

Commissioner to oversee private tertiary student quality service

Nadja Tollemache, former Ombudsman and inaugural Banking Ombudsman, is the new public face of quality for private tertiary institutions following the launch of the Quality Commission yesterday. We look at the commission and what it will mean for students.

The New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers (NZAPEP) yesterday launched an independent Quality Commission to take responsibility for self-regulation and to resolve student grievances.

Nadja Tollemache is the inaugural commissioner and John Hinchcliffe, the



former vice-chancellor of the Auckland University of Technology, the chairman of the five member commission that also includes consumer advocate David Russell, two NZAPEP members and a ministerial appointee.

The commission kicks off on 1 January next year and will work in a similar fashion to the banking and insurance ombudsmen: as a venue for grievances if talks with providers break-down. NZAPEP has also developed a code of practice for

participating providers and an NZQA-approved internal complaints procedure for providers and students to work through before approaching the commission.

NZAPEP has more than 360 members representing 48 percent of the sector. The quality scheme is voluntary; president Sandra McKersey said members were being encouraged to sign up from this month and she was optimistic of a high take-up.

Participating providers were bound to accept the finding of the commissioner and would be thrown out of the scheme if they did not. Students would be eligible for, at maximum, a refund of all their fees plus an extra \$2000 at the commissioner's discretion.

"We hope, of course, that the commissioner will have very little work but, when she does have a complaint, the commission will ensure it is focused on resolution from the student's point of view," Mrs McKersey said.

"We appreciate tertiary education is expensive and students have choice and we want to make sure they have the

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Rankings needed in a credible education system, visiting academic says

In a modern society, an education system must rank students as well as educate them – and the jury is still out on whether NCEA will achieve the former, argues UK education policy expert Alison Wolf.



Alison Wolf

so, and they might be less fair than a national, public one.

Professor Wolf, from the Management Centre at King's College, London, said if the system did not provide rankings, the players would set up their own systems to do

so, and they might be less fair than a national, public one.

"Getting an education is not just about learning. It's also about ranking students to give universities and the labour market some way of differentiating between them.

"A qualification system can lose credibility very quickly if it does not do this, and then employers and universities will start to use other measures.

"It's not surprising that some New Zealand schools are introducing Cambridge International Examinations; and tertiary

institutions may also start setting up their own entrance tests if the national system does not give them the information they need to select students."

Professor Wolf said the tertiary education system also needed to differentiate between tertiary qualifications and institutions to give them value. An egalitarian system where institutions were

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Alison and Martin Wolf in New Zealand

Alison Wolf visited New Zealand as a guest of the New Zealand Business Roundtable along with her husband Martin Wolf, the associate editor and chief economics commentator of the *Financial Times*.

The Wolfs were in New Zealand for nearly two weeks in August and September giving presentations and holding meetings with government officials and other education representatives.

A public lecture – Does Education Matter? – by Professor Wolf in Wellington on 8 September was attended by more than 100 people. She argued that if countries were less preoccupied with education for economic growth, they might get better

education and more growth.

Professor Wolf also met with representatives of the Tertiary Education Commission and Workbase, the national literacy organisation

Martin Wolf gave an address at Victoria University on 7 September tracing what he saw as the decline of the British universities from the 1960s to today.

He described the mass university system as having all the ailments of a nationalised industry; an underpaid and demoralised workforce, chronic underfunding in terms of the proportion of GDP allocated to university education; as well as a reliance on international students to balance the books.

He also gave the NZBR's Sir Ronald Trotter Lecture for 2004 in Auckland. It was attended by more than 200 people including senior politicians and business leaders.

More information on the Sir Ronald Trotter Lecture is at

http://www.nzbr.org.nz/lecture_series.asp?Topic=RonTrotterLecture

Auckland-based private school developers behind Taupo initiative

Subtext can reveal that Auckland-based private school developers Alex Findlay and Stephen Fleming are the developers approached by the Lake Taupo Development Company to build and open a private school in the district by 2006.

In *Subtext* last month, our lead story reported on an innovative plan for a private secondary school proposed for Taupo.

Mr Findlay and Mr Fleming have developed two private schools in the Auckland area with a third planned for near Hobsonville, and on track for a 2006 opening, to be followed, in all likelihood, by the development of the Taupo school.

Mr Findlay said Ministry of Education figures showed that the Taupo district lost around 100 students to out-of-district schools each year, and they banked on attracting around half that number to make the school viable.

- A feature story on the Findlay/Fleming private school developments is at page six.

Learn how to market your school

School marketing now plays an essential role in school management. A course next month could give you the skills needed to give your school a marketing edge.

The CMS Certificate in School Marketing is a practical distance-learning course suited to NZ schools. It consists of three units, a research assignment, a one-day interactive workshop and a work-related assignment.

