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AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION INDEX

THE first issue of the Australian Education Index was produced in 1957. It was described as an attempt to assist 'all those faced either with the task of trying to keep in touch with what is being published about education in Australia, or concerned to find comprehensive information about particular subjects'.

Fifteen volumes later the Index is still doing this job, and it is still the only Australian publication in this field. It is the first place to look for information on almost anything written or spoken about education in Australia. Over the years the Index has continued to expand to keep pace with the published writing on education. Coverage of material in the Index has also expanded. We try to include entries from any source we can find that may be of use to educators.

COVERAGE

Material currently being indexed includes books and individual chapters of some of them, articles in periodicals, newspaper articles, theses, seminar reports, legislation, parliamentary debates. Our policy is to include material of concern to research at all levels. This is sometimes not easy to define, but we tend to include material if we think it may possibly be of use, as well as material for which we know there is a demand. We do not include

entries for news items which can be expected later to be included in other sources. Subject articles such as a study of Poe's poetry or a teacher's guide to plant development experiments are not included. Articles on teaching poetry, botany, and other subjects are always indexed, as well as articles in curriculum development.

There are two requirements for information: one is for access to current material, and the other is for searching for 'all' the material published. To attempt to satisfy both needs, the Index is published in two forms. It comes out bi-monthly from May to November, to ensure that entries for current material are published as soon as possible after they are recorded. The information collected over the year is then consolidated and published each year as an annual issue. This cumulation makes retrospective searching much easier as one volume only of the Index needs to be looked at for the whole year's publishing. In addition, to assist those who want to know what books were published during the year, an annual bibliography of Australian education is included in each cumulation.

ARRANGEMENT

The Index is very easy to use. Arrangement of the entries is in one

alphabetical sequence, as this is both straightforward for users and a common feature with many other much-used indexes. The Index gives both subject and author information, as most people want either information about certain subjects, or information about what certain authors have written. Both these needs can be satisfied from the Index. Full details about each of the periodicals indexed are given at the front of each issue. This in itself is often a useful checklist of the regular publications in Australian education.

Some educators bypass indexes altogether and prefer to thumb through all the issues of a periodical that covers their subject particularly well. Those who do that will ignore the Australian Education Index, but they will need to have plenty of time and be prepared to miss the many relevant articles that are published in other periodicals. The Index is both a short route to information and a summary of most of the material being published in Australia. Libraries of most tertiary institutions in Australia subscribe to the Index, as do individuals. Your subscription of \$20 per year covers both the current bi-monthly volumes and the annual cumulation. Sample copies are available on request to the Editor, Australian Education Index, ACER, PO Box 210, Hawthorn 3122.



Australia Revisited — Some Impressions

Dr W. D. Neal is vice-president of planning and development at the University of Alberta, at Edmonton, Canada. He has recently completed a study with Dr W. C. Radford, director of ACER, for the Commonwealth Teaching Service. He has written this personal view as a result of his recent stay in Australia.

It has been my privilege for nearly four months between February and July 1972, to revisit Australia and to renew acquaintance with many aspects of Australian education. This was done in two parts with a period in between during which I spent some time back in Canada, where I work, but in which I also had the opportunity to visit the United Kingdom, France, and New Zealand. Hence, for me, it was an opportunity for a refresher course in Australian education but I was also able to make some comparisons with developments in other countries and perhaps to see old problems in new perspective.

During the period of time that I was in Australia I had the opportunity to visit five of the six states and to spend some time also in the Northern Territory and in Canberra. Because of the nature of the investigation on which I was engaged, I talked to officials in the education departments, representatives of teachers associations in all states, public service boards and tribunals where relevant, principals and teachers in some private schools, representatives of parents and citizens bodies, and also some staff on university faculties of education and teachers colleges. During the time available to me I was not able to visit many schools except in the Northern Territory, but I did read a considerable amount of literature produced in the last few years, including the many reports put out by various organizations and committees of inquiry.

I have been asked to put down my impressions of Australian education and I do this with some trepidation because I have always been wary of the visitor who tries to sum up a nation's schools after a relatively short visit. However for some 25 years prior to 1966 I worked in Australian education and the nature of my duties during that period led to a considerable knowledge and understanding of what was happening in all Australian states and included first-hand visits to them all. Hence, in the remarks that follow, I trust that I have not misread the situation to an unacceptable degree and that it will be realized that I have a great admiration for some of the things that Australian education has achieved.

SOME GOOD THINGS

There is much to admire in Australian education. I do not propose to elaborate on all of these but during my visit I was impressed with some things which are listed below.

