media articles, one book chapter, and one autobiography. All documents were available online.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis commenced by creating a timeline of events, starting with the equity-inspired school funding policy proposals the Australian Labor Party (ALP) put forward at the 2004 federal election. Guided by the policy cycle conceptual framework, the first step was to consider the key moments that shaped the emergence of the Review and specifically its approach to issues of equity. Second, we examined the backgrounds and professional associations of the panel members appointed to conduct the Review. The third step focused on the panel's stakeholder consultations and school visits.

Using a CPA ethos, we paid particular attention to the extent to which there was equitable representation and participation of school sectors across these policymaking processes (Diem et al., 2014; Diem & Young, 2015). We checked and re-checked our findings to confirm that our interpretations and conclusions were systematic (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Rigour and Triangulation

There are several ways to assess the rigour of a case study (Houghton et al., 2013). Given that this study was an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995), we followed Lincoln and Guba's (1990) guidance on establishing trustworthiness and Merriam's (1998) notion of triangulation. Lincoln and Guba (1990) identified two trustworthiness criteria: credibility and transferability. A research project establishes credibility when the researchers spend sufficient time to be able to identify and verify recurrent themes and patterns (Krefting, 1991). This article draws its data from a larger study that took place over four years. During this time, we developed a deep understanding of the context, time period and data (Yin, 2018). The research process we employed provided us with sufficient opportunity to seek out relevant sources of data and gain an appreciation of the complex and multi-faceted perspectives on the topic (Bogdan & Biklan, 2007).

We also employed triangulation throughout the study as a way to establish that data were credible (Merriam, 1998). This process meant that when we gathered data, we sought out other data sources that supported or refuted the claims of the original data (Bogdan & Biklan, 2007). For example, when we read a stakeholder comment on the ALP's 2004 school funding policy and made claims about the purposes and aims of the policy, we sought out commentary, data and

documentation from other sources. Given the political nature of the topic, we actively sought out opposing viewpoints in addition to those that corroborated the speaker's vantage point (Diem & Young, 2015).

Findings

Equity Inspired School Funding Policy and the 2004 Federal Australian Election Campaign

The fierce contest over school funding policy at the 2004 Australian federal election provided context for our findings in later sections because it illuminated the power of the non-government school sector. We focus less on the nature of the school funding policies put forward by the ALP during the campaign—they lost the election so the policies would never see the light of day—and focus more on the responses from special interest groups in Australian education. Specifically, those of the Independent schools' spokespeople, the media, and elements of the political class to one aspect of the policy during and post the ALP's 2004 election loss.

During the campaign, the ALP promised a comprehensive national school funding reform plan. A key plank of their education policy agenda was the redistribution of school funding based on equity principles. Indeed, this would be the aspect that attracted the most attention because the proposal promised to redistribute a significant proportion of the public funds of a list of uber-wealthy Independent schools to those who require additional resources per the ALP's measurements (Yaxley, 2004). The list consisted of 67 elite high fee schools (Yaxley, 2004), and the plan was to strip these schools of $500 million over five years and then redistribute the funds on an equity basis to disadvantaged non-government schools. The ALP rationalized the cut because five percent of the nation's students attend these elite schools. Those on the list received substantially more public funding than needed, given their ability to raise funds via fees, donations, and so on (Yaxley, 2004). This equity inspired redistributive school funding reform plan was met with an intense reaction, both leading into and post the 2004 election (Bentley, 2017).

