



AUSTRALIAN PRINCIPALS CENTRE

Monograph Number 9

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The APC's
2002 Summer Institute
*Reconfiguring Schooling
for the 21st Century*
was held in Melbourne on
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THE APC SUMMER INSTITUTE, 2002

RECONFIGURING SCHOOLING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

Aims of the 2002 APC Summer Institute

The APC Summer held in January 2001 aimed to provide:

- a two-day intensive program that linked theory and practice in a chosen area relevant to school leaders in their day to day work;
- an opportunity for practising school leaders to develop an operational framework to be applied to strategy planning or to the management of key projects in their school;
- a big picture framework in which school leaders can contextualise their work;
- a series of exemplary practices whose underlying principles can be adapted for use in other settings.

There was a blend of expert input, case study material and group based process work. This APC Monograph covers material from the keynote presentations and workshop sessions that took place over the two days. This includes summaries of:

- Professor Brian Caldwell's paper, *What do experiences tell us about the future of schooling? Contexts, trends, challenges and opportunities*
- Bruce Wilson's paper, *Schooling in Australia — How Might it Look in 2010?*
- Bert van Halen and Gabrielle Leigh's Case Study presentation
- group work using Zing technology.

EXPERT INPUT:

A summary of the keynote presentation by Professor Brian Caldwell

Dean of Education at
The University of Melbourne

***What do experiences tell us about
the future of schooling?
Contexts, trends, challenges and
opportunities***

Background

The classroom **has** changed. There is still a long way to go, though. How are we going to go about it? One key factor we will need to remember is that we cannot just keep adding to what we are already doing. Drucker talked about the need to manage "abandonment" as well as innovation — the idea that since there is no more time, if we add something to our already busy schedules we need to identify what will have to go to make room for it. By the end of this paper participants should be thinking about five things they want to change, and five things that they will abandon.

The Brief

My brief for this session is to:

- identify some of the problems we are facing in education, not just in Australia but internationally;
- look at some of the countries where similar problems have been faced, overcome or don't exist;
- imagine how the Australian situation would be different if we took on similar changes and/or practices.

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Educational reform in other nations

When considering possible applications of educational reforms from other contexts, we can think in terms of adopting, of adapting, or of raising our awareness about some of the things to avoid.

We can't always take on something in our own work setting or context just because it has worked successfully elsewhere, but we should think freely about the possibilities, and how changes might impact at the classroom, school and system levels.

Looking at what others have been doing often can help us to see that what seem "intractable" problems are not always so daunting. The process can inform us, affirm us, challenge us and warn us.

Taking all of that into account, in very general terms, how are our students doing as compared with those of other nations?

Let's look at some of the results from PISA (the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment). PISA looked at 15-year-olds in 32 countries, testing them on reading, maths and science literacy, applied to real life problems.

The results were published at the end of 2001. Overall, they show that Australian students are going "pretty well".

The Australian students in the sample came ...

- 4th in reading, behind Finland, Canada and New Zealand;
- 5th in Maths, behind Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Finland; and
- 7th in Science, behind South Korea, Japan, Finland, UK, Canada and New Zealand.

These results were similar to the findings from the TIMSS-R results, which were published in 1998.

However, the commentary by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) noted that there was a larger disparity between our highest and lowest achieving students, and between different groups, than there was in almost any other nation.

Consider the following:

- In national benchmark tests for literacy, the percentages of students in particular groups who met the benchmark included:
 - 90 per cent of girls;
 - 85 per cent of boys; and
 - only 66 per cent of indigenous students.
- The percentages of students completing to Year 12 were:
 - 72 per cent of girls;
 - 60 per cent of boys;
 - 67 per cent in urban areas;
 - 60 per cent in rural areas;
 - 60 per cent of students with low socio-economic status (SES); and
 - 76 per cent with high SES.

In 2000, the Kirby Report commented on the relatively poor Australian participation rates and the patterns of outcomes that are skewed against certain groups and geographical regions. Such outcomes are incompatible with the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st century, which commits Australia to "*safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling*". That, after all, is the key to what we want to do.

We need to put a new element into the framework that we're using. A priority needs to be placed on the development and implementation of policies that will help reduce disparities in achievement among different classifications of students — especially in those groups identified here:

- girls and boys;
- those in urban and rural communities;
- those in high and low socio-economic setting; and
- non-indigenous and indigenous students.



A priority needs to be placed on the development and implementation of policies that will help reduce disparities in achievement among different classifications of students

What are the implications if we do not address the disparities?

Let's look at what might occur, in terms of three scenarios, by the year 2010:

- 1 Government schools might have become "safety nets" — the disparities widening, with growing parent dissatisfaction leading to perhaps 60 per cent of secondary students attending non-government schools, as opposed to around 40 per cent who do so currently.
- 2 All schools might have started to disappear in the face of rapid social and technological advances. Schools might have become dangerous places to be, with parents responding by moving their children to home education or distance learning. There might have been an enormous growth in innovative learning centres.
- 3 There might have been a transformation of schools, with a range of innovative practices and creative leadership, and moves to face problems and solve them.

These are not the idle daydreams of an academic. At an OECD conference of Ministers, held in Rotterdam, they were scenarios that had been commissioned for very serious discussion.

A more detailed summary of all six scenarios is available in the IARTV Occasional Paper, No.73, *The OECD Schooling Scenarios and their Implications for Management, Leadership and Governance*, by David Istance (December 2001).

As Hedley Beare has pointed out, we need to take notice of the seriousness with which informed Ministers and other educational leaders around the world are considering the future of schools. We need to consider some of the other possible factors they are looking at, such as shortages of teachers and teacher exodus from the classroom, as well as a possible change of school role towards becoming a core social centre for the community.