1. The work being done in most departments in the field of curriculum development and in the production of support materials continues to be sound and has resulted in some most interesting projects. While the translation of curriculum guides into effective practice in schools continues to lag behind the quality of curriculum development, and while much of the work seems to be imitative rather than innovative, nevertheless there is much that should contribute to the development of a curriculum program which is unique to Australian needs.

2. Some of the experiments in different ways of organizing schools, and hence the learning experiences offered therein, appear to have prospects of contributing much to Australian education. I refer particularly to the form of school

known as the open area school and, in a few cases, the non-graded school, and to other forms of organization which are emerging. While there is some experimentation in secondary schools, the main emphasis appears to be in the primary school field and in this respect primary education appears once again to be leading the way in innovation.

3. Some of the reports of the committees of inquiry are not only first-class in themselves, but appear to be having major effects on the quality of education in some states. The results of such committees are often shelved or given lip service but such is not the case with such inquiries as those of the Karmel Committee or the Radford Report, both of which seem to be having quite an impact on education in South Australia and Queensland respectively.

4. Some of the teachers associations appear once again to have become interested in statements of educational philosophy and principle. While this is not unanimous by any means I was impressed by the thought being given by teachers associations to educational problems rather than industrial ones and by the time that many officials in teachers associations are devoting to committees examining such issues. My thoughts here, however, are mixed as will be evident in some of the remarks below.

5. The provision for special education in Australia appeared to be still among the best in the world. While there may be many in the field who claim that much more should be done, nevertheless it is true that most states devote a larger percentage of their resources and adopt a much more systematic approach to catering for handicapped children than can be found elsewhere.

SOME OLD PROBLEMS

It was disturbing to me to find some of the old problems still occupying centre stage in Australian education when one might have expected that concerted effort could have led to a solution of them. I give just a few examples below.

1. In the larger states particularly there is still a major antagonism between teachers associations and the education departments. Surely education in Australia can ill afford this kind of wasted effort. The associations appeared to be reluctant to accept their own responsibility for the development and implementation of educational principles. Few associations in response to my questions indicated that they were prepared to put resources into such things as the professional development of teachers or the preservation of high standards of professionalism and integrity, by accepting responsibility for weeding out incompetent teachers, despite their concern over the control of entry into the profession.

2. The continuing dispute over the role of external examinations filled me with considerable dismay despite the advances that have been made in a few states. It seems to me that the evidence against external examinations on educational grounds is so overwhelming that the issue needs no debate and that all the resources available should be put in to developing satisfactory substitutes. I must say that the universities in Australia appear in general to be of very little help in this matter and that they continue to be very narrowly prejudiced.

3. I saw little signs of the secondary schools in Australia, particularly at the upper level, breaking away from the strongly academic orientation that they have pursued for so many years. Certainly many statements of intent can be found in this area but effective results are still to come.

4. There appears to be still a great deal of ignorance in one state about what is happening in the other states. This applies not only to

interested citizens but also unfortunately to officials in education departments and in teachers associations. On one level this may be regarded as just an aspect of inefficiency because it leads to costly duplication of scarce resources in tackling problems which are similar from state to state. While there is some co-operation at the national level, for example in curriculum development, the possibilities have barely been explored. On another level however, this ignorance is downright dangerous. I talked to some lay people, for example, who may have considerable influence in shaping educational policies, and some of whom may be regarded as being extremely well educated in their own fields, and yet their lack of knowledge and misinterpretation of what was going on in education in Australia outside their own small area, was really appalling.

SOME MAJOR PROBLEMS

My next few remarks should be regarded as being applicable to educational systems throughout the world rather than just to Australia. Education in the advanced countries is under a major attack. There were signs of it during my period in Australia as evidenced by newspaper articles and letters and by the action of students, teachers, and members of the community. If the trend in other countries is any criterion, the pressure in Australia will grow. One can give as instances the concerted attack by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce on educational goals and on expenditures in Canadian education, or the repeated failure of bond issues when presented to the voters in many United States districts, to the extent that many new schools cannot be built and furthermore that some school systems have had to curtail the length of their school year. Why has this come about when education, since World War II, has been looked upon as the panacea for the ills of society?

Perhaps one of the reasons is that education has indeed been asked to undertake far more than it can reasonably achieve in its present form and with its present support

from the community. The schools have been asked to solve a multitude of problems on top of the formal role which the school has always played. Examples of these problems which have been thrust at the school are such things as drug education, sex education, delinquency, driver education, and so on. As other institutions in society have waned in influence schools have become 'social wastepaper baskets'.

However, even in achieving our more formal objectives we have perhaps been slower to adapt than we should be and the rate of change in the rest of society, particularly in the technological world, has passed us by.

