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Relational Inquiry into the Provision of Education (RIPE) Analysis

Scott Eacott

Research Brief

What is the problem?

- The provision of equitable and inclusive education at scale has been an enduring problem for governments, systems, and providers the world over.

- Governments are spending more on education than any point in history, yet student outcomes against national and international benchmarks are not meeting the expectations of many stakeholders.

- There are ongoing and accelerating disparity gaps for marginalised students and communities.

- Despite a wealth of publicly available data, it remains disparate and operating in parallel monologues.

- Irrespective of enduring appeals to non-academic outcomes, there is an evidence void on the diverse impacts of education.
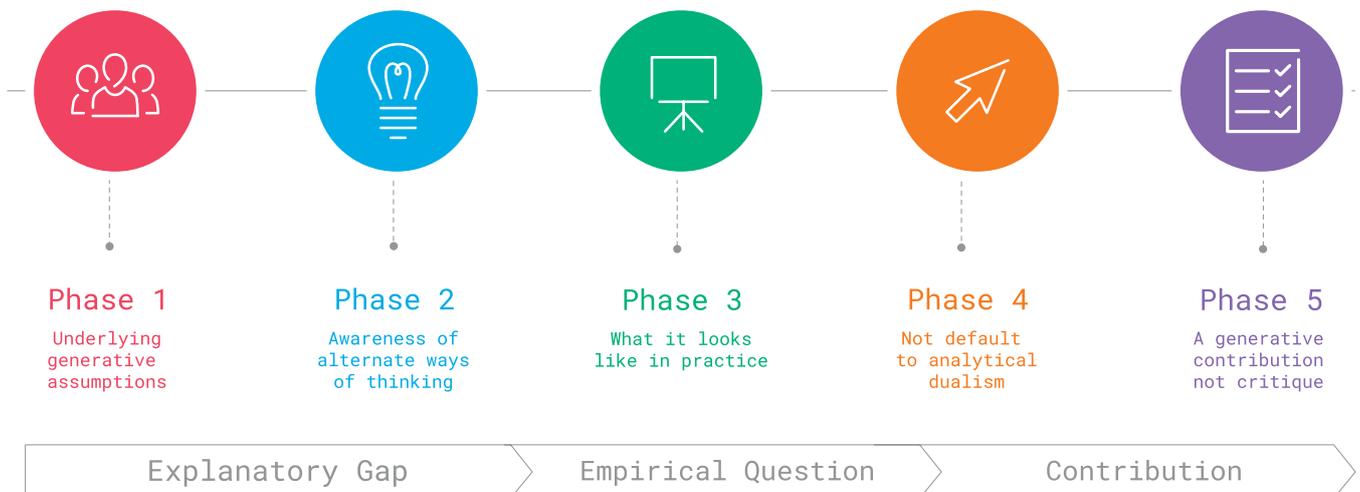
What we did about it

Under the leadership of Prof Scott Eacott, and drawing on the emerging field of relational studies, this interdisciplinary research program aims to:

- Establish novel theoretical frameworks for the design of equitable and inclusive education at scale that can withstand internal and external pressure towards consolidation of resources and cost efficiencies:

- Develop state-of-the-art relational models of the provision of education integrating contemporary and historical data from diverse disciplines to support the functionality of educational organizations; and

- Generate a body of theoretical and empirical evidence to inform policy decisions at national and international level, locating Australia as an international authority on the provision of education.

To deliver on this agenda, and drawing on Eacott's relational theory, the team has developed the Relational Inquiry into the Provision of Education (RIPE) analytical framework.

Working at the intersection of education, sociology, demography, economics, planning, and leveraging cutting-edge analytical techniques from multiple disciplines all held together through relational theory, this ambitious research program aims to move beyond individual disciplinary based ways of understanding education and its impact to not just inform policy decisions but explicitly contribute to re-designing the provision of education to deliver equitable and inclusive education at scale.