You will learn how to prepare a strategic marketing plan, design promotional materials, brand your school and establish strategic alliances, identify niche enrolment markets and attract international students.

The closing date for applications is 1 October. For further information, contact David Shearer at Synergy Education on 03 356 3356.

Conference of Cambridge exam schools to be held

A conference for the Association of Cambridge Schools in New Zealand is in Auckland next month.

The Bright Minds, Bright Future conference features Australian newspaper columnist and doctor of law Janet Albrechtsen; the Maxim Institute's Centre for Education director, Paul Henderson; Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Canterbury, Warwick Elley; and radio host Leighton Smith.

More information is at http://acsnz.org.nz/pdfs/conference_flyer.pdf



Labour governments of Britain and New South Wales support specialist schools

The Labour governments of both the United Kingdom and New South Wales are looking to reform secondary education by giving more emphasis to selective and specialist schools.

With the thinking that students flourish best when surrounded by peers of their own level and ability – and that one-size-fits-all 'comprehensives' have not been successful – both administrations are allowing more schools that select pupils and offer specialist courses.

In Australia, secondary schools that choose pupils on the basis of relevant skills are becoming increasingly popular, the *Sydney Morning Herald* has reported.

New South Wales, in particular, has embraced the selective school system.

In 1988 there were 12 selective high schools, including five with a specialist bent such as agriculture or music, out of 381 government high schools in the state. By 2002 there were 28

academically selective or partially selective high schools, two performing arts schools and 30 specialist schools that selected some students.

In the UK, the government is aiming to have 75 percent of secondary schools specialist. The government's target is to have 2000 specialist schools by 2006 (from 1954 today).

The programme is a key part of the government's effort to raise standards. It says children at specialist schools do better than those in other secondary schools.

Some top-performing state schools are to be allowed to adopt what is termed as 'independent specialist status'. They will be free to select up to 10 percent of their pupils on the basis of aptitude and to

attract funds from both the private sector and parents.

In addition, Education Secretary Charles Clarke recently announced a plan where the state will pay private schools to teach state sector pupils wanting to study seldom-taught subjects.

The Sydney Morning Herald story is at <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/08/11/1092102526279.html?oneclick=true>

A BBC story on specialist schools is at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3856411.stm>

A Hoover Institution-published article on streaming is at <http://www.educationnext.org/20044/72.html>

Submission calls for reforms to improve access to education

Fundamental education system reform is needed to get better outcomes at schools and more participation in tertiary education, the Education Forum has said in a submission to the Human Rights Commission (HRC).

The HRC was conducting a review into the Right to Education. It released its report earlier this month.

The Education Forum submission argued that New Zealand faced serious issues in terms of ensuring that all children had access to quality schooling and the opportunity to undertake further or higher education – irrespective of their

socioeconomic background.

More government programmes and more add-ons could not, on their own, change the fundamental weaknesses in the system. A comprehensive reform was required of the school sector and it should have three building blocks:

- expanding opportunity and choice for all families;
- lifting the status of the teaching profession;
- increasing schools accountability to families.

"In our view, the right to education is best advanced by adopting 'market-

based' policies at the school and tertiary education levels.

"Good progress was being made during the late 1980s and 1990s under successive governments. Recent government policy has been going in the wrong direction and will limit the right to education for many, especially for those from lower socio-economic groups."

The Education Forum submission is at <http://www.educationforum.org.nz>

The HRC education review is at <http://www.hrc.co.nz/report/printchap/Chapter%2015.doc>

Welcome to the Campus of Struggle – Cohen launches book

Education journalist David Cohen launches his book *Welcome to the Campus of Struggle* next month in Auckland and Wellington.

National Party leader Don Brash and Auckland University of Technology vice-chancellor Derek McCormack are guest speakers at the launches. The Education Forum has assisted publication.

The book is a collection of Mr Cohen's writing on tertiary education around the world from 1999-2004. It is a thoughtful and amusing collection of personal observations, profiles, news stories and columns that examine profound social and political changes from Samoa to Korea, Argentina to Britain, and not least in New Zealand, as seen through university life.

"It is a tour-de-force... a must-read for those who populate universities and for anyone who wishes to understand how the aim of higher education – indeed the very philosophy underpinning university life itself – seems to be changing across the globe." – Professor Kyongsoo Lho, Dean of International Affairs, Seoul National University.

Wellington-resident Mr Cohen is the Asia-Pacific correspondent for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, a correspondent for the British *Guardian* and a writer for a number of Australasian titles including the *National Business Review*.