We need to start by looking at how some schools are **now**. The future is here. To explore the policy and practice implications further, we also need to get into writing scenarios ourselves, as a planning tool.

To do that, we should start from where we think things will/should be in 2010 and work back. Ask yourself — What do we want to be? And how do we get there?

Is a global perspective relevant to developments in Australian schools?

What are others saying? And what might it mean for us? Well, one thing we should bear in mind is that education has actually led the world in globalisation — for example, through the rapid spread of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in universities and schools. Many in the educational community now think nothing of being in daily contact with students, teachers or lecturers in other countries. Their networks operate independently of factors such as geography, distance, and time zones. And educational sectors, come to that.

Second, there has been increasing emphasis on seeing education as an investment, which implies the need for maximum possible return on that investment.

The OECD, UNESCO, the State and the nation, are all saying what they want from schools. The international consensus is that they want all students, in all settings, to be literate, numerate citizens, who will be equipped for, and involved in, lifelong learning — leading to their being productive workers in a knowledge society.

One of the other common threads is the move towards self-managing schools. In Australia, Victoria has set the pace with the decentralisation of funding to schools. Some might argue that the resources are still too little and too constrained, but the fact is that 94 per cent of funding is decentralised. This is the highest proportion of any system in the world. Victorian schools, however, are not autonomous or fully self-governing. There is a set of central accountabilities to which they are held.

Parallel moves have been made around the world. The TIMSS study showed that achieving a balance between centralisation and decentralisation is seen as the way to go. This is the direction that has been taken by the countries demonstrating the highest levels of student achievement.



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Common approaches have included:

- Centralised testing;
- centralised control in the curriculum; but
- school autonomy in staffing, incentives, choices of teaching methods, and encouragement of parent interest.

The more systems advance down this road, the more they move towards autonomy. The UK is a good example, where the Blair government is allowing more freedom for the best performing schools.

The policy implication then, based on international practice, is to support the trend towards self managing schools.

Are competition and choice harmful or beneficial for student outcomes?

The Weissman study of TIMSS data found that “competition from private educational institutions” was a factor associated with high student achievement in public schools.

The evidence from UK and US studies suggests that competition helps to raise standards — where the competition is not “rivalrous” and where there is co-operation between schools, which is often the case (for example, through the sharing of resources and facilities).

The US Charter schools, for instance, receive public funding but are independent. While their development has been controversial, the consensus is that their success has stimulated schools in the system.

In the UK, a study showed that increasing choice between schools has actually led to a **narrowing** of socio-economic disparities. The conclusion was that schooling is fairer now than it was in the 80s. A challenging outcome indeed.

Contrary to what many Australians might think, internationally Australia is seen as having relatively low levels of competition between government and non-government schools, since all schools receive public funding. This is by no means universal overseas.

Can conflict over the funding of public and private schools be resolved?

In Australia, battle lines are drawn at every election between those who see “public” as synonymous with “government” — arguing that public schools must be built, owned, operated and funded exclusively from the public purse — and those supporters of non-government schools who believe that their exercise of choice should not require them to pay two sets of taxes — one to the government, which distributes only a portion to the school of choice, and another to the school in the form of a fee.

International observers from the UK, Hong Kong, the Netherlands or New Zealand would be puzzled by this, for in these places there are few distinctions in approaches to public funding on the basis of who owns and operates schools. In the UK, basically, Church of England and Catholic schools receive around 98 per cent of funding in comparison with the allocations to “government sector” schools.

In Hong Kong 92 per cent of schools are not owned by the government, and all schools receive the same funding. New Zealand integrated most private schools into the system in 1975.

Collaborative approaches can work well and do occur between competing schools. An Australian example considered later in this Summer Institute paper — three schools, from different sectors, on a single site — at Caroline Springs in Victoria, is a case in point.

In terms of policies, we should be encouraging both choice and co-operation. Every effort should be made to reach agreement on a national framework of policies, priorities, curriculum, standards and accountabilities, with a national system of self-managing schools supported by state, regional and community units of administration.

Difficult as it might be in Australia to achieve such a system — resolving the state/commonwealth and public/private issues — that is what we should be aiming for if we are serious about taking on the reforms that are currently working in other countries.



In terms of policies, we should be encouraging both choice and co-operation.

Is there a counterpart in other nations to the perennial concern about levels of funding for schools?

In the early 21st century, expectations for schools are rapidly outstripping the capacity or willingness of the community to meet through taxation the full cost of education. The same is true for health services.

How are we doing compared with international benchmarks? Australia ranks 12th out of 28 nations in the OECD, in terms of percentage of GDP. We are above the mean for primary and secondary — in absolute terms and in relation to growth over the last five years — and below the mean in class size. And in Australia, as in the other OECD countries, costs are rising.

Still, it's not enough.

But what is "enough"? Working from the TIMSS material, Weissman concluded that *"there is no strong positive correlation between spending and student performance"*. Japan, for example, has high spending and high achievement levels. Hong Kong and Singapore have low spending and high achievement levels. Australia has mid-range spending and relatively high achievement levels.

In general, Weissman concluded ...

"per pupil spending and smaller class size do not have positive effects, while having decent instructional materials and experienced and well-educated teachers do show positive results".

Where does that leave us? While Australia is operating its schools with a relatively high level of efficiency and effectiveness when compared with international benchmarks, the higher expectations and rising costs still point to the need for more funds from the public purse and additional support from the wider community.

The policy makers know this. What are the options? It remains to be seen whether the GST will deliver more funding to the states for education. Even if it does, it is unlikely to meet the needs, given the current taxation rate — which is not likely to rise.

Does Australia need a new policy framework?

The quick answer is "yes, we do". We have sufficient apparently intractable problems, with no obvious solutions in sight — for example, the disparities noted earlier, between groups and geographical areas, in terms of student achievement levels.