Powerful political and special interest groups went after the policy. For example, then Conservative Prime Minister John Howard described the policy as "Old fashioned class warfare" and a "hit list", which repeatedly appeared in media coverage throughout the campaign (Browne, 2012, p. 1). The Independent Schools group, who argued the policy was "19th-century class warfare" on school funding, repeatedly warned the policy would increase parents' fees (Browne, 2012, p. 1). While the Melbourne Grammar headmaster—an elite Independent school—said the Labor policy would "without question lead to higher fees - and the school becoming more exclusive. I just cannot believe that their solution to the problem is simply to take it from schools where they erroneously believe that all parents are wealthy" (Sheanen, as quoted in *The Age*, 2004, p. 1). Next, the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria's chief executive joined in saying the proposed cuts were "based on some 19th-century view of class warfare" (Greene, as quoted in *The Age*, 2004, p. 1). Building on these arguments, the then federal Education Minister suggested that by forcing some parents to move their children from Independent to Public schools, Labor's policy would cost taxpayers money: "This is a policy of punishment and persecution that will actually discourage parents from making sacrifices for their children" (Nelson, as quoted in *The Age*, 2004, p. 2). These were influential arguments in shaping the Review because the ALP would lose the 2004 election, and some would blame this policy in the wash-up for the defeat. Indeed, as we show in the coming sections, key players in the formation of the Review publicly admitted years later that the 2004 election loss resulted in them making concessions to the non-government school sector.

In some quarters, the equity-based funding policy was one of the key reasons the ALP lost the 2004 election. The "war", as its opponents above described it, with part of the Independent

school sector on school funding, was singled out as the critical weakness in its broader policy agenda. For example, the *Daily Telegraph* described the policy as a "Disaster"; prominent academic Robert Manne called it "Dubious politics" and a "policy mistake"; and a columnist at *The Age* described it as a "searing experience" for the ALP (Browne, 2012, p.1).

Evidence has since emerged that the election loss caused the ALP to recalibrate its school funding policy (Bentley, 2017; Gillard, 2014). For example, there was an absence of any school sector-based redistributive funding policy from that point onwards in key ALP policy papers and proposals (Rudd & Smith, 2007). Instead, the party pivoted towards driving a national approach to education policy that inextricably linked school funding to the nation's economic growth and prosperity (Rudd & Smith, 2007). In doing so, the ALP prioritized bringing all Australian students up to a minimum standard of education outcomes rather than focusing on providing equality of opportunity and access to resources and or addressing the impact of long-term inequities in the education system. According to the OECD (2006) data the ALP was citing, this focus on education outcomes would see the fulfillment of its economic and social goals for Australia (Lewis, 2020; Rudd & Smith, 2007).

Years later, evidence emerged that the Independent school sector influenced the roots and development (Diem et al., 2014) of the Review. For example, Education Minister Julia Gillard's Deputy Chief of Staff admitted in 2017 that her now-infamous promise that "no school would lose a dollar as a result of the Review" (Gillard, 2010b, p. 1) was a response to the campaign by Independent school organisations that "destroyed Labor's school funding policy at the 2004 election" (p. 341). He said the promise "was politically necessary to prevent meltdown" and agreement between the Review panel's five members would have been difficult in the absence of the promise (Bentley, 2017, p. 341). Former Prime Minister Gillard later confirmed the aim was to head off any campaign by the Australian Liberal party about a "hit list" (Harrison, 2010, p. 1) of schools by assuring the Independent school organisations that their taxpayer funding was not under threat. In her autobiography, Gillard went further, admitting that "at the outset, I sought to neutralise potential hit-list style politics…. Because I lived haunted by echoes of the 2004 election campaign" (Gillard, 2014, p. 257). As we show in the coming sections, the no school losing a dollar promise was not the only concession made to the Independent school sector during the Review.

The Make-up of the *Review of Funding for Schooling*'s Panel

On May 1, 2010, Education Minister Gillard announced the Review's panel members. According to her media release: The panel would "conduct the Government's historic review into the funding of every Australian School" and

> be led by chairman David Gonski AC, an eminent businessman, and philanthropist who is also the chancellor of the University of NSW and chairman of the Australian Securities Exchange, Coca-Cola Amatil, and Investec Bank. The panel will also include Ken Boston AO, former Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the United Kingdom; Carmen Lawrence, former Federal Minister and Premier of Western Australia and current Professorial Fellow in the Institute of Advanced Studies at the University of Western Australia; Kathryn Greiner AO, Deputy Chancellor at Bond University and chairperson of Australian Hearing; and Peter Tannock AM, noted international educationalist and former vice-chancellor of the University of Notre Dame. The panel reflects the widest possible range of experience and knowledge and is best placed to lead this historic piece of educational reform which will see school funding for government, Catholic

and independent schools reviewed in time for the next funding agreement due in
2013. (Gillard, 2010a, p. 1)