Wellington launch

6pm, Monday 4 October

The Film Archives

Corner of Ghuznee and Taranaki Streets
Guest of honour: Don Brash, leader,
National Party

Auckland launch

6pm, Tuesday 5 October

Bell Gully, Level 21, Vero Centre
48 Shortland Street

Guest of honour: Derek McCormack,
vice-chancellor, Auckland University of
Technology

RSVP: Please RSVP before 30 September by calling David Young on 04 494 9101 or emailing

dyoung@educationforum.org.nz.

Please include whether you will attend the Wellington launch on Monday, 4 October, or the Auckland launch on Tuesday, 5 October.

Keep an eye out for our competition in next month's edition of *Subtext* when we will have five copies of Mr Cohen's book to give away.

LIVE DEBATE:

Experts discuss ways to get the market into education

A conference in Washington on 28 September – 'Creating a true marketplace in education' – can be watched live on the Internet.

The Cato Institute discussion will explore how to move from the education status quo to an alternative that provides true choice for parents.

Renowned education policy experts such as John Merrifield (Professor of Economics, University of Texas at San Antonio), John Wenders (Professor of Economics, Emeritus, University of Idaho) and Claudia Hepburn (director of education policy, Fraser Institute) are part of the event.

Details are at <http://www.cato.org/events/040928conf.html>



Private school developers on the rise

With the construction and start-up of two private schools under their belt and two more in the pipeline, developers Alex Findlay and Stephen Fleming are providing options for education in the upper North Island.

South Auckland's Strathallan School was the first they built – from scratch on a rural block in Karaka with finance from a public share float. It opened in 2001. Next up was Wentworth College in Gulf Harbour, financed this time by a private share float and opened last year.

In the pipeline is Sunderland College which they hope to build, after obtaining resource consent, on a rural site near Hobsonville in West Auckland in time for a 2006 opening. A private school in Taupo is likely to follow.

Mr Findlay lives in South Auckland. He said that after looking around for a good private school for his children he saw many parents in the district with the same need and so developed a financial model to develop what is now Strathallan School.

The model involves a property company that owns the land and buildings, raises the funds to build the school and then leases the facility to a trust that runs the school. The lease runs for 100 years and payments are based on the number of students enrolled, allowing the school to find its feet and the return on investment to build over time as the school develops.

With lease payments fixed at a percentage of the school's income, Mr Findlay said the schools get to retain an operational budget much higher than state schools and the fees parents pay (currently around \$10,000 a year) are all-inclusive.



Stephen Fleming and Alex Findlay

Costs such as building levies are often extra at private schools.

Strathallan has now been sold to the Academic Colleges Group.

Mr Findlay said the model worked so well that they were approached by the Gulf Harbour developers to provide a similar quality, private school for the rapidly growing marina-based residential area. After raising nine million dollars Wentworth School was built and opened.

But it is not all about dollars. Providing a quality education is key to ensuring the success of the schools, and central to Mr Findlay's and Mr Fleming's developments are educational experts who develop quality systems for an all-round education

in academic and vocational learning, culture and sport.

Former Macleans College principal Allen McDonald played a huge role in appointing key staff for Wentworth and setting the general philosophy of the school. Mr Findlay says the quality of staff attracted to the school had been high in no small part because of Mr McDonald's reputation in education circles.

"He did a phenomenal job building the culture we were looking for," Mr Findlay said.

Mr McDonald and Wentworth principal Bruce Tong will have a big hand in setting at systems at Sunderland.

Communities, too, have embraced the idea behind the schools. When the Sunderland plans were released earlier this year, Waitakere mayor Bob Harvey described them as "an exciting proposition".

"The whole of the north-western sector of the city is opening up for development and with that comes the need for schools, parks, hospitals and so on. I'm delighted that the Sunderland Trust has seen the potential in Waitakere," Mr Harvey said.

"Schools are hugely important for their education and social aspects, but we can't under-estimate the positive impact of 150 new jobs either," he said.

Sunderland is designed for up to 120

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Good principals with freedom make the difference, says researcher

What makes a good school is a good principal with the power to run the institution how he or she wants and the incentive to do it properly – and that's more common in the private sector, says researcher Mark Harrison.

Speaking at the Melbourne Institute's Making Schools Better summit in Melbourne recently, Dr Harrison said evidence showed private schools were superior to state schools: they were more efficient (they had higher levels of educational achievement at lower cost), achieved greater equality in educational outcomes between rich and poor, and produced more social benefits, such as teaching students to be tolerant and law-abiding.

Dr Harrison, author of the Education Forum book *Education Matters: Government, Markets and New Zealand Schools*, said private school superiority came from autonomy and market incentives and having principals with the freedom to organise the school as he or she wanted.

He said the Australian and New Zealand

experience and international evidence showed regulation of private schools might threaten those sources of private school superiority.