Is it possible to get more of a national consensus on the need for reforms in education? Can we move beyond state/commonwealth disputes over who is responsible, who pays and what to do?

It will not be easy, but the answer again is "yes". Look elsewhere. The "strategic abandonment" of old conceptual frameworks and ways of operating has been a feature. In the UK there has been a move away from old ideologies — of both the left and the right — to focus on achieving the desired outcomes. There has been a recognition of the need to take a balanced approach — to be pragmatic but to apply values. What counts is what works.

We can challenge assumptions but remain true to our core values. In Australia, as Don Edgar has said:

"Clearly the processes and structures of education in Australia will have to change. Though the global economy seems to be the main driving force, my argument is that education is the key to a more active democracy, a more civil society in which individuals can achieve their own goals while not forgetting the value of the community which supports them"

*The Patchwork Nation:
Re-thinking Government
— Re-building Community,
2001, p 188.*



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At a nuts and bolts level, is it possible for us as educators to change minds? Yes. Is it possible to improve student outcomes? Yes. Are resources important? Yes.

What we can do as individuals is focus on strategies. We can:

- build change into the things we are working on;
- think about some of the issues that have been raised;
- use groupwork time at the Summer Institute to shape up say five strategies to meet five high priorities for change;
- place what we are planning in the context of realistic resourcing;
- identify five things to abandon;
- decide how we will go about implementing our ideas.

If we can do that, we can look back and feel that we are starting to add value in the move towards constructive change.

Editor's note:

As intimated by Professor Caldwell in his final comments, the Summer Institute provided opportunities for participants to work in groups using his suggested framework, with facilitators leading them through the process and introducing them to Zing technology. This process and some of the immediate responses are described later in this Monograph.

EXPERT INPUT:

An edited version of the keynote presentation by Bruce Wilson

CEO, Curriculum Corporation

Schooling in Australia. How might it look in 2010?

I have been asked to embarrass myself by making predictions. Before I do, let me share my predicament with you by asking the following:

- *How many young Australians presently get the kind of education we would hope for?*
- *How many are engaged, enriched and empowered by their schooling?*
- *How many leave school ready for the challenges of adult life, replete with skills, sophisticated in their understanding of social and natural phenomena, flexible and entrepreneurial in thought and action, warm in their appreciation of literature and the arts?*
- *How many of the children in our schools will deserve that description by the time they leave school?*
- *How many gain the benefits you would want for your own children?*

What percentage of young Australians at present gain rich and substantial benefits from their schooling? Do you have a number in your head? Look 10 years ahead. Will the results be substantially different from today? Which of the following three answers would you give:

- 1 *We will be doing substantially better than we are doing today.*
- 2 *We will be doing broadly as well as we are today, perhaps slightly better or worse.*
- 3 *We will be doing much worse than we are today.*

Your response might not be your most considered view, but this is the kind of judgement people like us are obliged to make every day, at least implicitly — every time we allocate resources to future projects, or buy a new piece of durable equipment to support our work, or advise a School Council about a policy decision. Behind such daily activity lies a set of judgements about the future of education.

How reliable are judgements like these? How good are people at predicting the future?



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I saw a graph recently, which tracked predictions by the 50 largest economic forecasting firms in the USA, relating to Long Treasury Yields in the United States between 1989 and 1995. The forecasters were comprehensively wrong in every case, completely failing to pick major turning points in the markets. Over relatively short periods of time, the most eminent market economists had failed to predict the direction of bond prices, a fundamental indicator of economic health and progress. The wealth of the clients who listened to these economists disappeared in the gaps between the predictions and the actual outcomes.

This gave me a new idea — a simple one, which I will explain shortly. Before I do so, let me provide some anecdotal evidence about prediction and forecasting in general.

- The most eminent financier of the 1920s, Bernard Baruch, cabled Winston Churchill in November 1929 to say: *'FINANCIAL STORM DEFINITELY PASSED'*. The world, of course, was on the brink of the worst depression of modern times.
- The Managing Director of the IMF said in 1959: *'In all likelihood, world inflation is over'*.
- On December 4 1941, the Secretary of the US Navy, Frank Knox, said, *'No matter what happens, the US Navy is not going to be caught napping'*. The Pearl Harbour attack happened three days later.
- Louis B Mayer was told by a studio executive not to bid for the rights of *Gone With the Wind*. He said: *'Forget it Louis, no Civil War picture ever made a nickel.'*
- The manager of the Grand Ole Opry told Elvis Presley: *'You ain't goin' nowhere son. You ought to go back to drivin' a truck.'*
- In 1899, the Commissioner of the United States Office of Patents urged President McKinley to close the office down because, he said, *'Everything that can be invented has been invented'*.
- President Hayes took part in an early telephone conversation in 1876, and afterwards said: *'That's an amazing invention, but who would ever want to use one?'*
- The eminent nineteenth century British scientist Lord Kelvin said: *'Radio has no future'*.

- A potential investor in the Ford Motor Company was told by his banker: *'The horse is here to stay, but the automobile is only a novelty'*.
- In 1901, two years before the historic Wright brothers flight at Kittyhawk, Wilbur Wright said, *'Man will not fly for 50 years'*.
- The editor of the *London Daily Express*, who was told in 1922 that the inventor of television wanted to see him, said: *'For God's sake go down to reception and get rid of the lunatic who's down there. He says he's got a machine for seeing by wireless. Watch him — he may have a razor on him'*.
- People have heard of the view expressed by Thomas J Watson, the founder of IBM, who said in 1943: *'I think there is a world market for about five computers'*. Fewer people know that in 1977, the founder of Digital Equipment, Ken Olson, said *'There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home'*.
- One of the scientists working for the company that won the original tender to develop Arpanet, the precursor of the Internet, when asked whether such a thing was possible, said *'Of course you can develop it, but why would you want to?'*

Why is prediction regularly so wrong? When people predict the future, they have a model in their heads of the future as a natural extension of the present. They fail to anticipate **changed** directions. Indeed, essentially they make a judgement that what applies today will go on applying, effectively without trend. They think that what is happening now has far greater power than it does to shape the future.