The professional backgrounds and associations of Mr Gonski and his fellow panellists are examined
in detail because, as Bowe et al. (1992) pointed out, they were responsible for representing the
triumphant policy ideas and discourses into the published text as well as translating the Terms of
Reference into a final report that provided recommendations for the government. The importance
of focusing on the panel's make-up is also important because, as Diem et al. (2014) make clear, CPA
should examine both the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge as well as social
stratification, inequality, and privilege. The appendices of the Education Minister's media release
(Gillard, 2010a) provided us with the panel members professional experiences and qualifications.

Notably, Chair David Gonski was the chairperson of the Sydney Grammar School
Foundation Limited and the Sydney Grammar School Trust, subsidiaries of an elite Independent
boys school located in Sydney. An interesting appointment given the Independent sector in 2010
made up 14% of total Australian student enrollments. Conspicuously, Gonski's role as chairman of
an elite Independent school trust was not acknowledged by Gillard in her public comments on the
record, with this fact appearing only at the bottom of a media release of the panel's professional
experience (Gillard, 2010a).

Dr Peter Tannock was the second appointment listed. Minister Gillard referred to him
publicly as a "noted international educationalist and former vice-chancellor of the University of
Notre Dame" (Gillard, 2010a, p. 3). Analysis revealed he was also the former chairman of the
National Catholic Education Commission and the chairperson of the Catholic Education
Commission, and the director of Catholic Education Western Australia 1985–1992. Significantly, he
was also a key member of the last national review of schooling funding in 1973 (See, Karmel, 1973).
Interestingly, Gillard did not publicly acknowledge Tannock's strong connection to the Catholic
sector on the record nor his affiliation with the Karmel Report (Gillard, 2010a). While larger than
the Independent sector, the Catholic sector enrolls 20% of all Australian students, yet their
representative is listed second in the panel's hierarchy behind chairperson Gonski.

Further analysis revealed that Dr Ken Boston's, Kathryn Greiner and Dr Carmen
Lawrence's backgrounds connected them loosely to the Public school sector. Although, neither had
the explicit ties to Public schools or the Public school sector more broadly in ways Gonski and
Tannock did with the Independent and Catholic sectors respectively—despite the Public-school
sector making up 66% of all Australian enrollments. The final panel member, Dr Carmen Lawrence,
had a professional profile that gave no clue about her affiliations with any specific school sector. The
explicit links of key panel members to the non-government school sector mean the Review was not
independent, calling into question whether addressing inequity across school sectors in the
Australian education system was ever a realistic possibility for the Review. After all, as Bentley
(2017) acknowledged, without the "no school will lose a dollar as a result of the review" (Gillard,
2010b, p. 1) promise, agreement between panel members would have been difficult.

The silences in terms of representation across the panel and their professional backgrounds
and experiences are worth highlighting. For example, those most impacted by the Review's
recommendations: namely Public school teachers and principals (Skourdoumbis, 2016), were not
represented on the panel in any way. Furthermore, illustrating Diem et al. (2014) point that there are
often differences between policy rhetoric and practiced reality, there was no Indigenous
representation on the panel despite improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students being
one of the central aims of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*
(Education Council, 2008*).* The contrast between the Indigenous student enrollments making up

5.6% of total Australian enrollments in 2010 (Australian Government, 2011) and the Independent school sector with 14% of enrollments is worthy of consideration given the latter had a representative of their sector chair the panel. The point here is that there were several options available to the federal government regarding appointing individuals to the Review's panel. Put another way, with a different panel make-up, the Review may have taken a different approach and produced different findings and, therefore, recommendations.