As I mentioned earlier, this is a world-wide problem in the western world. However, what concerns me about Australia is that there does not seem to be an appreciation of the seriousness of this impasse and of the significance of massive attacks on the educational system—attacks which are likely to intensify but which can be forestalled. It seems to me that there is a real call for dynamic leadership in the educational world. Such leadership should be based on the principle of co-operation involving the best brains that the community can make available to assist us. We educators will have to be prepared to give up some of the rights that we have jealously preserved in the interest of shared decision-making. More specifically, as part of this new approach to education development, we will have to face up squarely to three major problems which have beset us for many years, namely:

1. A systematic attack on the problem of decision-making including an analysis of the degree to which real decentralization can take place for certain kinds of decisions.

2. There still remains the central problem of providing equal educational opportunities for all kinds of people. While Australia has done much to provide for equal access for many pupils, this surely is not enough. The problems of socio-economic deprivation are looming large not only in rural areas but also in the inner core of large cities. Perhaps it is time for the Australian

systems to break away from the uniformity imposed by such things as formula staffing and formula financing and to develop patterns much more oriented to meeting educational needs.

3. The problem of the individualization of learning opportunities remains largely unsolved despite many efforts which pick away only at the fringes. There are signs, however, of opportunities to break the back of this problem and Australia should be gearing up for it.

Such are some few impressions resulting from a reacquaintance with Australian education. I strongly believe that Australia has a great deal going for it and that Australian education has a firm base from which it could take off to lead the world in many areas. I sincerely hope it does.

METRIC CONVERSION

ACER is currently involved in the metric conversion of ACER published tests and teaching aids which at present contain material based on imperial measures. Initially there will be problems in the introduction of materials incorporating metric items, as not all schools and or-

Mr R. T. Fitzgerald, a Chief Research Officer at ACER, is at present abroad on a six-month study tour. He was awarded a Churchill fellowship to investigate the educational provision for older adolescents in a number of European and North American countries. When Mr Fitzgerald's book *The Secondary School at Sixes and Sevens* (published by ACER in 1970) is revised, he hopes to include a section on this topic.

He spent two weeks in Sweden, and while in Europe visited the International Bureau of Education in Geneva and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris. In England he was interested in the work of the Schools Council and developments associated with the raising of the school leaving age. He will return to Melbourne in December after extensive travel in the United States and Canada.

Primary Mathematics Tests

ACER has just published a major new mathematics test series: *ACER Mathematics Tests*, AM series (generally suitable for Grades 4-6).

So far eight tests are available in the AM series: AM1 *Counting and Numeration*; AM2 *Place Value*; AM4 Part 1 *Whole Numbers — Mathematical Ideas*; AM4 Parts II and III *Whole Numbers — Terms and Applications*; AM4 Part IV *Whole Numbers — Computation*; AM5 *Money*; AM12 *Capacity and Volume*; AM13 *Time*. The other AM tests will be published progressively, as they are normed.

The tests are designed to measure the students' grasp of

specific areas of primary mathematics, and are accompanied by norms derived from data collected from all Australian states except New South Wales (which uses different editions of the tests in the Primary Evaluation Programme). The tests can be used individually, or in any sequence, according to the teacher's requirements.

It will be for teachers to decide when the administration of one of the tests is appropriate, but the following are two occasions when a teacher may decide to test:

- immediately before giving the class instruction in a particular mathematics topic, to determine how familiar the children are with that topic already;
- after dealing with a topic in class, to determine how well its principles have been grasped and which children need further help.

All test booklets, except AM4: IV, are reusable; parts II and III of AM4 are printed together in the one booklet. For the reusable test booklets, a standard answer sheet is available, which may be used for any test at any grade level. There is a separate score key for each test. The handbook (including technical supplement) provides information on administration, scoring, and interpretation of scores. The specimen set (\$3.75 including postage) consists of the handbook with technical supplement, one copy of each test and each score key, and an answer sheet.

ganizations are preparing for conversion to the same extent, as was done for decimal currency. However, as it is anticipated that all schools will be using metric measures by 1974, ACER will begin releasing metric material during 1973.

The conversion of the *Individual Mathematics Programme*, Kits B and C, has begun, and those parts affected in Kit B will become available as replacement items in February 1973. It is hoped that the replacement items for Kit C will be available by mid-1973. The conversion of tests is also underway—all items requiring conversion have been located, and in most instances replacement items written. To overcome some of the problems associated with mathematics tests, hypothetical rather than real units may be used in some cases. New primary level mathematics tests, including units of metric measure, will be available in 1973. It is realized that the conversion to metric measure will not be without its problems, but it is hoped that the conversion of ACER materials will be completed with the minimum expense and inconvenience.

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