"The result of government funding for private schools may be the government regulating them to become more like government schools, rather than encouraging government schools to operate more like private ones.

"Government shackles may follow government shekels. Policies to integrate private schools may move us away from a market system and make education worse," Dr Harrison said.

Leading education researchers including Stanford University professor Eric Hanushek also presented papers at the conference. Other summit topics included:

- How important are teacher quality, class sizes, leadership, the

socioeconomic background of students, and other factors in determining school outcomes?

- Are the right incentives in place to encourage high quality teaching?
- Do we need to reform the school funding system?
- Do we need a more integrated public/private system?

More information on the summit is at http://melbourneinstitute.com/school_conf/

The summit papers are at http://www1.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/iaesrwww/school_conf/conf_paper.html

Private school developers on the rise
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preschoolers, 400 primary students and 1000 secondary students in three separate campuses on one site. It would develop in stages with the secondary school initially taking years 7, 8 and 9.

"This will allow the school to grow organically and allow teachers and systems to bed in before students start taking external exams," Mr Findlay said.

Like Wentworth, Sunderland would offer both Cambridge International Examinations and NCEA.

One of the big attractions of independent schools, and one of their main strengths, is their relative freedom to organise themselves in the most effective ways to meet students' needs.

It is this freedom to get results for students – on a personal as well as educational level – that is seeing their rising popularity and increasing numbers of families seeking to get out of the state system; the success of Alex Findlay's and Stephen Fleming's private education ventures seems further evidence of this popularity.

As Mr Fleming said, parents liked having a choice of schools for their children and were happy to pay for an education if they got good quality.

The Findlay/Fleming financing structure has similarities to private finance initiatives for government services, including schools, in the UK.

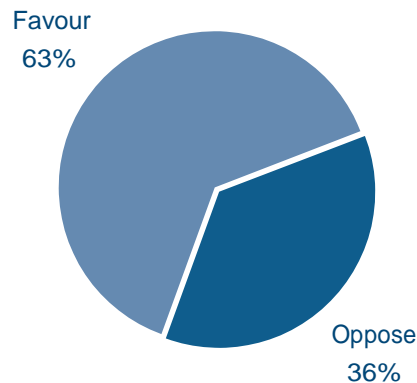
More information on the UK's school private finance initiatives scheme is at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/funding/schoolsprivatefinanceinitiative/> and at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/finance/PFU/>

School choice – it's all in the wording

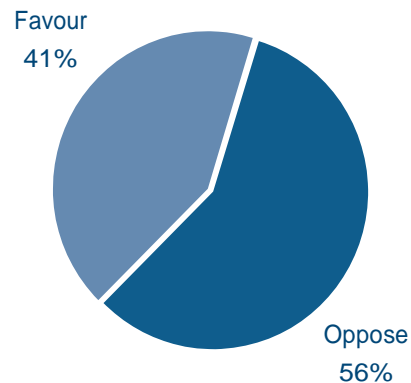
A recent US survey setting out to gauge public support for school choice has found that a difference in wording can have a drastic influence on people's perceptions.

The nationwide study, carried out for the Friedman Foundation, found that negative wording can lower public support for school vouchers, while neutral questioning got support from six out of 10 people, as the diagram below from the survey shows:

Do you favour or oppose allowing students and parents to choose any school, public or private, to attend using public funds?



Do you favour or oppose allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense?



The survey also found that 64 percent of those surveyed supported using tax dollars already allocated to a school district for education to be used to help parents pay for the school of their choice and that 80 percent of surveyed African-Americans supported school choice.

The survey coincided with the annual poll by Phi Delta Kappa – a professional society for US teachers – that has regularly found a majority of people opposing private-school vouchers.

The Friedman survey said that the wording used in the Phi Delta Kappa survey biases public opinion toward the issue and, when asked in a less negative fashion, an overwhelming number of adults support education options.

The Friedman Foundation survey is at
<http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/quorum.pdf>

Information on this year's Phi Delta Kappa survey is at
http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2004-08-24-attitudes_x.htm

Media training lifts education organisations' communications

An Education Forum jointly-organised media training day last month saw several education organisations sharpening their press release, interviewing and strategy skills.

Participants included Independent Schools of New Zealand, Early Childhood Council, Maxim Institute, NZ Association of Gifted Children, NZ Association of Private Education Providers, Home Education Foundation and others.

The half-day session included hints on how to attract media attention, conduct yourself in interviews, develop key messages, write press releases and put together information kits.

Education at a Glance

Hot off the press!

More people are studying for longer periods in developed countries, but educational patterns are uneven. Which countries are doing well, and which countries could be performing better?

The 2004 edition of the OECD's annual *Education at a Glance*, a widely-quoted compendium of comparative statistics, looks at the answers.