The Consultation of School Sectors' Stakeholders during the Policymaking Process: Stakeholder Meetings and School Visits

The consultation processes of the Review served many functions for the panel members. Our analysis deployed the four categories and criteria below:

Public Sector: A public primary or secondary school or an organization explicitly affiliated with the Public education sector.

Independent Sector: An Independent primary or secondary school or an organization explicitly affiliated with the Independent education sector.

Catholic Sector: A Catholic primary or secondary school or an organization explicitly affiliated with the Catholic education sector.

Other: An organization that is not directly affiliated with one school sector: for instance, business organizations, cross-sector associations, and so on.

The Consultation Process

After receiving the final terms, the panel's first step was to undertake a "comprehensive public consultation process to gain a contemporary understanding of the issues affecting school education in Australia" (Australian Government, 2011, p. 228). Thus, during the second half of 2010, the panel members conducted a listening tour, meeting with 71 key education groups across Australia. Our analysis split the submissions into the four categories as outlined previously. Table 1 shows that the Public school sector was under consulted by the panel compared to its percentage of student enrollments. The Independent sector was over-represented, and the Catholic sector consulted on close to proportional levels in terms of their student enrollment percentages.

Table 1

Stakeholder Consultations Data

	Public Sector	Independent Sector	Catholic Sector	Other	Total Visits
Panel meetings per school sector	18	18	16	20.0	71
Total panel meetings per school sector %	25.4	25.4	22.5	28.2	N/A
Student enrollment per school sector % (2010)	65.7	14.0	20.3	N/A	N/A
Net representation in proportion to school sector enrollment % +/-	-40.2	11.4	2.2	N/A	N/A

Source: Australian Government (2011, pp. 231-232)

The next step in the panel's consultation process was 39 school visits across Australia. These visits aimed to "discuss funding issues experienced by principals, teachers and school communities in catering for their students, and to observe the effect of the current funding environment on a range of schools" (Australian Government, 2011, p. 237). The panel members claimed they selected schools for the visits that represented a range of school settings, including those in "government and non-government sectors, regional and remote areas, and those with high enrollments of Indigenous students, students with an LBOTE, and students with special needs and students with disability" (p. 237). However, our findings revealed inequity in the representation of each school sector vis-a-vis their total student enrollment percentage.

The selection of school visits and stakeholder consultations were the panel's collective decision. As Tables 1 and 2 show, each sectors' consultation did not proportionally reflect the percentage of total Australian students each enrolls. We view this approach as particularly problematic given the inequities that exist across the three school sectors (see Figure 1). For instance, the Public school sector enrolls 66% of all students and 79% of those in the bottom SEA quartile. Yet, the panel consulted and visited this sector less than the Independent school sector which enrolls 14% of all Australian students and 6% of students from the bottom quartile SEA.

Table 2

School Visits by the Panel

	Public Sector	Independent Sector	Catholic Sector	Total School Visits
School visits by panel members per school sector	14	16	9	39
School sector % of total panel member visits	35.9	41.0	23.1	N/A
Student enrollment per school sector % (2010)	65.7	14.0	20.3	N/A
Net representation in proportion to school sector enrollment % +/-	-29.7	27.0	2.8	N/A

Source: Australian Government (2011, pp. 237-239)

In our view, proportional representation of school sectors across school funding policymaking processes in the future is one step policymakers can make to begin to improve equity in the Australian education system. Following on from this suggestion, we use our findings to make some recommendations, what Ball (1994) would call the Context of Political Strategy, on how school funding policy may be more equitable in the future in the coming sections.

Discussion

Influence Across School Sectors: A Minority can have Greater Influence than the Majority

This case study's findings have illustrated how the Independent and Catholic school sectors played a disproportional role at several points of the *Review of Funding for Schooling's* (2011) policy cycle. The case illuminated specific examples of the disproportional representation of the

Independent school sector in the Review's policymaking process and how it had influenced school funding policy in the past, suggesting a pattern of behaviour that will continue in the years to come. We also found examples of the Catholic school sector disproportionally influencing the policymaking process—although to a lesser extent than the Independent school sector.