Relational Inquiry into the Provision of Education (RIPE) Analysis

Phase 1
Underlying generative assumptions

Phase 2
Awareness of alternate ways of thinking

Phase 3
What it looks like in practice

Phase 4
Not default to analytical dualism

Phase 5
A generative contribution not critique

Explanatory Gap > Empirical Question > Contribution

What we found

There is a wealth of existing publicly available data on education (particularly school-based education). However, there remains an evidence void with implications for how education is assessed and judged within and beyond the sector. There is an urgent need for improved and more diverse data, enhanced monitoring of outcomes, adequate and aligned financing, knowledge sharing about effective practices, and support for implementation capacity and system strengthening.
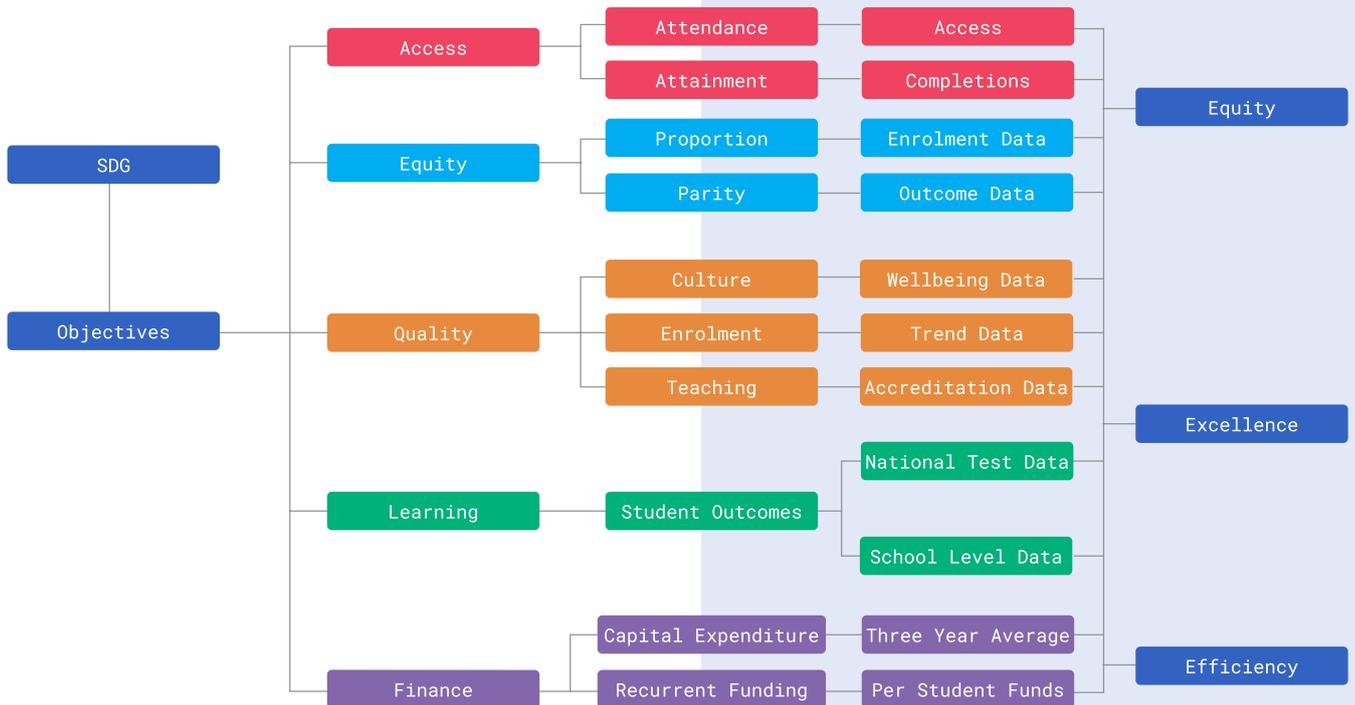
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The provision of education is also intimately tied to social, demographic, and economic conditions within communities. More than just inputs to be compensated for, these relations need to be embedded in ideas of provision and how to best meet the needs of students and communities.
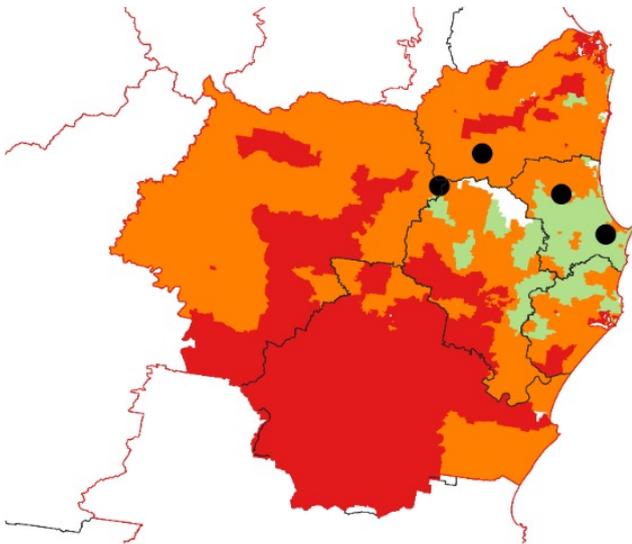
Linking school provision with socio-economic data