The publication was released just this week and more information is at
http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,2340,en_2649_34515_33712135_1_1_1_1,00.html

Education Forum appoints three new members

The Education Forum last month appointed three educationalists – drawn from the primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors – as members.

The new appointments are: Derek McCormack, vice-chancellor, Auckland University of Technology; Enosa Auva'a, principal, Mount Albert Primary School; and Sherida Penman-Walters, executive principal, Pinehurst School.

Derek McCormack has led the university in many recent developments including its extensive campus redevelopment and its transition to university status. He has participated in

education development at a national level over many years.

Enosa Auva'a is national secretary of the Pacific Island Training Provider Organisation New Zealand. He has been an elder of the New Zealand-Aotearoa Presbyterian Church for 23 years.

Sherida Penman-Walters' school was the first in New Zealand to achieve the internationally-recognised 'Investors in People' Standard, was a finalist in the

2003 School of the Year award, and has successfully introduced Cambridge International Examinations for Year 10-13 students.

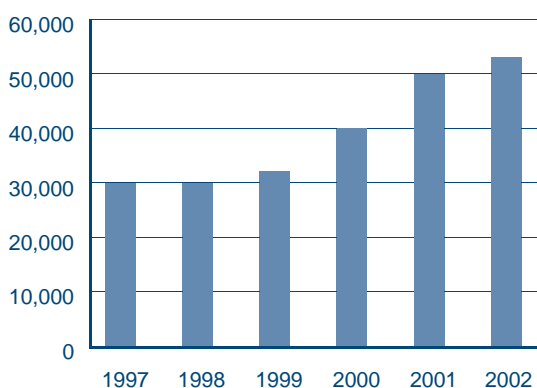
Education Forum chairman John Morris said he looked forward to the contribution the three had to make to public policy debate on education.

"We welcome three new members with a common concern for the future of New Zealand education."

It's a fact #1:

NZ private training establishment enrolments on the rise

Enrolment at private training establishments in New Zealand grew by nearly 87 percent between 1997 and 2002.



■ Private training establishment enrolments

Source: *Profile and Trends – New Zealand's Tertiary Education sector* (Ministry of Education 2003)

The document is at <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=9182&indexid=8656&indexparentid=8654>

More knowledge means economic growth, reports say

More education – along with more innovation and more telephones – can equal better economic growth, two unrelated studies show.

A World Bank study says an increase of 20 percent in the average years of schooling of a population tends to increase the average annual economic growth by 0.15 percent.

In terms of innovation, a 20 percent increase in the annual number of United States patents granted is associated with an increase of 3.8 percentage points in annual economic growth.

When the ICT infrastructure, measured by the number of telephones per 1,000 persons, is increased by 20 percent, annual economic growth tends to increase by 0.11 percentage point.

A US National Bureau of Economic Research study argues that the percentage of workers with college degrees is a "powerful predictor of urban growth" and that a large population of skilled, educated workers appears to be the key factor in determining whether declining urban areas could rebuild economically.

The World Bank study is at

<http://econ.worldbank.org/view.php?type=5&id=37702>

The NBER study is at <http://www.nber.org/digest/jun04/w10191.html>

Skills training needs highlighted in website

A revamped, online toolkit for employers, workers and young people is now on the skillnz website.

The skillnz website focuses on giving information about New Zealand's core formal workplace learning programmes – Industry Training, Modern Apprenticeships, Gateway and Workplace Literacy.

Workplace learning is on- or off-the-job education and training that counts towards a qualification.

The website says staff training can produce returns ranging from 30 percent to 7,000 percent and that staff who have had formal training have been up to 230 percent more productive than their untrained colleagues doing the same job.

There are almost five times as many people in industry training today as there were eight years ago.



- skillnz is a joint initiative between government, Business New Zealand and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions in conjunction with the Industry Training Federation.

The website is at <http://www.skillnz.org.nz>

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information to choose really credible providers with redress if needed.

"The commission shows we are prepared to stand up and say we guarantee what we do and what we say we do. We are confident it will be fair to all parties."

Mrs McKersey said NZAPEP would consider allowing other tertiary education provider organisations to join.

She said government education agencies had been very supportive of the commission's development.

Quality Commissioner Nadja Tollemache, who helped set up the Banking Ombudsman's office in 1992, said the commission was part of a developing and successful trend to set up ombudsman-styled organisations in the private sector.

"It is a lot less expensive and more flexible than litigation and we will try to work to get resolution by agreement.

"The other advantage is that any changes required to the providers' code of conduct can be put in quickly and easily on the recommendation the commission to ensure ongoing and enhanced protection for students."

Associate Education (Tertiary Education) Minister Steve Maharey said the commission was a welcome move by the private training sector.