We suffer as a plague from the classic prediction flaw: we think tomorrow will be like today. That is my "big new idea": that when we predict the future, we expect it to be more like the past and the present than it ever turns out to be.

In almost all the cases I cited, that was the mistake people made. Virtually all of these people were experts. Most were the best qualified people you could imagine to make their predictions. They had access to the best information available. Still they made predictions that now look dumb. They were trapped in the present and could not see the forces leading to radical change even when they were themselves the agents of that change.



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So, when we make projections about the future of schooling and of student learning in Australia, as I asked you to do earlier, we base them on an extrapolation of the present. And as I have just demonstrated, an extrapolation based on experience to date is likely to be wrong.

Given that we can't extrapolate the future from current experience and trends with any confidence, let's start from the opposite end: let's predict a radically different outcome, and see what might have to happen if we are to get there. If I predict that in ten years, most young Australians will gain the kind of rich, substantial benefits from their education that only a relatively small proportion now gain, what intermediate actions and events would that outcome require? What else do I need to predict in order for that to come about?

The point of using prediction as a starting point in this discussion is this: often our approach to strategy is driven by what we conceive of as the possible, in other words by our fallible predictions based on our current state of knowledge and prejudice. We are the Wilbur Wrights of education. We are the people who know the field intimately, deep in our bones. And as experts we are almost certainly wrong in our predictions of the future. That often means that our strategies are also wrong, because they are limited by our predictions, our understanding of what might be achievable. Expert predictions, as I have suggested earlier, are more about what won't happen than about what will. That is, they are about what will stay essentially the same.

Starting from what we desire

If predictions are largely wrong, perhaps we should start much more often from moral positions or hopes and dreams, rather than from analysis. If we can't predict accurately, let's go for what we desire, since it is as likely to be right as anything else, and we will at least feel good about it. That is my new life philosophy. In this case, I want to make some predictions in three areas which will need to change in the next decade, if we are to achieve a properly democratic education system. The three areas are:

- Resourcing
- Delivery arrangements
- Curriculum

I will make a few brief comments and suggestions on the first two, and devote most of the remaining space in this paper to the area of curriculum.

Resourcing

The first major prediction I want to make is that there will be a substantial increase over the decade in the level of resources directed to the improvement of student learning. The increase will be large enough to transform the teaching and learning process, and to improve outcomes dramatically for all students. This prediction is based on two assumptions.

- 1 If the promise of the GST is realised, there will be a progressive increase in real funds available to states and territories during the coming decade. In some states, the real increase will not occur until 2007, but in every case there is a credible argument that jurisdictions will have access to significantly increased fiscal resources. That is virtually certain, in itself, to lead to an increase in funds to education, simply because of the proportion of state budgets devoted to education.
- 2 Governments will further increase spending on education in a discretionary way because they are coming to understand that the primary basis of improved general economic performance, and therefore of increasing community prosperity, is an effective modern education system.

Over the next decade, resources available to schools and school systems will be allocated more directly to the improvement of learning. The work of schools and school systems will be analysed much more systematically to identify those activities which are net efficient contributors to the educational process, and those which are dispensable, or could be outsourced or reduced in scope and cost. Much of this reallocation of resources has to do with changes in delivery arrangements, and I will say something further about that later. But we will also get much better at identifying what produces student learning, and what is neutral or negative in its effect.

Equally, resourcing opportunities arise in the curriculum area. Again, I will say more about that in a minute, but my summary view about resourcing and curriculum is that we presently waste millions of dollars on unproductive curriculum work at system and school level, arguing endlessly about matters which should be decided once and put away. We will get better at focusing our curriculum work, putting our energy into the hard stuff rather than making a meal of the easy stuff. To make one part of this point clearly: it ought to be easy to define what we want students to learn, and we should spend as little of



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our precious resources as possible on that work. What is hard is making sure that students get it, and that is where we should put our time, money and energy.

My other major point about resources is that it is probably fair to say there is no major sector of the Australian economy that makes less effective use of technology than school education. The education industry has not invested substantially in technology, and has made no major effort to identify areas in which technology could assist in the delivery of its core operations. The investment process is now starting, and the laptop program in Victoria is one example.

What has been missing, and is just beginning, is a systemic analysis of the work flows in the sector and an identification of opportunities to use technology to improve work flows and outcomes. That will happen over the next five years or so and, once the results are clear, governments will devote significant additional resources to the design and implementation of technology solutions to problems in educational management and delivery, including issues of technology.

So, in summary: education will get more resources from government, we will allocate them more directly and efficiently to improve student learning, and we will buy and use technology effectively for the same purpose.

Arrangements for delivering education

Arrangements for delivering education, in my view, constitute the single greatest blockage to improving student learning. I am sure you are familiar with the line that education is working on an industrial model in the information age. I don't feel completely comfortable with that kind of analysis, because I think many elements of the industrial model are important in the delivery of education and schooling. These include:

- high levels of administrative efficiency;
- clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities; and
- a focus on results.

So, I don't share the view that we should do away with the old industrial model school as the focus of educational delivery, although we should do away with some of its rigidities and inefficiencies. Many inefficiencies in delivery will be done away with in the next decade. Incompetence, class sizes and local hiring and firing are just three examples of simple, critical areas where I expect to see radical reform.