Similarly, contemporary provision needs to be understood in relation to the history of provision, communities and shifts in social, cultural, environmental and economic conditions.
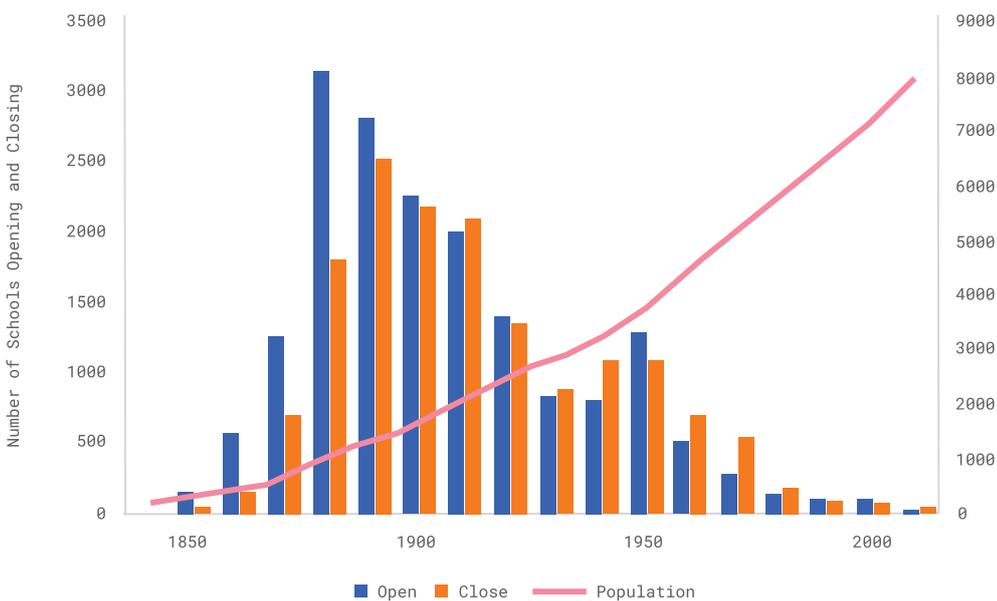
Why it matters?

Achieving the educational goals of national – the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration – and international – Sustainable Development Goal 4, Incheon Declaration – statements require a scale of robust interdisciplinary evidence not currently being met. The analytical procedures of RIPE analysis generate the level of evidence required by governments and systems to amplify, deepen, or scale initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for students, staff, and communities.

About the Author

Scott Eacott

Scott Eacott PhD, is a Professor in the School of Education | Research Fellow in the Gonski Institute for Education at UNSW Sydney and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. He leads an interdisciplinary research program that seeks to develop tools for educators, schools and systems to better understand the provision of schooling through relational theory. His distinctive relational approach that has led to invitations to run workshops and give talks in Norway, Canada, the USA, Indonesia, South Africa, Mexico, and throughout Australia. Scott has authored > 100 publications, led major research projects (funding· $3.7M) and successfully translated his research into policy and practice. You can connect with him on Twitter @ScottEacott

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