In a statement to NZAPEP, Mr Maharey said quality standards needed to be promoted if "you are to equip your students with the skills they need to succeed in our knowledge society".

"You are to be commended for the work you are doing to introduce a Quality Commissioner and I pledge the government's ongoing support for this project."

Mr Maharey said the government would welcome other private training

organisations joining the scheme so that they could also offer greater protection to their students.

Education Forum policy advisor Norman LaRocque said he was pleased to see the private sector taking responsibility for quality assurance.

He said the private sector should play a significant role in maintaining quality of provision, and overseas this was not uncommon: for example, there were private accreditation schemes in the USA and Philippines, and Oman had private sector school review.

Corporate accreditation (such as for Microsoft) and international accreditation (such as for business schools) were other, well-known forms of quality assurance by private organisations.

The NZAPEP website is at <http://www.nzapep.co.nz>

Rankings needed in a credible education system, visiting academic says
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not differentiated was unlikely to succeed once a society moved into a mass tertiary education system.

"We have to stop pretending that all tertiary education is the same and recognise that differentiation between universities occurs. Not all universities can be really good."

Professor Wolf suggested that was occurring in New Zealand with Auckland University well-regarded overseas and Otago's medical school seen as the country's best.

The Tertiary Education Commission's Performance Based Research Fund programme was "a way of creating differential".

Professor Wolf is the author of the controversial book *Does Education Matter?* (Penguin, 2002) in which she argued that a preoccupation with economic growth had narrowed and distorted society's idea of education.

Speaking to *Subtext*, Professor Wolf said governments wanted more people in tertiary education and were tailoring policies to that end, helping an explosion in enrolments.

A result of that policy was a downward pressure on resources, a pressure to teach more students and reduced spending per-student. Resources per-student had halved in the past 25 years in the UK and good

teachers were being sucked from secondary schools to fill the increased tertiary teaching needs.

"It is very likely we will be educating more people but not as well as we used to," she said. A sign of this was the increasing number of first-year university students in remedial literacy classes.

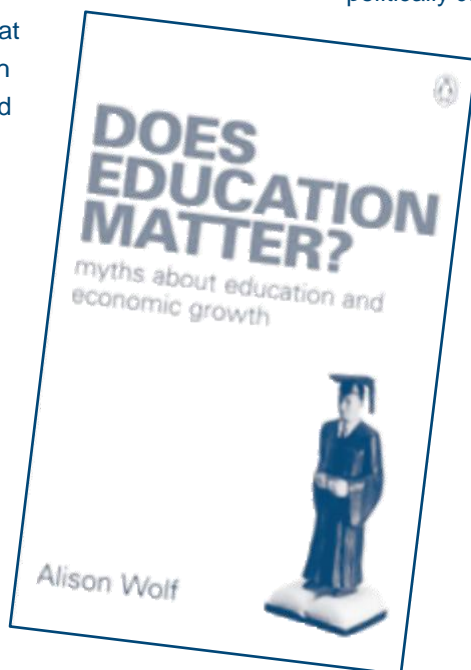
However, Professor Wolf said mass tertiary education systems were now a fact of life in most developed countries and this would not change. Once there was a large number in tertiary education this encouraged others, to ensure they would not miss out on the jobs they saw as only available to tertiary-educated applicants.

"There is a classic and well-recognised enrolment graph which starts off growing very slowly and then it takes off, and no politically conceivable level of fees

will dissuade people from going."

Income-contingent student loans – with maintenance bursaries for very poor students – were the best way of funding tertiary education. The loan scheme had worked in New Zealand and other countries were implementing similar schemes.

Professor Wolf said it was not surprising a skills shortage arose when tertiary education was subsidised, as employers were more likely to employ students with qualifications rather than invest in apprentices.



Rank students by ease of subject, says study

Top grades in some UK A-level subjects are easier to achieve than in others and universities should take this into account when making offers to students, a new study has concluded.

The University of Durham's Curriculum, Evaluation and Management Centre found that A levels were graded "more severely" in mathematics, the sciences and modern languages than in the arts and humanities, *The Times* has reported.

Durham researcher Peter Tymms argues that universities should "weight" applicants' results to take account of the differences when deciding which ones should be offered a place.

The *Times* article is at <http://avantgo.thetimes.co.uk/services/avantgo/article/0,,1244810,00.html>

"If the system biases choices, don't be surprised to wake up one morning and find you have a shortage of skills."

She said the situation was not remedied by the government creating training places but by it acting "like an employer" and offering incentives to get people to train in particular areas.

More information on *Does Education Matter?* is at http://www.penguin.co.uk/nf/Book/BookDisplay/0,,0_0140286608,00.html and http://www.iconservatives.org.uk/does_education_matter.htm

Philadelphia's school reform results in higher grades

After introducing a radical reform programme to turn its schools around, Philadelphia is showing big improvements in grades, the *Wall Street Journal* has reported.