Incompetence

There will be a much more vigorous and sustained attempt to eliminate incompetent and dangerous teachers from the profession. Have I said that clearly enough? The profession has not been good at managing professional standards, and while there is now some work being conducted by professional associations and government agencies on professional standards and on industrial arrangements intended to enact those standards, there is a long way to go.

Over the next decade, I expect we will move to a position in which incompetent members of the profession are identified, properly supported and, if necessary, removed from the profession. I anticipate that by the end of the decade, this process will be essentially in the hands of members of the profession, rather than employers — it will be a professional rather than an industrial matter.

Class sizes

The current arrangements about class sizes are an excellent example of what is wrong with the industrial model. In respect of class sizes, we are at the same stage of development as the automobile when Henry Ford said you could have one in any colour so long as it was black. Setting inflexible maximum class sizes eliminates one of the major potential opportunities for improving student learning. To make the point simply: under current staffing ratios, every class of 50 that you run lets you run one class of 5. If you run a lecture for 100 students, you can run four classes of 10. Why wouldn't you? I predict that we will have much greater class size flexibility (which doesn't mean fewer teachers; nor, on average, does it mean larger classes).

Hiring and firing

Victoria has made some progress on putting the responsibility for staffing and other resources where the work is done, but much more will be done in that area. In 10 years time, local schools will essentially hire and fire their own staff. They will do this within a formal financial and industrial framework, but this will also be more flexible than it is at present. This will allow schools to plan and adapt staffing to need, as businesses can now do.

Curriculum

In 1976, James Callaghan, then the British Prime Minister, argued in his seminal Ruskin speech that curriculum had become a 'secret garden'. That speech began the process which



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culminated in the development and adoption of a national curriculum, shining some public light, at least, into the secret garden in the UK.

Curriculum professionals in this country have so far been successful in maintaining our own secret garden. Like the English garden of which James Callaghan spoke, ours consists mainly of peculiar linguistic outgrowths, arcane gardening practices and liberal applications of fertiliser.

The most obvious feature of the Australian curriculum garden is that it is actually 8 different gardens (one in each state or territory), managed by a total of 17 head gardeners, each with a full collection of hoes and rakes and garden sheds. Each of those gardens has its own internal discussions about the arrangement of beds and pathways, often involving different views from key bodies such as the Board of Gardening, the Gardening Department, or the Horticultural Council. Inside these gardens we have some outstanding native species. These are our own special local variants, curriculum flora of which we can be particularly proud, because they exist nowhere else in the world, and because they make a unique contribution to the secret garden.

Among the inhabitants of the Australian secret gardens are the local hybrid SOSE; the Health and Physical Education plant; introduced species within the genus LOTE and in literacy; and the complex extended families of linguistic mosses. Holding sway over this magnificent horticultural resource are the secret gardeners. I am proud to be one. It is our responsibility to ensure that the various Australian gardens are protected from damage and interference by those who don't understand them. Our critical conservation role, of course, is the reason that we don't usually allow the public, or their representatives, into our gardens except on special occasions.

Sometimes we have public consultation processes, to ask people what they would like in the garden. As it happens, these consultations reveal that people mostly want pretty much what we ourselves would want, which is gratifying.

We have not forgotten, of course, that the gardens were established by those who thought that the children who visited should leave with a basket of fruit, flowers and vegetables, all culled from the tree of knowledge. Nowadays, however, we are much more advanced and prefer that children learn **how** to garden, rather than taking away specific produce.

This approach won't work. During the course of the next decade or so, our secret gardens will

be transformed by the effects of the knowledge economy. This phenomenon will strip away the intellectual framework which now dominates curriculum thinking. Much of this framework for the curriculum was put in place during a brief and exciting flowering in the 1970s. Since then, we have turned a radical intellectual movement, which might have been a useful corrective, into a new orthodoxy. We have largely forgotten why we established the garden in the first place.

So to my predictions about the curriculum, which are based on the view that over the next decade we will rediscover the purpose of the secret garden.

First, within 10 years we will have one garden in Australia, rather than eight, in the form of a national curriculum. In Australia we now have eight different curriculum structures, and eight different assessment systems. We have by my count seventeen bodies with major political, intellectual and bureaucratic responsibility for the curriculum. Those bodies employ thousands of people who work away at solving the same set of problems, as they affect this single nation. If you were constructing arrangements to develop curriculum in this nation today, is this the system you would put together?

Our curriculum arrangements are an accommodation which met the political needs of the Federation process at the end of the nineteenth century, and which was appropriate to a large continent with poor communication systems. In the knowledge age, it is difficult to imagine that the present institutional arrangements will provide a sustainable, credible, powerful response to the challenges of globalisation

Within the decade, this infrastructure will be replaced. Instead we will have a single national locus of responsibility for curriculum development. Its role will be to state what it is that children in Australia should learn, simplifying and clarifying Australian curriculum. It will also enable us to achieve my second prediction, which is to reallocate resources to the improvement of pedagogy. One in every 80 Australians is a teacher. We are part of a 0mass profession. It will require a dramatic improvement in resourcing and the levels of support available to teachers to raise the general level of teaching to the highest possible standard. I think that is worth doing. I can't think of anything that is more worth doing.

My prediction is that those resources which presently go to sustaining a complex state-based curriculum framework and other resources, will go, instead, to improving teaching.



During the course of the next decade or so, our secret gardens will be transformed by the effects of the knowledge economy. This phenomenon will strip away the intellectual framework which now dominates curriculum thinking.



... our task is to offer every young Australian a framework of knowledge and skills as a tool for gaining power over the world. And we have never faced honestly the meaning of 'every' in that sentence.

Before I introduce my third curriculum prediction, take a moment to consider your position on the following statements:

- *Teaching should move from a content-centred approach to an approach based more on processes.*
- *Teaching should move from a knowledge-based approach to one based on learning how to learn.*

I suppose I have asked 5000 educators to state their position on these beliefs in the past five years. Perhaps 4000 have agreed with them; 20 people have expressed their opposition. (Around a thousand have not committed themselves.)