The Independent school sector, we found, not only influenced the 2004 federal election campaign's school funding policy debates but did so in ways that would shape and then echo across the Review's policymaking process six years later. Indeed, they were so effective during the election campaign that the federal Education Minister, who commissioned the Review, admitted publicly that significant concessions were made to assuage Independent school sector organisations (Gillard, 2014). For example, they included a promise that "no school would lose a dollar as a result of the review" (Gillard, 2010b, p. 1) meaning the Review's panel could do little, if anything, to address education advantage in the Australian education system (Kenway, 2013); a stakeholder of the sector chairing the Review, and being consulted and their schools visited more than any other school sector. All of this, despite being 14% of all Australian student enrollments and enrolling 6% of students from the bottom SEA quartile. Elsewhere, the Catholic school sector, we found, had their representative listed second behind the Independent school sector's chairperson on the Review's five-person panel hierarchy—despite enrolling 20% of all Australian students. That person was Dr. Peter Tannock, who we revealed was a panel member on the last national review of funding in Australia in 1973. The sector was also a beneficiary of the "no school would lose a dollar as a result of the review" (Gillard, 2010b, p. 1) concession, which protected their special funding arrangements with federal and state governments (Connors & McMorrow, 2015).

In contrast, the Public school sector, we found, were less effective at influencing the Review's policymaking process. Despite enrolling 66% of all Australian students, and 79% of students from the bottom quartile of SEA, the Public school sector did not have one of their stakeholders or representatives leading Review, were consulted and their schools visited less than the Independent and Catholic sectors combined, and nor were they seemingly a concern of key political figures when assembling the Review. Following Diem et al. (2014) who encourage critical policy scholars to explore differences between policy rhetoric and practiced reality, we must point out that all of the above has occurred while "equity and excellence" has been the official number goal of the Australian education system since 2008 when it first emerged in the *Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians* (Education Council, 2008)—and continues to be today via the *Alice Springs [Mpartnwe] Declaration* (Education Council, 2019).

Reflecting on the disproportional influence of the Independent and Catholic school sectors at key points in the Review's policy cycle highlights the importance of CPA. For example, our findings confirm Ball and colleagues (1992) argument that the dominant interests shaping the policy agenda before a new policy emerges must be factored into the analysis of the current policy at hand. Similarly, as Diem et al. (2014) identified, a CPA approach prioritises considering the roots and development of policies. These scholars also point out that CPA approaches often focus on the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge; social stratification, inequality, and privilege; and how nondominant groups resist and engage in policy efforts. In view of this, our findings suggest the Public school sector can do more to advocate for the representation of its interests across future policy cycles. Indeed, an examination of the proportional representation and influence of the Public school sector, and Independent and Catholic sectors, in both past and future policy processes has emerged from this work as an important area for future research given the Australian education system's ongoing equity problem (Kenway, 2013; Savage, 2011; Teese, 2011).

While our retrospective analysis in this article has highlighted the Independent and Catholic school sectors disproportional influence at key points in the *Review of Funding for Schooli*ng's (2011)

policy cycle, the next step is to counter this influence in real-time. That said, any path towards equity in Australian school funding policymaking is challenging because the interests that benefit most from the status quo are entrenched, organized, and politically potent, as we saw at the 2004 federal election. Despite this, while also acknowledging Kenway's (2013, p. 12) critique of the limitations of a "fixation" on school sectors which she argues "distracts" from layers of disadvantage and advantage across all sectors, we push on with our recommendations. We hope they progress future reviews of school funding policy in Australia—and elsewhere—towards more equitable processes and outcomes because, as Kenway (2013) admits, "there is a disproportionate concentration of disadvantage in the government [Public] sector which must be properly funded" (p. 12).