The city hired five companies and two universities to run 45 schools. For-profit company Edison was hired to run 20 of them for five years at a price tag of US\$60 million, the largest for-profit school contract to date.

Another 21 schools were slated for "reconstitution" – operated by the School District, but with extra resources and staff training; and four former public schools were converted into charter schools to be run by outside entities.

The *WSJ* said the city scored double-digit gains in reading and maths proficiency, and tripled the number of schools meeting federal No Child Left Behind standards.

Of the institutions running six or more

schools, Edison boasted the biggest increase in the percentage of students scoring 'proficient or above' and the biggest decrease in the percentage scoring 'below basic'.

Pleasing for Edison's supporters was that these gains came from students in 20 schools that had been among the worst in Philadelphia when they were turned over to Edison, the *WSJ* said.

The *Philadelphian* figures back up a Brookings Institution report last year suggesting charter schools are increasing performance faster than public schools and, among charter schools, education companies are closing the gap fastest.

The report says that the charter schools

run by Education Management Organisations (EMOs) showed solid gains in test scores, significantly out-gaining similar non-EMO managed schools.

- Edison is the largest for-profit operator of public schools in the USA. It runs about 130 schools, in low-income areas, with 132,000 students. Schools are managed under a contract with the local school board and are free to students.

It's a fact #2:

Strong growth in US public schools under private management

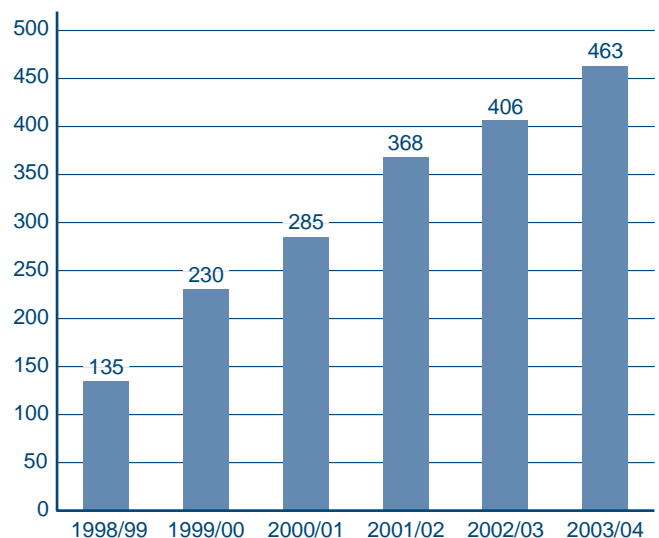
The number of US public schools under private management more than tripled between 1998/99 and 2003/04.

In 2003/04, there were 463 schools, with some 200,000 students, being operated by 51 educational management organisations (EMOs) in 28 states.

Source: Molnar, Alex, Glenn Wilson and Daniel Allen (2004) *Profiles of For-Profit Education Management Companies: Sixth Annual Report 2003-2004*, p 9.

It is at <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/CERU/Documents/EPSSL-0402-101-CERU.pdf>

Number of public schools under EMO management in the USA



Quote of the month:

"If you disempower people by controlling their budgets, their every move and every decision, you don't actually enable people to grow and stand tall and that's important."

– Prime Minister Helen Clark addressing the National Hui on Whanau Development, as quoted in an August newsletter from National MP Murray McCully. [Does this signal the return of bulk funding of schools? – ed]

Smaller classes don't help say Australians

Reducing class sizes does not improve academic performance at primary or secondary school level, according to a new Australian study.

The study, involving 1540 Victorian primary and secondary schools, concludes that academic achievement is unrelated to the number of students in the class.

An article on the report by The Australian is at http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,10559561%5E601,00.html

The report is at http://www1.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/iaesrwww/school_conf/Papers_presentations/Performance_of_Victorian_Schools.pdf

Vice-chancellors' pay packets compared to business

The University of Queensland vice-chancellor is overpaid by 51.3 percent while the head of Sydney's University of Technology is short-changed by 19 percent, according to a study comparing the Australian tertiary education sector with business.

University of Western Australia honours student Lisa Soh used a formula to look at the pay packets of the vice-chancellors of 34 universities (averaged over the past five years).

Ms Soh's formula matched the salaries to the size of the institutions and annual revenue. She concluded that half the university heads were underpaid and half overpaid, *The Australian* has reported.

The Australian story is at http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,10556873%5E12332,00.html

Stifling bureaucracy pushes UK academics to US

Government funding in Europe keeps most universities at the same mediocre level while creating "stifling bureaucracies and burdensome restrictions" which are pushing top academics to the United States, a European Commission survey, reported in the *Wall St Journal*, says.