But neither view expresses a real alternative. Each sets out two essential components of a good education. In the current orthodoxy, however, one of the two is more essential than the other. We believe in process, and in learning how to learn. We don't believe in knowledge.

One of the more contentious implications of the knowledge age is this: knowledge matters. For anyone outside the secret garden that would seem axiomatic and even tautological. For many inside education, it sounds heretical to say that knowledge matters. Many secret gardeners will disagree with me. If you do, I would ask you to read most contemporary Australian curriculum policy documents with an open mind. Knowledge is rarely mentioned.

Our contemporary beliefs about knowledge are part of a set of views originally designed to correct an exaggerated focus on knowledge at the expense of pedagogy. As is often the case in reform programs, we forgot that the thing we are trying to reform is the point of the exercise. You can't have a successful education system unless young people take some knowledge away.

In the knowledge age, when the old markers of culture and identity are washed away by astonishing technology and the overwhelming flow of capital and information, it will become more than ever the job of schools to help young Australians discover who they are and where they belong.

Our approach should involve teaching young Australians their history and geography, introducing them to the artistic, cultural, moral and linguistic traditions which should sustain them, guaranteeing every child a framework of knowledge which can provide a foundation point from which to comprehend a changing world.

So, my third prediction is that the curriculum will return, though in a revised form, to an older conception, one based on what people know. We will rediscover (and I speak here particularly of official documents) the idea that young people benefit from a framework of knowledge.

We will move away from process-based ideologies and wishy-washy apologies like 'life-long learning' and 'learning how to learn'. These terms are in effect our excuses for the fact that many young Australians don't know very much.

My fourth prediction is that we will adopt high standards for every child. We will do what highly successful education cultures do: assume that every child can achieve the highest standards, and work on how to get them there. You might think that is what we do now. I think our actual current view is that many children can't achieve much, and we shouldn't force them to fail, so we will offer them easy success in the hope that their self-esteem will be robust and powerful.

I think every child should be challenged intellectually. All children should do things every day that expose them to risk of failure. They should be exposed consistently to new and difficult learning experiences. You don't get high self esteem from doing things that you know you can do. Nor do you get high levels of intellectual achievement. You get those things from succeeding at enterprises that you find scary and that involve the risk of failure. We will not achieve universal high standards until we demand them for every child, and until we are willing to expose ourselves, and our students, to the risk of failure.

Final comment

Such are my predictions for schooling in Australia in 2010. Like many expert predictions they are probably wrong. They do, however, avoid the common problem of sounding too much like today. They sound different because they involve setting aside our current prejudices: economic, industrial, intellectual and educational.

If they all came true, I think we would begin to see the real potential of Australian education being realised.

Why might it be worth setting aside our current allegiances, preferences and ideologies like this? Because our task is to offer every young Australian a framework of knowledge and skills as a tool for gaining power over the world. And we have never faced honestly the meaning of 'every' in that sentence.

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CASE STUDY:

**A summary of
the presentation by
Bert van Halen**

Principal of Deer Park Secondary College

Gabrielle Leigh

Principal of The Brookside School

Bert van Halen

A short case study from
Deer Park Secondary College

Bert van Halen spoke about work done at Deer Park Secondary College that related to the themes being raised at the Summer Institute. He commented on the ways in which theory should underpin practice — in their case, Deer Park Secondary College had particularly called upon Sergiovanni's, Atkin's, Edgar's, Ellyard's and Drucker's ideas. These had been used to help build on the commitment of teachers and develop their capacity.

At Deer Park, he said, they are looking for new ways of knowing, of networking, of developing a new professionalism, of taking on board the spiritual and emotional dimensions that too often are not built into school frameworks.

This year the staff are writing curriculum, seeking consciously for the best possible balance between knowing and learning. Much remains to be done. It is only after seven years of working directly with Dr Julia Atkin, for example, that teachers are finally feeling they understand the Thinking component.

They are looking at new ways of networking with the community, basing their work on Don Edgar's work in *Patchwork Nation* (mentioned earlier by Brian Caldwell). For this they have received government funding and support, which has funded a project officer.

In the area of professionalism, they are working to change teachers' self perceptions — to see themselves as lifelong learners, valued as people — and to develop the passion and purpose that they have for their work.

Drucker's ideas about abandonment, referred to by Brian Caldwell, have been taken on board very seriously and are applied in areas such as job descriptions, which tend to be prescriptive. Nobody takes on anything additional without giving something away. The aim is to do things better.

At Deer Park, he said, there is a philosophy, enacted in practice, of working together with other schools, to avoid the negative aspects of competition. Positive outcomes for the students are paramount.

Rather than concentrating on teaching the eight KLAs as such, learning program management is given to teams, who maintain an overview of teaching, learning and assessment that ensures the school's accountability for student outcomes. A new, simpler curriculum is being drawn up in a clear framework. This will include elements catering for lower achieving students and provide for developmental learning.

Commenting on this presentation, Brian Caldwell commented that what Bert van Halen had described was a working model of Tony Blair's ideas for school autonomy.

Gabrielle Leigh

A short case study from
The Brookside School

Gabrielle Leigh, Principal of The Brookside School, described how the school was developed at the end of the nineties — as a new school in a new community at Caroline Springs. The school was custom-built as part of a single campus that includes independent and Catholic primary schools as well as the government school, Brookside. The three schools share some facilities and have all been networked from the start. There had never been any thought of primary education being what Bruce Wilson had called a "Secret Garden", she said.

A summary of Ms Leigh's presentation follows.