Looking forward, we draw on our findings to make some suggestions for improving the school funding policymaking process for those already disadvantaged and marginalized by the Australian education system. In doing so, we have identified several critical moments that shaped the arc of the *Review of Funding for Schooling* (2011) away from equity. We recommend, as a result, that scholars, policymakers, and equity-minded citizens pay greater attention to and use their agency at critical moments that occur throughout the policy cycle.

The case suggested that for future reviews of school funding: policy history, policy players, and policy representation matter.

Policy History Matters

The history of the current policy moment is essential for scholars and policymakers to identify and understand. This work includes mapping the prior debates, contests, influences, and the victors in previous battles over school funding policy at all levels of government. The findings that result will help policy analysts locate and predict the forces and power relations that will shape the current period of school funding policy being advocated for or studied. The tracing of the history of the policy moment will also highlight the importance of influencing the here and now because what does or does not happen today, tomorrow, next week, next year will shape the next review in ways that may not be clear at the time.

The 'Who' of Policy Matters

Before the announcement of the next review, scholars and policymakers should be able to, at a minimum, name the major players and organisations with the clout to influence the policy process. More than this, an understanding of their motives and history, the timing of the election cycle and political fortunes of the major parties at that moment, and the dominant education policy vocabularies is required to be able to identify opportunities to build a nuanced and context specific understanding of the case. This approach will enable the mapping of, and then entry, into the dominant education policy conversation, which is essential to influence the policymaking process to effect change. It may also open the possibility of collaboration and coalition building by identifying like-minded stakeholders with similar agendas. Strategies include engaging with media, politicians, and policymakers in a language they understand and accept to get a seat at the policymaking table and using social media to make connections across borders and localities.

Policy Representation Matters

Scholars and equity-minded citizens must lobby politicians and policymakers for proportional representation of school sectors across future policy cycles. This work is increasingly important given the inequity across school sectors. A proportional representation approach in future policy processes, especially if couched in democratic terms—for example, in Australia, by highlighting the 66% majority of the Public school sector enrollments—will be a step towards reducing the ability of well resourced, well-organised elite-minority interests to shape the policy

being advocated for or studied. Proportional representation in the policy process aims to ensure that those most affected by a policy have a say at the highest level of policymaking.

Conclusion

Our focus in this article on critical moments is practical and can improve school funding policymaking processes towards equity. In order to improve equity in Australia specifically, a reasonable aim is to have Public school sector representatives proportionally represented throughout the cycle of future school funding policy reviews. The sector enrolls 66% of all Australian students and it disproportionally enrolls Australia's most disadvantaged students. Therefore, the federal government could, for example, appoint a chairperson of the next review panel with current Public school sector connections and experience. The Terms of Reference for the next review could also mandate the consultation of schools and stakeholders in proportion with each school sectors' total enrollment percentage. If these recommendations were put into practice, the result would see the most populated and marginalized school sector and its representatives in a much stronger position to advocate for its interests and require them to organise accordingly. It would also be symbolic, which as Rizvi & Lingard (2010) point out, is often a decisive step towards material action in the future. With this foundation in place, proportional representation from this point onwards could take on several other forms, including location, socio-economic status, and English as a second language within each sector. Indeed, a call for proportional representation in the school funding making process would be hard to refute, particularly if couched in democratic as well as equity terms.

In closing, while the *Review of Funding for Schooling* (2011) case, at least according to former Prime Minister Gillard, did shift the school funding discourse in Australia to "needs-based funding" (Gillard, 2017, p. 1), the next step is to disrupt the ways the three school sectors are framed, represented and consulted in school funding policymaking in the future. This work will remain important until the three sectors equitably represent the Australian population. In combination, we argue the focus on influencing critical moments, as well as our specific recommendations, provides a foundation for more equitable school funding processes and, therefore, more equitable societies in the future. Perhaps, a time when all Australian students, and those worldwide, receive a more equitable distribution of educational opportunity, resources, and outcomes, regardless of school sector and or individual background, is not that far away.

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