More than 70 percent of the EU-born recipients of US doctorates between 1991 and 2000 planned to stay in the US.

Some 100,000 European-born researchers currently work in the US. The European Commission is worried that by the end of this decade Europe will have 700,000 fewer scientists and engineers than will be needed to compete in the global knowledge economy.

The quality of teaching and research in the US is a prime motivation for seeking career opportunities there.

Dubai-based company starting 'mid-market' private schools in the UK

A new breed of 'mid-market' private school is being promoted in the UK for parents dissatisfied with the state system but unable to afford traditional private education.

Dubai-based Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) currently has 35 schools in the Gulf states. It plans to build 20 of its model mid-market schools on greenfield sites in the UK, acquire another 25-30 schools and have 120 schools under its management within five years.

It also has its eye on Germany and the 10 new EU accession states.

A Guardian story on the company is at http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1284393,00.html

The GEMS website is at http://www.gemsedu.com/pc/html/home_flash/

Progress on implementing No Child Left Behind Act

The most comprehensive and up-to-date report of US states' progress toward implementing the No Child Left Behind Act is now online.

The US Education Commission report is at <http://www.ecs.org/html/special/nclb/reporttothenation/reporttothenation.htm>

Quebec public school enrolments lowest in 50 years

Enrolment at Quebec's public schools has dropped to its lowest in nearly 50 years, while private-school classrooms continue to fill, CBC News has reported.

Registration at the province's primary and secondary schools has dropped 2.6 percent since last year, to 1.08 million children and teenagers in the province's 2,838 public schools. It's the smallest group since 1958.

Despite this, enrolment at private schools is up and has been increasing since 1998.

Overwhelming response to first US federal voucher programme, say officials

More than 1000 Washington DC students are using a new voucher programme to escape troubled public schools.

Officials running the nation's first federally funded voucher programme said the response was overwhelming, CNN reported earlier this month.

Seventy-four percent of students who applied for vouchers and were eligible are enrolled in participating private and parochial schools, and more applications are under review.

The CNN story is at <http://www.cnn.com/2004/EDUCATION/09/01/dc.school.vouchers.ap/index.html>

German economy would benefit from competition in tertiary education, says OECD

As the German government moves toward major reform of its labour market, the OECD says the country should go further and open tertiary education to more competition.

It says more competition and "widening the autonomy of educational institutions with respect to achieving targets" would contribute to more effective human capital accumulation.

The OECD's German economic survey is at http://www.oecd.org/document/51/0,2340,en_2649_201185_32907123_1_1_1_1,00.html

Alternative education increases in the US

"Across the US, on the web and in the home, classrooms are evolving beyond the traditional learning environment with alternatives that are no longer bound by geography and customary modes of operation." – A CNN feature looks at a growing alternative education movement.

The CNN feature is at <http://www.cnn.com/2004/EDUCATION/08/13/b2s.overview/index.html>

New schools emerging that do not seem public or private

New forms of school organisation are emerging that do not fit the classical definitions of public and private, a report says

The report looks at the fuzzy boundary between schools that are clearly public and those that are clearly private, and argues that the shared characteristics between public and private schools are sufficiently stabilised to allow for school organisations that defy the public-private dichotomy.

The report is in the Columbia University *Teachers College Record*, Volume 105, Number 5, June 2003, pp. 753-781.

More information is at

<http://www.ingenta.com/isis/searching/ExpandTOC/ingenta;jsessionid=5gtvch5tpvtbi.crescent?issue=pubinfobike://bpl/tcre/2003/00000105/00000005&index=3>

Education Next now online

The latest edition of the renowned Hoover Institution's peer-reviewed publication *Education Next* is now online.

Read about: what is needed to attract and retain better teachers; the inside story on how vouchers came to Washington DC and if they will ever get to Colorado; whether the 20th-century growth in school size improves education; plus new evidence on the black-white achievement gap; and why children are still grouped by ability.

The latest edition of Education Next is at <http://www.educationnext.org/20044/>

R&D subsidies may be detrimental

A new study shows research and development subsidies may be detrimental to both productivity growth and welfare, in contrast to publicly provided education targeted to science and engineering skills.

The University of Zurich report is at http://papers.ssrn.com/paper.taf?abstract_id=567103

Education Forum

PO Box 10 539

The Terrace

Wellington, New Zealand

Telephone: +64 21 607 636

Fax: +64 4 471 1304

Email: info@educationforum.org.nz

Web: www.educationforum.org.nz

Subtext Editor: Norman LaRocque –

nlarocque@educationforum.org.nz

Writer: Adam Shelton – www.facttactic.co.nz