As Bert van Halen commented earlier, Deer Park Secondary College worked with Dr Julia Atkin over a long period. Brookside also worked with Dr Atkin — as part of a group with schools from Moonee Ponds — to develop a Thinking Curriculum, where thinking is taught explicitly. Staff thinking styles were assessed as part of this process, and were found to provide a comprehensive spread over the four quadrants that Dr Atkin uses as a framework. Student dispositions for thinking are used in every curriculum area.

Taking on something as radically different as a thinking curriculum requires a degree of "strategic abandonment", as Brian Caldwell suggested, but the school has been careful not to



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“throw the baby out with the bath water”. The school had no additional funding to explore its new directions. Indeed, during the establishment phase on the new site, funding was shared between the three schools, spanning the sectors.

Initially out-of-school-care was one element that could not be provided, although that situation has now changed.

Flexibility has been vital. For example, tennis might be provided for one term, replacing performing arts, or there might be one term where science becomes a curriculum focus. That kind of decision, ensuring an overall balance in curriculum provision, within the context of limited resources, has implications for the employment of teachers. What the students need determines the curriculum; the curriculum determines the choice of teachers.

The three schools on the one site — Brookside, Christ the Priest and a sub-campus of Mowbray College — provide education that is different not only in terms of curriculum and sectoral or religious associations, but also in structure. For example, the schools are experimenting with covering different age ranges — Brookside has been P-6, but in 2002 is moving to provide Year 7 as well; the Mowbray school, which functions as another College campus, moves this year to a P-10 format.

The Caroline Springs three-school campus was consciously established as a centre for the new community — both educational and social. The developers, Delfin, built the schools first, before the construction of houses began, and pre-planned the installation of networking throughout the community.

Since the early days, in 1997, the Caroline Springs campus has been based on commitment to a number of principles, including:

- lifelong learning;
- optimal use of learning, information and communication technologies;
- a philosophy of sharing; and
- new forms of ownership and structures.

What are some examples of how principles are applied in practice?

At Brookside, the Intranet is working well, and the staff are already exploring its further possibilities. As originally conceived, the aim is to connect all students from home, with connectedness at all levels to a wide range of locations in the community.

Sharing includes some of the buildings and facilities, the playground, curriculum and sport. In local inter-school sport, for example, rather than forming teams that represent the three schools separately, students compete as members of Caroline Springs A, B and C teams.

There are no bells or loudspeaker announcements. It is the responsibility of students and staff to be in particular places at particular times.

The balance between co-operation and competition is addressed continuously. The schools share, but they also compete at different levels in various areas of operation. And they push up each other's standards.

The schools have three different uniforms. It is the parent's right to choose between schools and sectors. The relations between the schools need to be based on mutual trust.

The Brookside motto is “*World Class Learning*”. Part of what we are doing is to explore a new professionalism. We value it. We support staff. And we focus on achieving the best results for the students. At Brookside we have an appraisal system that is exhaustive and worthwhile. Each teacher has a set of goals which are re-visited mid-term. There is mentoring for all teachers, with additional guidance and coaching also available. Part of every teacher's role is to model life long learning, as a leader.

In addition to the usual range of formal professional development activities within and beyond the school, on-site sessions have a regular timeslot, on Wednesdays. Planned a term in advance, these sessions may involve one, two or three of the schools. Time is also allocated for planning, on Mondays. Reflection time is built into the schedules.

Staff are organised in “vertical” teams — with no age range division. Before staff meetings these teams work together on health and well-being activities. As well as providing designated time for work-related discussion, these occasions provide opportunities for social interaction — getting to know each other as colleagues and companions.

Joint meetings across schools' staffs are held once a month. Discussion at the meetings starts by looking at what is working well.

As part of the creation of a new school culture, different types of good leadership capacity are being built: strategic; educational; responsive; and cultural.



The balance between co-operation and competition is addressed continuously.

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The new school culture is being built on mutual trust and common purpose. Going deeper, the foundations include; passion; purpose; hope; alliances; tapping of expertise within and beyond the school; responsive leadership; and celebration.

During the last couple of years, the school has been involved in the Middle Years Research and Development (MYRAD) project. On the basis of that experience, and working closely with Deer Park Secondary College, the school is looking seriously at an ongoing involvement with middle schooling. Currently this involves attempts to redesign the curriculum in terms of two-hour blocks, at Years 5, 6 and 7. Good things are being incorporated from the primary and secondary learning environments, while acknowledging the importance of rites of passage for students who are in transition between stages of their lives as well as their education.

Opening the **Questions and Answers** session, Brian Caldwell commented that this had been a local illustration of how to operate in the new policy framework. He asked what was the key attribute in terms of personal leadership capacity. Ms Leigh responded that it is the belief that everybody involved can go through a change process and be excited by learning.

Steve Marshall, Regional Director of Western Metropolitan Region, has been a key figure in links between the school and the Region/Department. He identified additional key attributes as the capacity: to be pro-active; to be willing to take on and work with the bureaucracy; and to inspire others.

A question about why parents would choose one or other of the three schools was answered in terms of parent perceptions — perhaps looking for a particular underpinning of religion, traditions, values or philosophy. Ms Leigh commented that it is important to remember some additional factors. These include the facts that:

- the three are all excellent schools;
- between them they have a total student population of around 870 at present;
- only about one third of the independent school students are primary; and
- despite the variation in fees for the three schools, the government school must not be seen as a “low cost alternative”. That is not why parents are choosing to send their children there.

GROUP BASED PROCESS WORK: Outline of the Series of Workshop Sessions led by John Findlay, MBA

Learning in Teams Using Collaborative Tools that Scaffold Facilitation, Knowledge Creation and Thinking Skills

During the course of the Summer Institute, participants worked in a series of group sessions, with facilitators, using new technology in a collaborative thinking and learning process. The “Zing” technology that they used consists of software and hardware, was developed in Australia, and currently is installed in around 80 schools in Australia, New Zealand and the UK.

With the Zing system, up to twelve keyboards are connected via a multiplexer to a single computer or a network. As participants key in material, all writing simultaneously, the material that they enter is projected via a data projector on to a large screen, where it can be discussed and manipulated in a variety of ways.

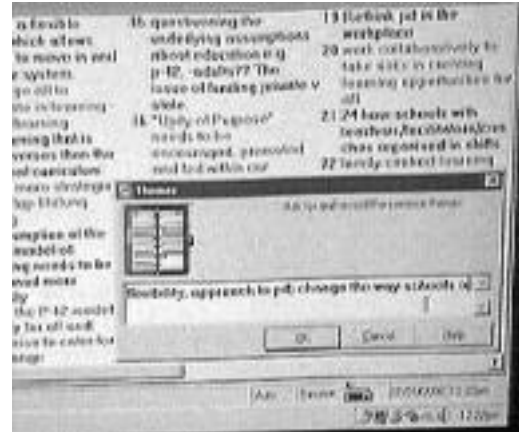
Each participant has an on-screen “playspace” for working on his/her own ideas, and there is a “teamspace” where ideas are collected. Participants follow an “etiquette” — a series of repeated steps:

- 1 they talk things through orally as a group, identifying the topics they will work on;
- 2 using the keyboards, they type in their ideas, simultaneously;
- 3 as a group, they read the combined results out loud — their own ideas and those of others that were being written at the same time; and
- 4 they summarise and sift the material, where possible extracting issues and themes, before repeating the process to develop or refine the ideas further.

The facilitator’s job is to provide structure at the start, support freewheeling creativity in the middle, and encourage thoughtful resolution at the end. In this situation, the facilitator was an external “expert”, but normally, once participants are familiar with the equipment and its use, this role can be taken on by any participant. If this done by rotation, each person will given an opportunity to build leadership skills.



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Samples of group material, photographed from the screen during sessions.

What are some of the advantages of this system over more conventional group discussion?

- All group members participate and contribute.
- All ideas, from all participants, are recognised as having value.
- Errors along the way are expected, and actually encouraged, as they often lead, serendipitously, to new insights.
- Participants not only see the full range of ideas on screen, but hear them as they are read out.
- The process is fast, because group members are providing input simultaneously rather than consecutively.
- Group discussion can concentrate on drawing out common themes and directions — taking thinking further, rather than spending excessive time on getting to first base.

Advocates of the system believe that it has the potential to change dramatically the way that people learn, and to help shift responsibility for the learning process from the teacher to the learner. It provides an environment where ideas are developed, exchanged, synthesised, refined and focused rapidly.

It also keeps participants on task, leading to the creation of:

- new knowledge;
- new views on possible directions; and
- new perceptions of what might be possible, as well as how to achieve it — individually or in collaboration with others.

At the APC Summer Institute, participants were introduced to the technology in their first group session and initially were given the chance to “play” with material, so that they got use to the process and outcomes — the feel and look of the system. They then moved to discussion and use of the technology to elicit key issues that participants would wish to work on in further discussions.

From this process, a cumulative issues list was developed by the facilitators — to be used as focus material for discussions in sessions on the second day of the Institute. This was done while participants were occupied on other Institute activities.

In their second group session, participants were given further opportunities to familiarise themselves with the technology and processes, distilling issues from the keynote presentation by Bruce Wilson. They also discussed a plan of action for their group work on Day 2.

The group work on the second day lasted most of the morning, as groups worked with their facilitators to explore practical ways of developing strategic directions they could introduce in their own work places.

Discussion was intended to focus around three enduring themes:

- new ways of thinking;
- new ways of networking; and
- the new profession.

Groups focused on issues in terms of projects that participants were either already working on in their schools, or intended to work on. Groups used varied approaches to defining and discussing the projects and issues: one, for example, used de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats.



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Another group worked through a series of questions such as:

- What do we know about this?
- What other information do we need?
- What is our perception about the issue — as informed or gut reaction?
- What are some of the ways we could deal with it?
- What could we do differently?
- What innovations could we bring in?
- What would be the advantages and disadvantages of particular strategies?
- If we were to bring in particular innovations, what would we need to abandon in our current situation or practice to make room for them?
- What steps would we need to take to get started?
- And what about dates and timelines?

Facilitators also introduced participants to ideas about how they could look wider, seeking out and incorporating additional material in their deliberations, for example researching topics via the Internet, while working in the group situation.

By the end of the session, each participant had a relatively refined set of ideas and strategies to take back and implement in his/her workplace — on issues that were of direct and immediate relevance in that setting.

In a plenary session, participants discussed what the outcomes had been for them, what they thought of the technology and processes they had used, and where they went from here. How would they use what they had learned and the ideas they had developed during the two days? Would they want to continue networking with the people in their groups, who had helped them formulate the new ideas that they would take back to their schools? And how could APC provide ongoing support in terms of follow-up activities?

The overwhelming response was very positive. Participants felt they had moved forward in their thinking far more rapidly than they would have done working with conventional methods. Their ideas had not only been developed more quickly; they were also more coherent and more fully thought through. The participants had benefited from the input of other professionals in a highly effective sharing process.

Participants intimated that they would want to use the technology again, both for themselves and with their staffs — especially where the equipment became easily available, shared between schools or on loan from the Region. The approach would have particular application where substantial reforms were needed — and where “roadblocks” could be overcome by moving quickly through discussions that otherwise would bog down in the early stages.

Further collaborative work with other participants — formally or informally — would be valuable in supporting the initiatives they would undertake on their return to their work places. The APC could have a valuable role in this regard, perhaps through facilitating the exchange of ideas via their web site and follow-up activities.



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